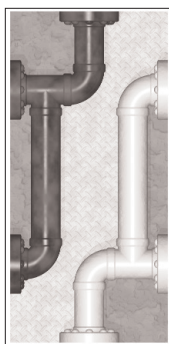


The Very Clever Pipe Game

a game by James Ernest



Players: 2-4

Playing Time: 20 Minutes

You Need: The 48 cards in this package.

Description: This is an abstract strategy game unlike any other pipe-related game you've ever played. We promise.

The object of the basic game is to connect sets of pipes of your own color and remove them from the board, while preventing your opponent from doing the same.

In more advanced variations the background colors also come into play. It's very clever! It's a pipe game!



the Very Clever
Pipe Game
Hip Pocket Edition

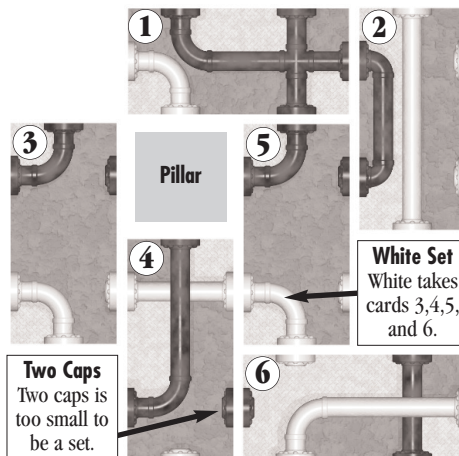


Figure 1
A Game In Progress.

The Very Clever Pipe Game is © 1997, 2001 Cheapass Games: Seattle WA
Designed and illustrated by James Ernest

Version One, Basic Pipes (2 players):

The Game, in Brief: You will be playing cards from your hand onto the table, and trying to close sets of pipes. A “set” is a string of pipes with no open ends. Players pick up sets of their own color, regardless of who finished them. Whoever picks up the most cards is the winner.

The Deck: There are 48 cards in the deck. You need nothing else to play.

To Begin: Shuffle the deck and deal a hand of nine cards to each player. Determine randomly who will take the first turn. That player discards four cards from his hand, then declares whether he will be playing Black or White Pipes. The other player must now take the opposite color, and discards four cards knowing this. The first player then plays one card in the center of the table, and the game begins.

Put the discarded cards face up on the bottom of the deck. They will not be used in this game. Technically, they are public knowledge.

On Every Turn:

Step 1: Play a Card. Each turn you will play one card from your hand anywhere on the table, by the following rules:

A) Each card covers two squares of an imaginary grid. You can play cards in any position on the grid, as long as they could eventually meet up with the cards that are already there.

B) If you play a card that touches any existing cards, you can't connect pipes of opposite colors.

C) The playing surface is technically infinite, but you may have to agree to constrain it to the tabletop. It depends on how much of a geek your opponent is.

Step 2: Pick up Sets: Sets are defined below. When a set of pipes closes, the appropriate player picks them up. For example, if a white set forms, the white player takes it, regardless of who closed it. Obviously, if you're playing white, you'll want to form white sets. But at times it's strategically important to close an off-color set as a sacrifice.

Every card you pick up goes into your “score pile,” to be counted at the end of the game.

What's a Set? A “set” is a string of pipes that won't leak any water, i.e., every pipe leads to a cap or loops back onto the set. When you close a set, you pick up every card involved in that set, including the end caps.

Take a look at the Figure 1. Regardless of who closed this set, the white player would pick it up, taking cards 3,4,5, and 6.

Step 3: Draw One Card. This brings your hand back up to five cards. When the deck runs out, you will keep playing until your hand is gone.

Other Basic Construction Rules:

Pillars: A pillar is a square hole, half the size of a card, as shown in figure 1. Every pipe leading into a pillar it is considered to be capped at that spot. If the space opens up, the pillar goes away.

Clearing the Board: If you make a play that clears the board, regardless of who picked up the cards, you may decide to reverse the colors.

Switching colors helps if your hand was really better for the other player; just hope your opponent didn't have the same problem.

Non-Sets: Two end caps right next to each other aren't long enough to constitute a set. They need at least one pipe section between them. (Note cards 4 and 6 in Figure 1.)

Two Sets at Once: If you close two sets of different color, you pick up your own cards first. Then, if there are any left of your opponent's set, he takes them. Picking up your own cards first doesn't break up the set you made for your opponent.

Winning:

After the deck is exhausted, players continue playing until their hands are empty. After the last card is played, count the cards in your score pile. The player who picked up more cards wins. (And a tie is a tie.)

Strategy:

To keep the advantage, you need to constantly establish threats. If you can't pick something up, get as close as you can. That way, your opponent will be too busy responding to your threats to establish any of his own.

Respond to your opponent's threats with splitters: cards that not only extend his systems, but give them more open ends.

Don't always try to score enormous systems of pipes. Usually you're better off establishing smaller, more easily finished sets.

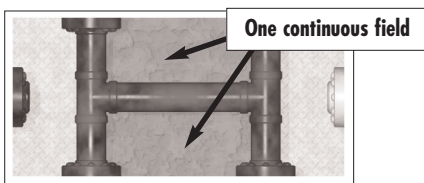
Use pillars to your advantage: there never seem to be enough end caps when you need them, but you can always make new ones by forming pillars. It's also possible to use empty space against your opponent, by playing free cards that make connections more difficult.

Version Two, Basic Fields (2 players)

There's plenty of strategy in Version 1 to keep you busy for hours. But when you're ready for a new challenge, try Version 2.

Version Two of the Pipe Game works almost exactly like Version One, except that you are trying to surround fields of one color with fields of the opposite color, instead of closing sets of pipes.

Take a look at the backgrounds behind the pipes. There are two different "colors," a light gray **steel floor**, and some dark, raised **stone platforms**. (You can't tell that the platforms are raised; just take our word for it.) These two textures are the "light" and "dark" fields.

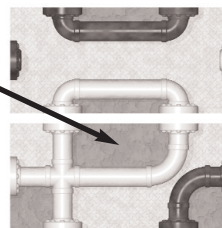


What's a Set of Fields? A closed set of fields is one which is entirely surrounded by fields of the opposite color. For example, a dark field which was surrounded by light fields would be "closed". Whoever was playing dark fields would pick up every card in that set, as shown below.

If the two fields on opposite sides of a pipe are the same color, that field is assumed to be continuous behind the pipe. Since they run behind the pipes, it's sometimes hard to tell exactly what shape the fields are. Just imagine that the border between two opposite fields runs right down the exact middle of the pipe. When two pipes cross, all four fields meet at the corners and are therefore unconnected.

A Closed Dark Field

The player who is dark fields will pick up both of these cards.



To test if a field is completely enclosed, imagine a little ball trying to roll around on the surface. If it comes to an edge, it stops; if it comes to a corner, it stops. The field is closed when the ball can't escape. Sort of like water escaping from a pipe. The dark field in the figure above is closed.

Construction Rules: For the most part, Version Two works exactly like Version One. Players try to make sets, and pick up sets in their own color. You're only scoring the fields, however, so sets of black and white pipes will stay on the table unclaimed.

You are still building by exactly the same rules. You can't join up mismatched pipes, but there's no added restriction for matching field colors; you can abut fields of different colors. Furthermore, no field set is so small that it can't be picked up: closed 1-card fields are legal.

If a pillar forms, the fields leading up to it are enclosed at that edge. Again, imagine the little ball. Card 4 in Figure 1 has a closed light field set, because of the pillar. Card 1 also has a closed light field set.

Strategy: You will probably notice that you are picking up smaller sets than you were in Version One, but more often. When playing fields, it's not uncommon to just play one card and pick it back up. Don't waste too much time trying to close off that huge, wandering field. Take it apart in little chunks.

Version Three, Pipes & Fields (2-4 pl.)

Since the building rules are the same for both pipes and fields, you can play a hybrid of the two, and include up to 4 players. But first, let's talk about the changes in the two-player game:

At the beginning of the game, player 1 has his choice of 4 colors: black or white pipes, and light or dark fields. Player 2 gets to choose from the three colors which remain. So, for example, one player might play white pipes, the other light fields. In that case, the black pipes and dark fields would remain unclaimed on the table.

If someone clears the board, that player gets the following choice: he can leave the colors the way they are, or choose a new color. If he opts to change colors, his opponent gets to pick from the remaining three, just like in the beginning.

Adding Players: In the 3- or 4-player version, player 1 chooses his color; then player 2 chooses from the remaining three colors, player 3 chooses from the two that are left, and player 4 (if there is one) is stuck with the last color. The game is short with only 4 players, so recycle the discards from the starting hands to add a little more to the deck.

Multiple Sets: If multiple colors of sets are closed off, the multi-player rule is this: first, the player who made the play takes whatever he can. He is followed by the player to his left, and so on around the table until everyone is accounted for.

Teams: You can also play the 4-player game in teams. Each player has a different color, but the team with the highest total score wins the game.

