

# HYPOTHERMIA

## The Journal of Icehouse Gaming

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**MELTDOWN**  
An Introduction by Dr. Cool



Greetings Icers!

Hope you enjoy the new games in this newsletter, just in time for the 2005 Origins game convention. Sadly, this is the first Origins since 1998 that I will not be attending, due to vacation constraints. I will miss many of you and I'm sorry I won't be able to help referee the annual Icehouse Tournament. But there are plenty of good refs available. I've noticed while refereeing the past two tourneys that the players have become amazingly cool and very adept at policing themselves, which I consider A Good Thing. It reminds me of the type of sportsmanship found in Ultimate Frisbee matches. Cool.

Since the last Hypothermia, many busy people have contributed to the evergrowing Icehouse culture. Mike Sugarbaker started a public Icehouse wiki site that has been growing by leaps and bounds and really looks great. Zarf (Andrew Plotkin) got the back-to-back *Icehouse Game Design Competitions* up and running; thanks Zarf! New Icehouse games are appearing regularly—check out the online *S.L.I.C.K.* reference—and many designers are even using the pieces while designing and prototyping non-Icehouse games. Icehouse pieces are also great as scorekeepers for existing games. (At Wunderland we often play Texas Hold'em using the pieces as Martian poker chips.) Meanwhile, Looney Labs has produced boxed sets for two Icehouse games—Kory Heath's mind-blowing **Zendo**, and Andy Looney's fast-paced **IceTowers**. More are planned.

The first four games in this issue were winners of the last four Icehouse Design Competitions. The fifth game, **Armada**, was specially chosen by the Hypo crew as a good example of a one-stash game. I commend Dan Isaac on his design; it's quite a challenge to make a decent game with only 15 pieces, all the same color!

We have rules for two strategy games: **Sprawl** (a population out-of-control game) and David Bush's **Hextris**, a simple but challenging game of movement and grouping. **Undercut**, by Joseph Kisenwether, is an auction game with an alien feel; the lowest bid wins an auction and the lowest score wins the game.

On the surface two of the games sound very similar—both are naval warfare games that use Icehouse pieces as ship miniatures—but they have very different qualities. Jacob Davenport's **Torpedo** is a no-turns game for two or more players, and Dan Isaac's **Armada** is the aforementioned one-stash game for two players. Both games have intriguing movement and shooting rules.

So, enjoy the games, and I hope to see you at next year's Origins!

— Dr Cool

# Sprawl

by Brandon Wiley, Valerie West, and Jonathan Leistiko

**Winner of the Icehouse Game Design Competition #1!** A game of strategy, resource management, planning, and diplomacy.

## Goal

To place as many of your pieces on the board as possible while blocking the other players from doing likewise.

## Set Up

- Set your Icehouse pieces in front of you, off the board. This is your stash.
- 3 players play on a 5x6 board.
- 4 to 6 players play on a 6x6 board.
- 7 to 8 players play on an 8x8 board.
- Randomly choose a player to go first.
- On your first turn, take a piece of any size from your stash and place it upright on a square anywhere on the board. This is your starting tower. All future towers you place on the board must be spored in a vacant space targeted by a branch point you control. (Don't worry, we'll explain what that means later.)

## How to Play

On your turn, you can:

- *Build* (add to an existing tower)
- *Branch* (lay pieces off of a tower or tower branch), or
- *Spore* (start a new tower in a square targeted by a branch point)

## BUILDING

- To build, cap a tower you control with a piece from your stash. This piece must be one pip smaller than the piece it's capping.
- A tower can only support branches that are as long as the number of pieces in the tower. A one-piece tower can have a maximum of four pieces coming off of it. A two-piece tower can have a maximum of 12 pieces coming off of it.

## BRANCHING

- To branch, lay a piece from your stash on its side in a space adjacent to one of your towers or in a space adjacent to one of your existing branches.
- Branch points must point at an adjacent square. Diagonal squares are invalid.

## Stuff You Need



3-8 players



40-90 minutes



1 stash per player



a chess board

- Branch points coming off a tower must point away from the tower (in any of the three remaining directions). Any size piece can branch off a tower.
- Branch points coming off the side of a parent branch must point away from the parent branch in the perpendicular direction (e.g., if you lay a branch point in the space East of a parent branch that's pointing North, it must point East. It may not point North or South).
- Branch points placed in the space that the parent branch point is pointing at may point in any direction *except* at the parent branch.
- Branching pieces must be one size smaller than the piece that they are branching from. Twos may only branch from threes. Ones may only branch from twos. Nothing can branch from a one.

### **ATTACKING**

- Branch points automatically attack the adjacent space they're pointing at. If a tower occupies a square that is being attacked, it's at risk of being neutralized.
- A tower is neutralized if it is attacked by a piece of a size that is not in that tower. If a tower has a 3-pip and a 2-pip piece in it, and it's attacked by a 1-pip piece, then it is neutralized. A tower with one of each size piece in it is safe.
- The owner of a neutralized tower can not build on it or continue to branch off of it. Branch points on neutralized towers still attack squares they point at.

### **SPORING**

- Targeting: Branch points target the space they're pointing at (pip) spaces away. A three pip piece targets the space three squares away. A two pip piece targets the space two squares away. A one pip piece targets the adjacent space it points to. It does not matter if there are intervening pieces; the space is still targeted.
- To spore, place a piece from your stash upright in a vacant square that one of your branch points targets. This piece may be any size. This creates a new tower that you can build or branch from on future turns.
- You may not spore a tower in a position where it will instantly be neutralized.
- You may not spore off of a branch point on a neutralized tower.

### **Game End**

- When one player has no more valid moves, the game ends at the beginning of that player's next turn.
- When the game ends, return all pieces in neutralized towers and branches attached to neutralized towers to their player's stashes.
- Add up the pips of your color on the board at the end of the game. If you have the most pips on the board, you win.

### **Variants, etc.**

For several variants, a visual explanation and more, please visit:  
[www.icehousegames.org/wiki/?title=Sprawl](http://www.icehousegames.org/wiki/?title=Sprawl)

# Undercut

by Joseph Kisenwether

## Winner of the Icehouse Game Design Competition #2!

### Goal

To have the LOWEST score when the first player reaches 10 points.

### Set Up

- Dump all 5 stashes into the bag
- Each player then draws six points worth of pieces (Large= 3pts, Medium= 2pts Small= 1pt) in any combination of sizes.
- Make a score sheet with one column for each player, plus three extra. Label the extra three columns *Tree*, *Triplets*, and *Foursome* and write a 2 in each, like:

Player 1	Player 2	Player 3	Player 4	Tree	Triplets	Foursome
				2	2	2

## Stuff You Need



3-5 players



45-60 minutes



5 stashes



an opaque cloth bag,  
paper, pencil, tokens

### How to Play

Choose a starting player for the first round. Each round consists of two phases, the Scoring Phase and the Auction Phase.

### Scoring Phase

Beginning with the start player and proceeding clockwise around the table, players must turn in any scoring combinations that they have in their hand (if possible), in exchange for the points listed under that qualifying combination on the score sheet. After each set is turned in, the pieces are returned to the bag *and the score for that combo is increased by one*. The Scoring Combinations are:

- Tree — One large, one medium and one small piece, all the same color.
- Triplets — Three identical pieces.
- Foursome — Four pieces the same size in four different colors.

For example: Player 1 turns in a tree, he is awarded 2 points and the tree count is increased to 3. Player 2 and 3 have no combinations, but then Player 4 turns in another tree, she is awarded 3 points and the tree count is increased to 4.

If a player has more than one scoring combo during the scoring phase he may turn in whichever he likes, but if still left with another scoring combo after those pieces are returned to the bag, he must also turn in the remaining combo.

## **Auction Phase**

Once all players have turned in scoring combos, the start player draws several stacks of one large, one medium, and one small piece and places them in the center of the table. Build one fewer stack than players.

### **BIDDING**

Beginning with the start player and proceeding clockwise around the table, players bid to acquire the stacks. Lowest bid for each stack wins that stack.

The value of a bid is the sum of the point values of its pieces. When two bids have equal value, the one using fewer pieces is considered lower. So, for example, two smalls is less than one large (2pts < 3 pts) but one medium is less than two smalls (2pts=2pts, but 1 piece < 2 pieces).

When making a bid, take the desired pieces from your hand and place them on the table next to the stack on which you want to bid. Place your token with your bid so everyone knows who made the bid. You may bid zero by placing just your token next to a stack. If there is already a bid on a stack, any new bid must be lower, and the bid that was undercut is immediately taken back (retracted) by the player who placed it. The retracting player will have the opportunity to place a different bid on his next turn.

Bidding continues around the table. Anyone who still has their token has the chance to undercut any bid on the table when it is their turn.

### **PASSING**

Bidding proceeds until one player decides to pass. You may not pass if there is any stack on the table with no bids.

The player that passes immediately gets one point added to her score and draws one additional piece for her hand. She can root around in the bag to draw whatever size piece she wants, but cannot choose a specific color.

All other players take the pieces for which they hold the lowest bid into their hands and return the pieces they bid with to the bag.

The player who passed becomes the start player for the next round. Game play returns to the scoring phase.

## **Game End**

When any player's column hits ten points the game ends. Finish the scoring round and then compare scores. Lowest score wins. In the event of a tie, use the pieces in each player's hand as a tiebreaker; fewest points wins.

## **Strategy, etc.**

For strategy, a sample game and more, please visit:  
[www.icehousegames.org/wiki/?title=Undercut](http://www.icehousegames.org/wiki/?title=Undercut)

# Hextris

by David J. Bush

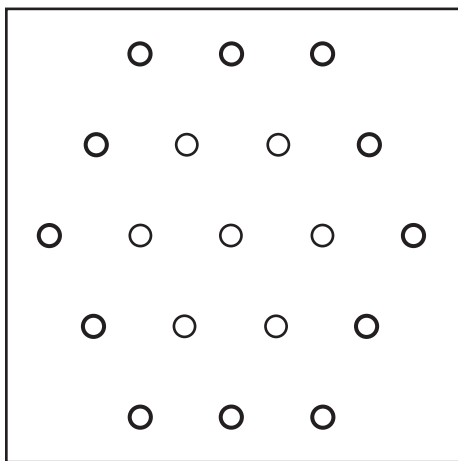
Winner of the Icehouse Game Design Competition #3!

## Goal

To connect three groups of five pieces.

## The Board

Draw 19 spots on a sheet of letter paper as shown below. The overall shape of the grid is hexagonal. There are 12 spots around



## Stuff You Need



2-3 players



15-30 minutes



1 stash per player



a sheet of letter paper and pencil

the perimeter of the board, and 7 interior spots (illustrated at left).

## Set Up

The board is empty of pieces at the start of the game. Each player has their stash arranged in front of them, in full view of the opponents. These off-board pieces are said to be in hand.

## How to Play

Players choose who moves first. Play proceeds clockwise around the board.

On your turn you either: 1. Place a piece you have in hand onto any vacant perimeter spot (called *dropping a piece*), OR 2. move a piece of your color on the board according to its powers of movement.

You may not drop a piece onto any interior spot. You may not both drop and move in the same turn.

There are two different ways to move a piece: 1. *Move* it in a straight line in one of the six directions, OR 2. *Swap* places with an adjacent piece of any color. (There is no capturing, nor any stacking or nesting of pieces on the board.)

You may not pass on your turn as long as a legal move is available to you. If you have no legal move, you lose your turn and play proceeds to the next player.

## **MOVING PIECES**

If you are moving a piece instead of swapping a pair, all the spots you move through and the destination spot must be vacant.

- Small pyramids move only to adjacent spots, a distance of one spot.
- Medium pyramids may move up to two spots in a straight line.
- Large pyramids may move as far as desired in a straight line in any of the six directions.

## **SWAPPING PIECES**

You may swap two adjacent pieces of any color, as long as they conform to the following size restrictions. Once you have swapped pieces, you may not make any additional moves on your turn.

- A large piece may swap places only with an adjacent medium piece.
- A medium piece may swap places only with an adjacent small piece.
- A small piece may swap places only with an adjacent large piece.

## **CONNECTED PIECES**

- Pieces of the same color which are on adjacent spots are said to be connected to each other.
- Any piece of the same color adjacent to a connected group is part of that group.
- If your move produces a connected group of five pieces of the same color, those five pieces are removed from the board, stowed by their owner (in sight of the other players), and are out of play for the rest of the game. A connected group is removed regardless of who created it. Connecting an opponent's group is usually inadvisable.
- You are not allowed to form a connected group of more than five pieces of the same color, either for yourself or an opponent. Any such move is illegal.

## **Game End**

The game ends when any player has achieved three connected groups of their color (the third group will occur on the board, while the previous two groups are stowed by their owner). That player wins. If two players get three groups at the same time, the winner is the one whose move ended the game. Players may agree to a draw if no one sees a way to make progress.

## **Strategy, etc.**

For strategy, a sample game and more, please visit:  
[www.icehousegames.org/wiki/?title=Hextris](http://www.icehousegames.org/wiki/?title=Hextris)

# Torpedo

by Jacob Davenport

**Winner of the Icehouse Game Design Competition #4!**

## Goal and Description

To survive with the most powerful ships. Each piece is a naval ship, all placed on the field of play in a mad rush. Then the small ships shoot torpedoes, then the medium ones, and then the large ones.

## Set Up

Agree on a playing field, such as a card table or similar sized area. Players should be able to reach nearly every part of the table. Everyone should have their stash of pieces upright at the edge of the playing area.

## Begin

Once all the players are ready, as indicated by having a finger resting on the pointy top of one of your pieces, play begins. You may play any of your pieces lying down anywhere on the playing field that does not touch any other piece. Once a piece is played, it is not moved again.

## Crashes

If you move (bump) an already-played piece, first try to return the moved piece to its original location. The piece you were playing when the crash happened is immediately declared dead and should be set on the side of the playing area standing upright. Put it away from your unplayed pieces so you don't accidentally play it again.

## Stopping

Once somebody has played his or her last piece, that player yells "STOP!" All play stops, although any pieces that are already touching the table may stay there, even if a player is still touching it.

## Launch Torpedoes

### SMALL SHIPS

First all the small ships fire torpedoes. Use your straight edge (as needed) to draw a line from the tip of each small ship, and the first non-small ship that it

## Stuff You Need



2-5 players



10 minutes



1 stash per player



optional straight edge  
(pointer, ruler, string)



hits, enemy or friend is destroyed. These torpedoes launch simultaneously, so mark the sunk ships by setting them upright, making sure that by setting a piece upright you don't recheck a small piece you have already checked. After all small ship torpedoes have been checked, removed the destroyed medium and large ships.

### **MEDIUM SHIPS**

Then the remaining medium ships fire torpedoes, and any non-medium ships they hit are destroyed, again simultaneously. So again mark the hit small and large ships by turning them upright and removing them when all the medium ship torpedoes have been checked.

### **LARGE SHIPS**

Last the large ships fire torpedoes, sinking any non-large ships in the same way.

## **Attacked Ships**

Because most plays are made close to the target piece, you will probably not need the straight edge very often. Don't remove the attacked ships as you go, because you might accidentally think that a ship which has already fired has not yet fired. Everyone should help with this so there are no mistakes.

## **Scoring and Game End**

You get 1 point for any of your remaining small ships, 2 points for any remaining medium ships, and 3 points for any remaining large ships. The player with the most pips of ships left at the end is the winner. (Ties are broken by fisticuffs.)

## **Strategies**

If players are going too slow, there is a lot to be said for throwing down your ships as fast as possible and then yelling "STOP!" This is often a successful strategy to keep play moving pretty fast.

You should make your attacks close to the target, although you really don't need to worry about somebody putting the tip of their ship in front of yours. If you see a far shot that is aimed at one of your ships, you can block it by putting a like-sized ship in front of the shot, and hopefully aim the like-sized ship somewhere useful.

Don't bother attacking a ship twice if a small is already pointed at it.

It is better to play your ships somewhere useless, even if it might get shot, than to let it never get played.

In case of a tie, strike first and hard. Maybe you'll catch the opponent flat footed.

## **On the Web**

These rules are also online at:

[www.icehousegames.org/wiki/?title=Torpedo](http://www.icehousegames.org/wiki/?title=Torpedo)

# Armada

by Dan Isaac

*Editor's Pick* and 4th place in the  
Icehouse Game Design Competition #4.

## Goal and Game End

To sink the entire enemy fleet.

## Set Up

Set aside one piece of each size. Use these when moving ships and firing cannons.

The remaining pieces are split up such that one player gets the four Large pieces, while the other player gets the four Small and four Medium pieces. One player will choose which pieces he gets and the other player chooses who goes first.

Each player sets their pieces in a grouping near them on the table in any design:

- Each piece should lay flat and should not overlap any other piece.
- Each piece should be no closer than 10-12 inches away from opponents pieces.

## How to Play

On each player's turn, that player performs up to three Actions, including:

- Move one of their ships (that has not yet moved this turn).
- Fire from a ship that has not fired its full battery yet this turn.

*Note: If there is any dispute whether a given situation is allowed (e.g., is a ship within cannon range, can you move without hitting a ship, etc.) the answer is "No, you can't do it." Try to make certain that your moves put you into clear position to hit your target, etc.*

## Ship Movement

As one Action a ship can move up to a maximum number of steps based on size.

- Large ships can move a max. distance of up to one (1) step as one Action.
- Medium ships can move a max. distance of up to two (2) steps as one Action.
- Small ships can move a max. distance of up to four (4) steps as one Action.

Each step is made as follows:

- Take the spare Icehouse piece of the same size as the ship you plan to move.
- Place the **center** of the spare piece's Stern (base of the pyramid) so that it touches the Bow (point) of the ship to be moved.

## Stuff You Need



2 players



about 30 minutes

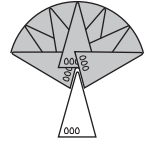


1 stash



a few chits / markers,  
20" diameter area min

- Orient the new ship (by pivoting around the point, stern centered) in the direction that you wish it to move and place it down.
- Then remove the original ship from the old position. (Damage markers should be moved to the new ship location as well.)



Continue this process until you have either gone as far as you wish, or until you have traveled the maximum distance allowed based on the size of the ship.

A ship must move in increments of its size. No partial-size moves are allowed, only moves that are a number of full steps less than or equal to the maximum (e.g. a small can move the length of 1, 2, 3, or 4 smalls, but no fractions thereof).

If a ship would come into contact with another object or the edge of the playing surface during a move, the move is not allowed.

*Note: It will be impossible to orient the new ship in some directions, such as at a 90 degree angle or straight back, as the new ship position would overlap upon the previous one. Also, it is possible to have a ship in a position where there are no valid directions that it may move. (Its path could be blocked by another ship, or an obstacle such as the edge of the playing field.) In these cases that ship is currently stuck and cannot be moved any further this turn.*

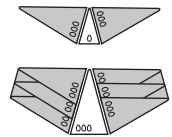
## Firing a Cannon

During a turn a ship can only fire its cannons a number of times equal to its size, and **each shot requires one turn action**.

Therefore a Small ship may only fire once per turn, a Medium may fire up to twice, and a Large up to three times in a single turn.

All ships can fire cannons at objects up to a distance of one Large away, but only in specific directions.

To fire a cannon, use a Large piece (regardless of ship size) such that the entire base side of the Large touches one of the two long sides of your ship. The Large piece indicates your possible target area. If the object you wish to shoot at lies in the area covered by the Large piece, and is not obstructed by anything, then you can hit that target.



When a ship is hit from a cannon fire, it takes one point of damage. A ship is destroyed (sunk/removed from the game) when it has taken damage equal to its size. So a Small ship is sunk the first time that it is hit. But a Medium ship will not sink until the second time that it is hit, and a Large can survive until the third hit. Use chits or other markers to indicate ships that have taken damage. The damage stays with the ship the remainder of the game until it is sunk.

*Note: Remember to move damage counters along with a ship whenever it moves.*

## Variants, Visuals, etc.

For advanced variants, some visuals and more, please visit:  
[www.icehousegames.org/wiki/?title=Armada](http://www.icehousegames.org/wiki/?title=Armada)

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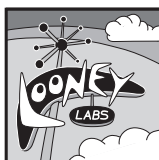
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