

Sim

How to Give the World a Headache with Just Six Dots

Sim takes its name from Gustavus Simmons, the Albuquerque mathematician who first analyzed the game. But its deeper origins lie in Ramsey Theory.

Frank Ramsey was born in 1903 and died in 1930. In his few, fruitful years, he advanced the fields of economic theory, probability theory, and logical paradox. In perhaps his most impressive feat of all, he befriended the philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein, who was, historians agree, totally unbearable. Yet the theory to which Ramsey lends his name deals, rather simply, with games of multicolor connect the dots. It asks questions of the form: *If I want to guarantee the presence of a certain shape, how many dots do I need?*

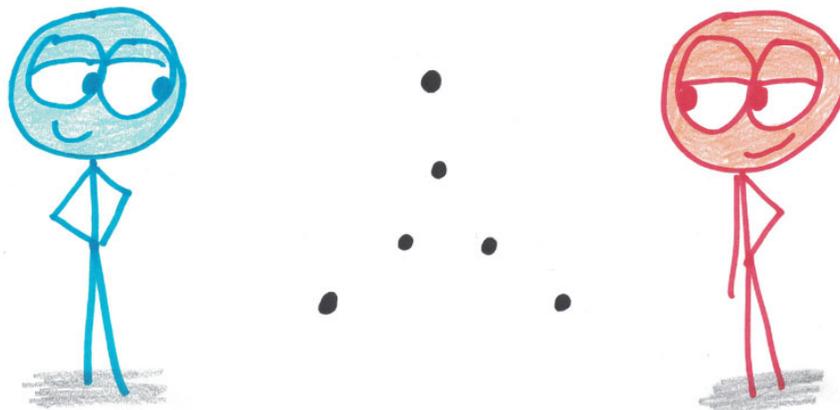
Sounds silly? Guilty as charged.

Sounds easy? Au contraire, my friend.

How to Play

How many players? Two.

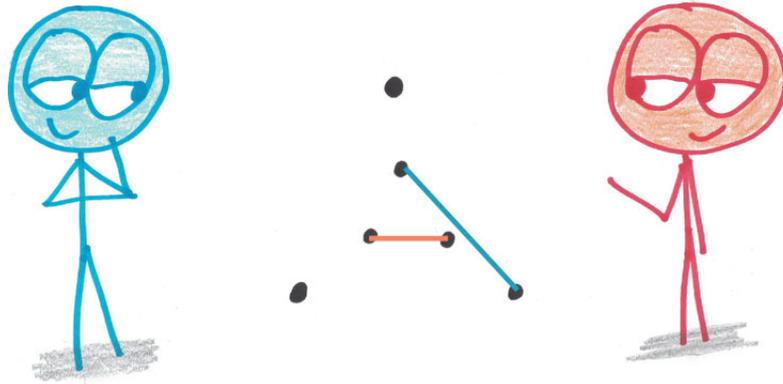
What do you need? Two colors of pen, and six dots drawn as below. (Aspirin optional; consult with your physician.)



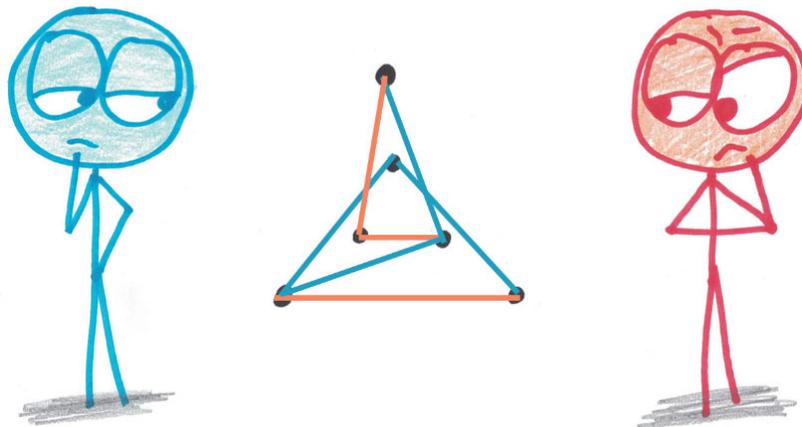
What's the goal? Force your opponent to create a triangle in their color before you create one in yours.

What are the rules?

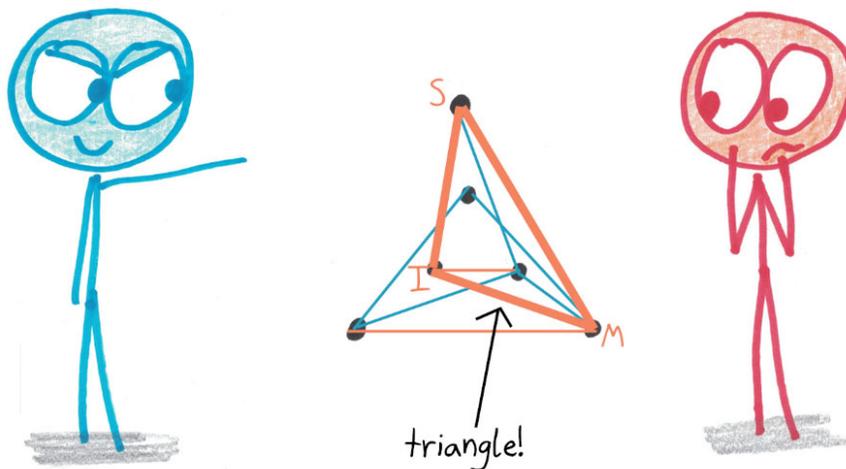
1. Each person picks a color. Then, take turns **connecting any two dots**.



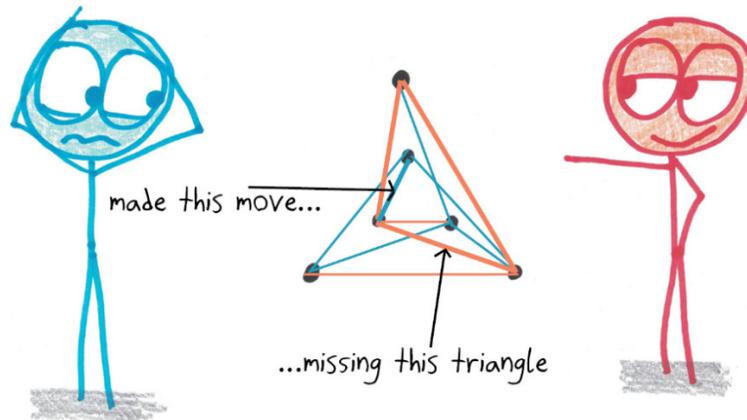
2. A few of the lines will crisscross. That's okay. Note that each dot will allow at most five connections, i.e., one to every other dot.



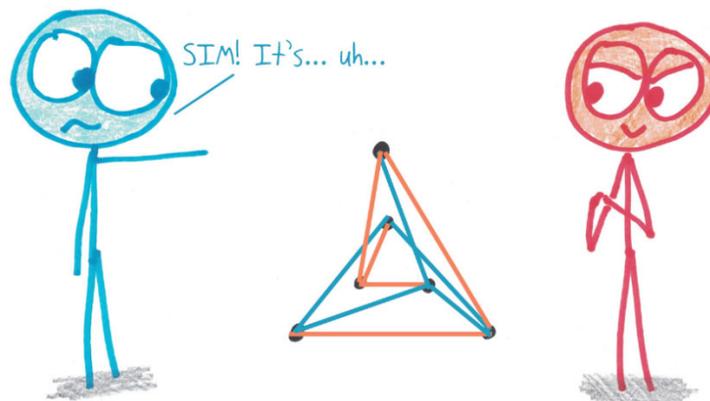
3. If your opponent **creates a triangle entirely in their color**, tap the three dots and spell S-I-M. Congratulations: you've won!



4. If you complete a triangle in your color, don't despair. If your opponent fails to notice it, and moves instead, **you can "steal" the victory by pointing the triangle out yourself.**

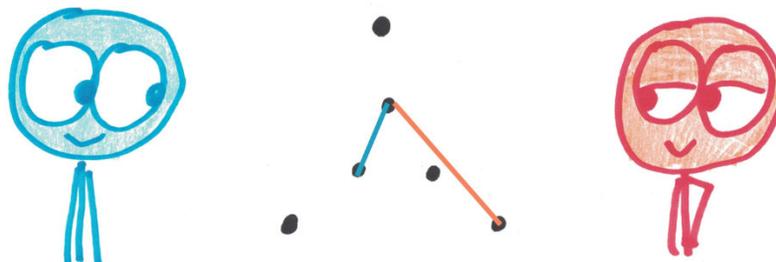


5. However, if you say "S-I-M" with no such one-color triangle present, **you immediately lose the game.**

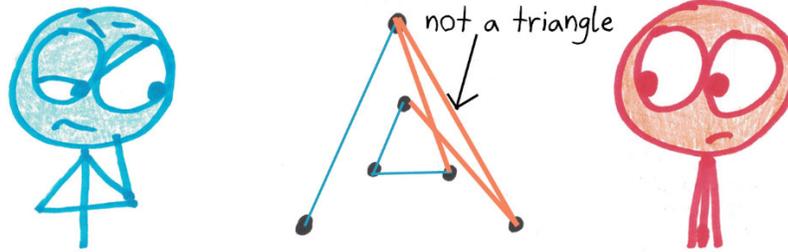


Tasting Notes

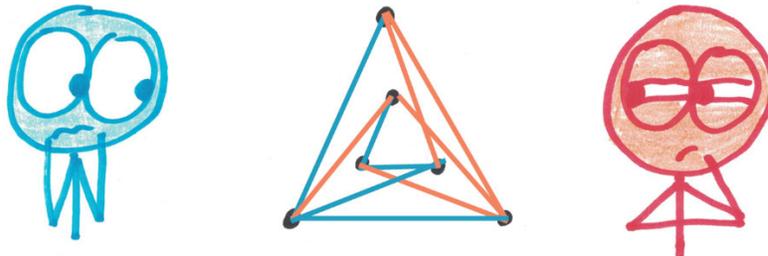
Syrupy sweet when it first hits the tongue, Sim soon develops the brooding complexity of an aged and intimidating wine. At the beginning, you see, there are plenty of places to move.



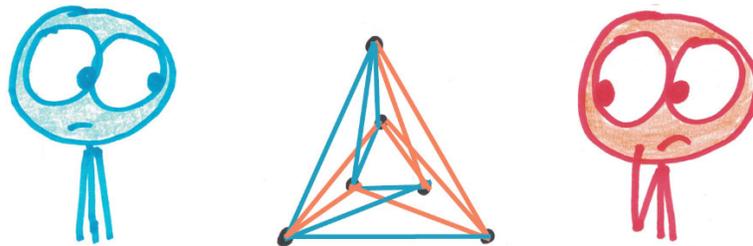
But soon, complications arise. For example, your board may become cluttered with “distractor” or “decoy” triangles. They *look* like triangles—because they are—but they don’t count for Sim. In Sim, a triangle only counts if its vertices are three of the original dots.



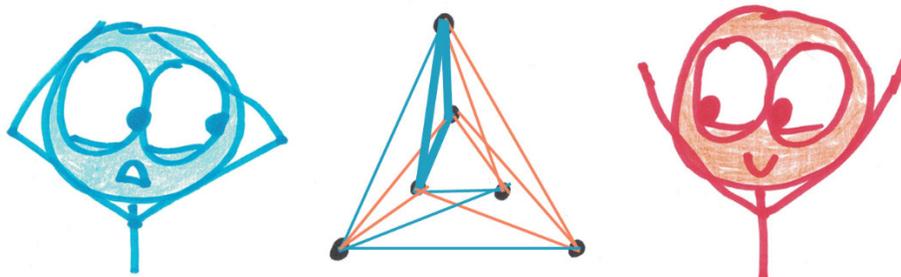
Before long, the game is a thicket of crossings. The six dots allow for 20 possible triangles; that’s a lot of traps to evade. You stare at the board with furious intensity, as if inspecting the world’s smallest crime scene.



On you go, tiptoeing through the game like a disposable character in a horror film, until... aha! Do you see it!



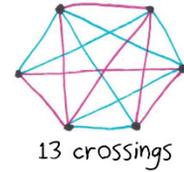
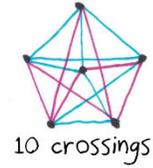
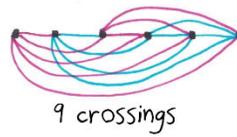
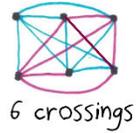
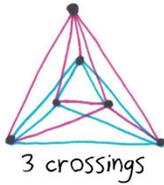
Blue has created a triangle. Here, I’ll highlight it:



I warned you. Six dots can get pretty tricky.

Variants

In the past, Sim has always been played on a hexagon. This book is, to my knowledge, the first to suggest the triangle-within-a-triangle arrangement of dots. Though mathematically identical, it has fewer crossings than any other six-dot formation, which means fewer “decoy” triangles.



The change was suggested by my father, Jim Orlin. This means you are obligated—by common courtesy if not yet by law—to call this version “Jim Sim.”