

How to play Twixt on Vassal

Twixt is a two-player game invented in 1958 by Alex Randolph, and first published by 3M in 1962. The board is a 24x24 square grid of holes, minus the corner holes. The rows of holes around the edges are border rows. The top and bottom border rows are red, and the left and right borders are blue. (In a 3M set, the colors are red versus black.) Each player has an unlimited supply of pegs and links. Pegs on the board align with the holes. Each link on the board spans between two pegs of the same color which are at opposite corners of a six-hole rectangle, like a knight's move in chess. There are four possible orientations for links on the board, and each orientation is represented by a different piece in the module. The numbers in each link name indicate the orientation relative to an analog clock display. For example, Red Link 10-4 points at 10 o'clock and 4 o'clock.

The board is empty at the start. Red moves first. Each move (except for the swap move) consists of up to three steps:

1. Remove as many of your own links from the board as you wish. This is rarely done, but sometimes you may need the elbow room to create a continuous path.
2. Place one peg of your color in any vacant hole, except you may not play in either of your opponent's border rows.
3. Add as many legal links of your color to the board as you wish. Links must connect two pegs of your color which are a knight's move apart. Link crossing is not allowed. Usually, it makes sense to add all legal links to the peg just placed.

After the first peg is placed, the opponent has the option to swap sides, which, with a 3M set, would be indicated by turning the pieces box end for end. When playing with Vassal, the second player could click the swap button or tell the opponent if he/she chooses to swap.

If sides are swapped, the player who moved first becomes the other color, and makes the next move. This option to swap is available only to the second player, and only immediately after the first move. If sides are not swapped, the second player moves normally as the other color, and may not swap sides later in the game. This is called the **pie rule** because it is like when two people want to divide the last of the pie. One person cuts the pie into two slices, and the other chooses which slice to eat. The rule makes the game much more fair and deep. Alex Randolph adopted this rule change after the 3M edition came out.

The end move button provides a way to tell your opponent you are finished with your move. This might be convenient if you make a move involving link removal. If used all the time, it could help prevent a situation where both players are waiting for the other to move, because one player did not add a possible link.

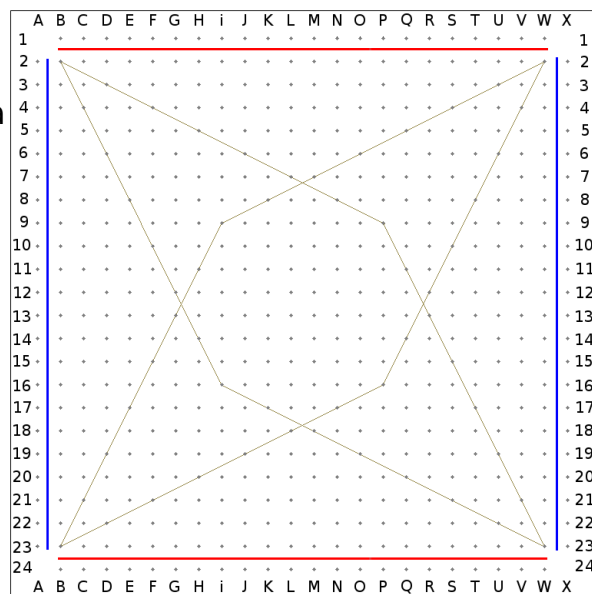
The object is to connect a peg in one of your border rows to a peg in your other border row with a continuous chain of linked pegs. If neither side can achieve this, the game is a draw. Players may resign or agree to a draw at any time.

Guide lines

An alternate board image is available with eight diagonal guide lines.

Compared to most abstracts, 24x24 is a large grid. These lines are intended to help the player read the position. For example, they can clarify the result of a ladder chase towards a corner.

The guide lines have **no effect on the rules**. They are like the nine emphasized dots on a Go board. They give your eyes a frame of reference.



Variants

A newcomer to the game may not enjoy losing all the time to an experienced player. One possible workaround for this is **handicapping**. The intent here is the opposite of the intent of the pie rule. Instead of making the game more balanced, the game is made more *imbalanced*, to compensate for the difference in playing strengths.

The smallest handicap is to dispense with the pie rule. The weaker player moves first as red, and blue may not swap. So, red could make a strong initial move such as near the center, and thereby gain an advantage.

For a stronger handicap, one dimension of the grid is reduced. The weaker player moves first as red, and has less distance to cross. Handicap boards are available from one row to ten rows, with or without guide lines. Of course there is *never any swap in a handicap game*.

TwixtPP is a popular variant. The PP stands for paper and pencil, which is how the game was originally played. Links are never removed, and your own links are allowed to cross each other. Crossed links are not inherently connected. In other words, to win you must still create a chain of directly linked pegs which connects your border rows. So, for example, you might build a winning path which loops across itself, which could never happen with a physical set. Many endgame positions have very different tactics depending on which ruleset is used. In terms of game outcome, however, probably less than 0.1% of games would differ. In general, TwixtPP rules can result in slightly fewer draws, but draws are still rare under standard rules, and much complexity and depth is arguably lost without link removal.

A couple of **alternate board sizes** are included, 18x18 for a very quick game, or 30x30 for a brain marathon.

Diagonal 45 Twixt and **Diagonal 26 Twixt** are based on a suggestion by Mark Thompson. The overall shape of the board is changed. The border lines still form a square, but this square is rotated relative to the grid of holes.