

Reversi rules

The complete rules of Reversi, also sold as Othello. Two players, 64 squares, five rules.

1. Set the board up

Place four discs in the middle four squares. White on d4 and e5, black on d5 and e4, so the colours are diagonally opposite. Every other square starts empty. Black moves first.

2. Make a legal move

Put a disc on an empty square so that one or more of your opponent's discs sit in an unbroken line between your new disc and another disc of your own colour. The line can run across, down or diagonally. A move is legal only if it traps at least one disc.

3. Flip what you trapped

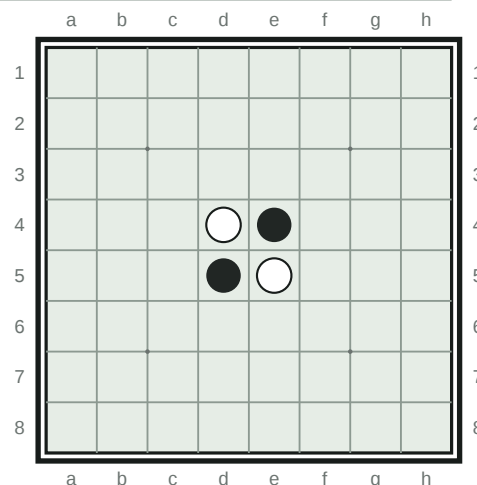
Every trapped disc turns to your colour. One move can trap lines in several directions at once, and all of them flip. Discs already on the board are never moved to another square.

4. Pass only when you must

If no square on the whole board would flip anything, you pass and your opponent plays again. You are not allowed to pass when you do have a legal move, and you rejoin as soon as one appears.

5. Finish and count

The game ends when neither player has a legal move, which is usually when all 64 squares are full. Count the discs. The player with more discs wins; an equal count is a draw. In tournament play any empty squares left over are given to the winner.



The starting position

Reading the board

Squares are named like a chessboard. Columns run a to h from left to right and rows run 1 to 8 from top to bottom, so the top left square is a1 and the bottom right is h8. A written game is just a run of square names: f5 d6 c3 d3 c4.

Three things beginners get wrong

- Grabbing discs early. Leading on discs in the middle of the game usually means you are losing.
- Playing b2, g2, b7 or g7 while that corner is empty. It normally hands the corner over.
- Forgetting that corners can never be flipped, so a corner disc is yours for the rest of the game.

Words you will hear

Corner	a1, h1, a8 and h8. A corner disc can never be flipped, so it is yours for the rest of the game.
X-square	b2, g2, b7 and g7, diagonally next to a corner. Playing one early usually gives the corner away.
Mobility	How many legal moves you have. More choices than your opponent beats more discs than your opponent.
Stable disc	A disc that can never flip again, usually because it is anchored to a corner or a full edge.