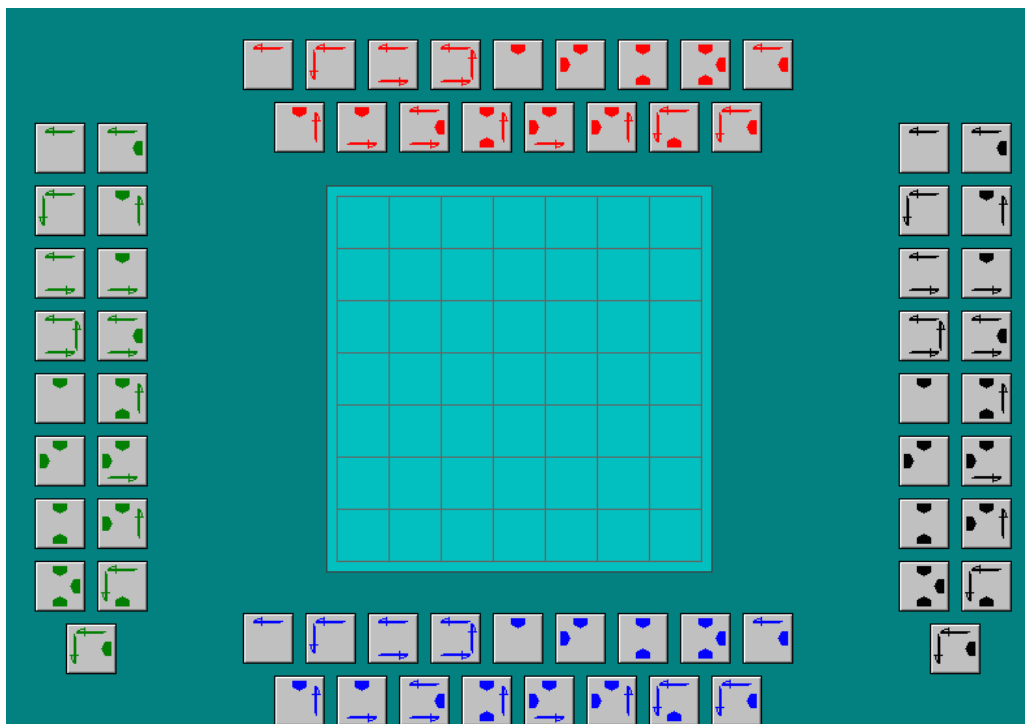# Zarathustra

**Games Rules**

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## 1 Overview

### 1.1 Objective

Two to four players place tiles which attack or defend other tiles on a playing field. The player having the greatest number of blank sides on the tiles on the board wins the game.



### 1.2 Playing Field

Zarathustra is played on a board of square spaces. The number of spaces on the board depends on the number of players. For two players, the board contains 25 spaces, 5 x 5.

For three players, the board contains 36 spaces, 6 x 6, and for four players, 49 spaces, 7 x 7. Spaces on the board have no special characteristics, although border and corner spaces do have some strategic advantages.

## 1.3 Tiles

Each player begins with 17 tiles marked with combinations of swords and shields at each edge. The tiles contain every combination of swords and shields, where each tile holds at least one symbol and at least one blank edge. The color of the symbols on the tile indicates the player who owns the tile. The symbols on the edges of the tiles determine the action taken on neighboring tiles. Blank edges are called vulnerable sides. Edges with swords attack the tiles immediately facing them. Shield sides unconditionally resist attacks from the side facing them.

## 1.4 Game Play

Players rotate turns in a clockwise direction, playing a single tile each turn. A tile placed on the board affects the four spaces immediately adjacent to it, except when the tile is placed on the border of the playing field, in which case the tile affects only those spaces within the playing field. Depending upon the symbols on the edges of the tile played and the symbols on the edges of the neighboring tiles, any of the neighboring tiles or even the tile just played may be removed from the playing field. A piece may not be placed immediately next to the previous piece played, even on a diagonal. Play continues until either all tiles have been used or all spaces on the board have been occupied or have been blocked by the previously-played tile.

# 2 Rules

1. The playing field for two players is a square, five spaces by five spaces. For three players the field is six spaces by six spaces, and for four, seven by seven. Players may not place tiles outside the designated playing field.

2. Play proceeds in a clock-wise direction. During a turn, a player must place one and only one tile on the board, even if the player can only play a tile which will be destroyed.

3. A tile may not be placed adjacent to the last tile played, even if it touches the last tile only at the corners, at a diagonal. The open spaces around the last tile played are marked with a skull preventing the next player from placing a tile in these spaces.

4. The symbols at the edges of the tile played determine the effect that the tile will have on the tiles immediately surrounding it, as well as the effect that those tiles will have on the tile just played. For each of the four edges of the tile played, conflicts between neighboring tiles are resolved as follows:

† For a sword adjacent to a blank side, the tile with the vulnerable side is always removed, even if the tile with the vulnerable side belongs to the player.

†† For a sword adjacent to another sword, both tiles are threatened. The resolution depends upon how many shields support the tiles. For each tile, count the number of adjacent tiles which have a shield facing the tile in question, even if the adjacent tiles belong to an opponent. Shields on the tile itself do not count. The tile with the greatest number of supporting shields is victorious and the other tile is removed. If both tiles have the same number of supporting shields, then both tiles are removed.

⌸⌸ The following combinations have no effect on either tile: sword against shield, shield against shield, vulnerable against shield, vulnerable against vulnerable, and any side at a border of the playing field or facing an empty space.

†⌸ The events on different sides of the tile just played do not contribute to each other. The conflicts at each side are resolved independently. It does not matter if two neighboring tiles attack the tile with swords; if the tile can successfully counter both attacks with shields or swords, the tile just played will remain. See Examples below.

5. A player may destroy the player's own tile in accordance with the previous rule, and if there are no other options, a player must play a tile which will cause one or more of the player's own tiles to be destroyed. Furthermore, a player's tile may protect and be protected by an opponent's tiles.

6. A tile's impact is felt simultaneously on all neighboring tiles, and at the same time, their impact is felt on the tile. On one side, the tile may be destroyed by its neighbor, yet the tile can still destroy a neighboring tile on another side.

7. The game is finished when all players have used all of their pieces, or when all spaces on the playing field are either filled or blocked by skulls. For each player, the number of vulnerable sides on the tiles on the board belonging to the player are counted. The player with the greatest number of vulnerable sides wins the game.

## 3 Examples

### 3.1 Example 1
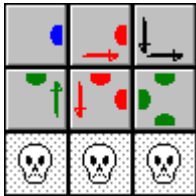


In this example, Red has just placed tile number 14 in the center of these nine spaces. At the top edge, Red's shield counters the sword of the red tile facing it; therefore,

neither tile will be removed. At the right edge, two shields face each other, so neither tile is destroyed. Red's vulnerable side faces an empty space at the bottom blocked by a skull and is therefore not threatened there. At the left edge, Red's sword faces Green's sword. At this point, the number of protecting shields are counted. Red is supported by Green's shield to the right; it therefore has one support. Green has no supports, so it will be destroyed by Red's sword.

### 3.2 Example 2
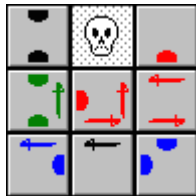


Here Red has just placed tile number 17 in the center of these nine spaces. To the left, Red has countered Green's sword with a shield, and will therefore not be removed. At the top edge, Red's vulnerable side faces an empty space blocked by a skull and is therefore not threatened there. At the right edge, Red's sword attacks the vulnerable side of another red tile, which will consequently be destroyed. This red tile is removed even though it is the same color as the tile just played and despite the supporting shields from Red at the top and Blue at the bottom. A vulnerable side is always extremely vulnerable. Red's sword encounters Black's sword at the bottom edge. Red has no supporting shields, but Black has support from Blue on the left and the right. Therefore, the red tile in the center will be destroyed by Black from the bottom, but not before destroying its own tile to the right.

This was clearly a very bad move for Red.