

# Ghast

*The Free Ranging Connection Combat Game*

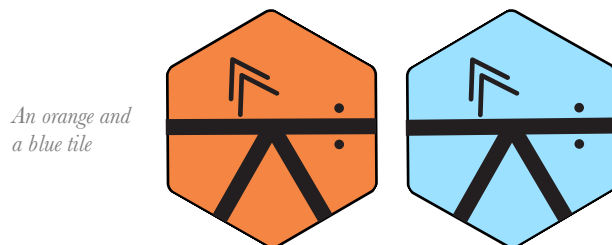
**“He who flabbers most wildly at first will one day ghash with the best of them and all the better for it”**

— No one ever

- A 2-player game of skill
- In standard mode: no luck, nothing hidden
- A distant descendant of the game of Go
- In its feel, its volatility and its length it is closer to Chess than Go to play
- More options per move than either
- Advanced hidden information “Fakerghast” variant available
- Handicapping system available for unequal players

## Ghast At A Glance

1. One player is **Orange** the other **Blue**.
2. Orange plays by placing orange tiles on the board. Blue places blue tiles.
3. Orange makes the first move. After that, the players move alternately.
4. The aim of the game is to have more tiles of your colour on the board than your opponent. You achieve this mostly by killing opposing tiles by depriving them of oxygen, and by making your own tiles hard to kill.
5. If you have **nine more** tiles on the board of your colour than your opponent has, after his/her turn you can claim victory.
6. Clearly the rule by which you can kill your opponent's tiles is crucial for winning the game, but first I must describe the tiles.



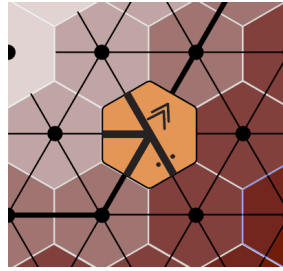
7. There are also some restrictions on the opening moves explained at the end of the instructions.

## Tiles and How to Place Them

Tiles are placed centrally on a dot at the intersection or potential intersection of the grid lines. These are called **hexes** or **positions**. Each tile has six distinct edges. Tiles have thick lines called **couplers**. These designs must be pointing **along** the grid lines so that it is clear which edge points to which neighbouring hex. This means that a tile has six distinct orientations.

Tiles may not be played on top of or instead of existing tiles and, once placed, they **do not move**.

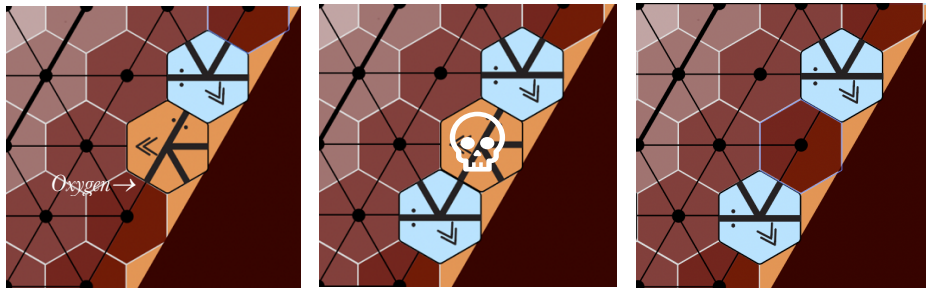
*An orange tile placed on a hex*



Tiles also have one **ranged coupler** (double arrow) and one **receiver** (double dot) which will be explained in the next section.

### **Killing And Connecting Tiles** *(read carefully)*

**Tiles need oxygen to survive.** After you move you look to see if any tiles are starved of oxygen and if they are, you remove them. You will want to suffocate your opponent's tiles, not your own. Oxygen **originates** at a tile wherever a **coupler** points to an empty space.



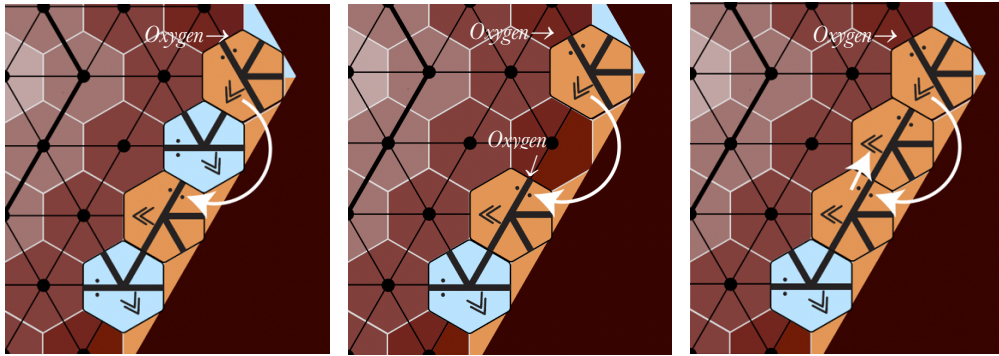
*Example in which blue deprives an orange tile of oxygen by covering its last free coupler resulting it being removed from the board*

Oxygen can pass instantly among tiles of the same colour by way of **connections** keeping them all alive. Wherever two **couplers** touch, they form a **two-way connection**. Oxygen can pass through any number of connections **from** the tile where oxygen originated.

Any tile that is starved of oxygen is removed even if it has just been placed. All dead tiles are removed **simultaneously**.

Additional to the regular couplers, the **ranged coupler** (double arrow) makes a one directional connection to the tile one space away from it in the direction of the arrow. That is, the connection jumps over one hex and lands at the tile on the hex beyond it. For this connection to be received successfully, the tile in this hex must have its **receiver** (two dots) on the edge facing the ranged coupler.

As with regular **couplers**, the ranged coupler works instantly and does not block or preclude any other connection. It does not matter if there is a tile on the intervening hex, the connection forms a bridge over that hex.



*Examples in which a ranged coupler provides oxygen to a receiver. In the first example, the ranged coupler is the only source of oxygen for the lower orange piece. In the second example, the empty hex in between also provides oxygen (but this source does not travel up to the upper orange piece). In the third example, there is another orange piece in the middle which receives life from the top piece indirectly via the bottom piece as shown by the white arrows.*

## Opening Restrictions

The very first move is by orange and must be on an edge hex (darkest shade).

Blue goes next but still on the edge of the board only.

Then, Orange can play any tile either on the edge or one hex away from the edge.

Next, Blue, up to two spaces from the edge etc. This continues until the whole board is open which happens on the seventh move, at which point the central hex is unlocked.

## The Win Conditions

You can claim victory if you have nine more tiles (points) on the board after your opponent's move and any resulting dead pieces are removed. It is the difference between the number of tiles that matters.

Gast is an unstable game meaning that someone pulling ahead by nine tiles before the board is filled is by far the most likely result, especially for beginners. However, if the game reaches an impasse where neither player can increase their points by continuing and both players pass, then the player with the higher score at this time wins.

If players find that they are repeating a cycle of moves that cause prior positions to recur, then the player with more points on the board can claim victory once the cycle repeats three times.

Draws can occur if an impasse is reached and the score of both players is identical down to the last half point. This is the only way a draw can occur. Players may not agree to a draw.

Either player can of course resign allowing the other player to win.

### Optional Rules

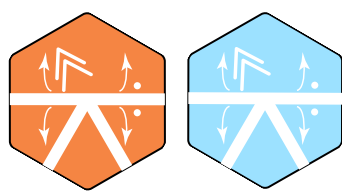
The above rules are those that are obligatory for playing Ghast. But players and groups of players may agree other rules such as time conditions.

One tool available in cases where a sanction less severe than forfeiting the game is needed is the **Veto**. These can also be used for handicapping or for small unlawful moves played by accident or time violations. A veto is owned by the player getting the advantage, say Player A, who might have three vetoes as a handicap against the more experienced player (Player B). The Veto is used on B during B's turn.

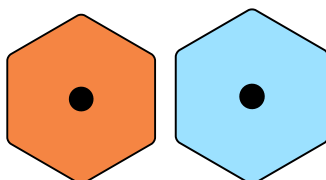
B moves then A says "I veto that move" or just "veto" before any dead tiles have been removed, then B takes that tile off the board and makes a different move. The new move must differ in position not just orientation. The veto is a way of making the disfavoured player play his/her second favourite move.

### Fakerghast

Ghast can also be played in an advanced mode called Fakerghast. In this mode both players play two tiles at a time rather than one: 1 real tile and 1 **fake tile**. You place both tiles on the board inverted (i.e. upside down). The backs of both the real and fake pieces look like this:



Thus, means the other player cannot tell which is the real and the fake piece. The fake pieces look like this once turned over:

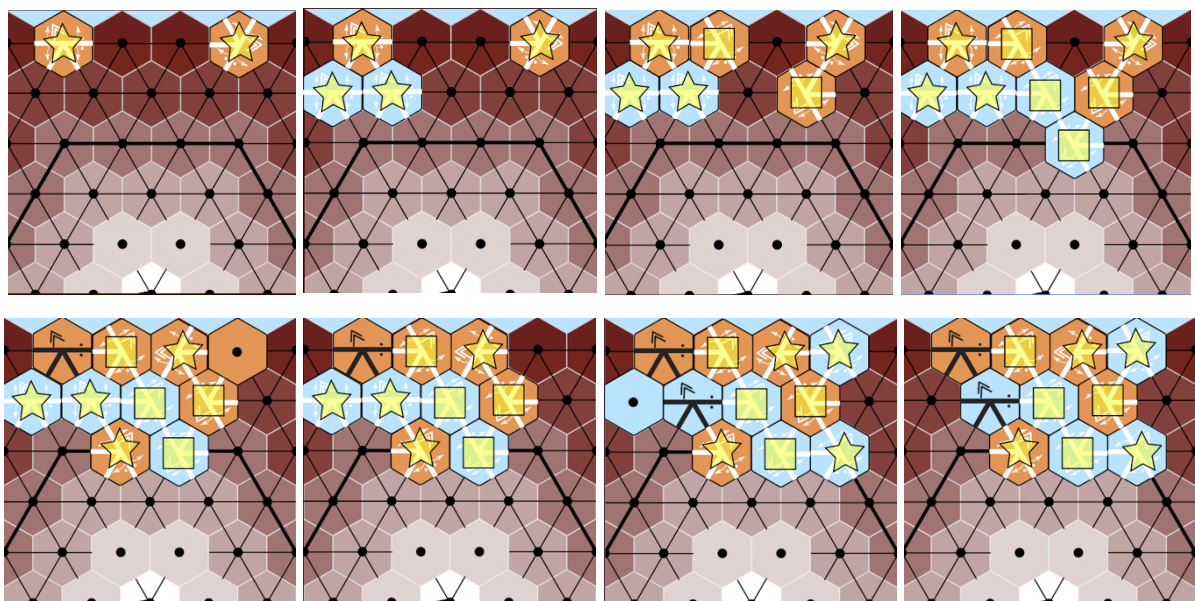


(while the real tiles are just the ones you use for regular Ghast). To keep track of the pairs played earlier, the player should place matching transparent markers on top. Each player will need two **Star markers** and two **Square markers**.

On the first turn, the pieces should be played with **Stars** on top. On the second, with **squares** on top. On the third turn, the player moves the stars to their

newly placed pieces, and flips over the pieces that are uncovered, revealing which is the real one and which is the fake one. When flipping the tiles over, the player must follow the small white arrows to ensure the true piece stays in the same orientation as indicated on its back side. The fake piece should now be removed.

This process then continues, with blue moving his or her stars onward to their third play, and flipping the tiles revealed by this and removing the fake one. On the next turn, orange moves the square markers to the newly placed pieces and flips the revealed pieces and again removes the fake one. The game continues in this manner. For an even harder version, you may use the triangle markers to track a third layer of hidden pieces.<sup>1</sup>



*Example of fakerghast play. Orange plays two pieces (one real and one fake) and marks them with stars. Blue follows suit. Orange plays two pieces and marks them with squares. Blue follows suit. Now Orange plays two more pieces and moves the stars onto these, revealing and flipping their original pieces. This reveals that the right hand piece was fake so it is removed. Play continues in this manner.*

As a (hitherto untested) variant, one could augment regular Ghast by allowing a finite number of Fakerghast moves (say 3 over the course of a game). These could be used at any time, and should last one turn, with the player revealing the true piece and removing the fake as they play their next turn.

<sup>1</sup> Note this is the original intended version. However, the current custodian of this game feels it may be too taxing for anyone but its original creator.