

Amazons

A Game of Vanishing Territory

Like a butterfly, a Pokémon, or the Leonard Cohen song “Hallelujah,” the game of Amazons needed a long time to reach its final form. The concept wound its way from a mathematical text (in the 1940s) to a *Scientific American* column (in the 1970s) to a German board game publisher (in the 1980s) and then at last to an Argentinian puzzle magazine (in the 1990s).

It was worth the wait.

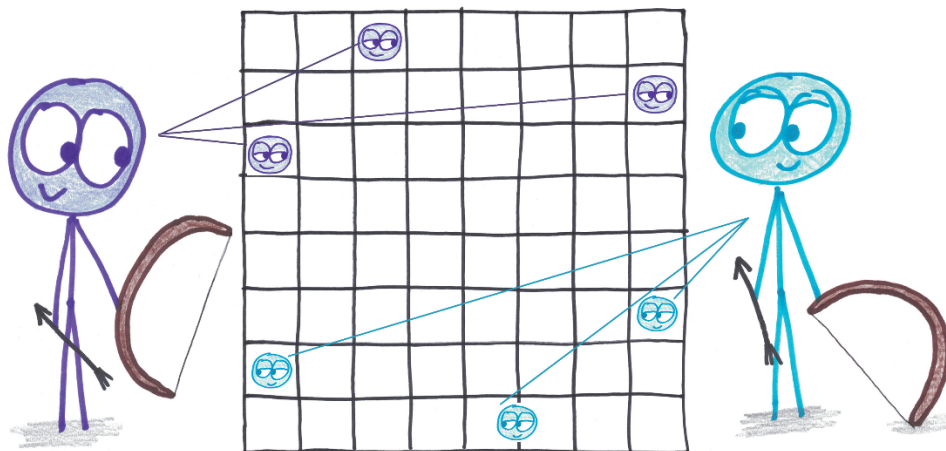
Amazons’ fans consider it a masterpiece, the perfect midpoint between games like Teeko (newbie-friendly, but lacking depth) and ones like Chess or Go (deep, but bogged down with specific tactics to memorize). Amazons is the best of both worlds, deep yet accessible, a combination game *par excellence*.

How to Play

What do you need? Two players, a chessboard, three black pieces, and three white pieces. The pieces are called “Amazons,” and move like queens (but feel free to use pawns).

You also need a collection of coins or counters for marking “destroyed” squares. Or, if you draw the 8-by-8 grid on paper, you can mark “destroyed” squares with a pen or pencil.

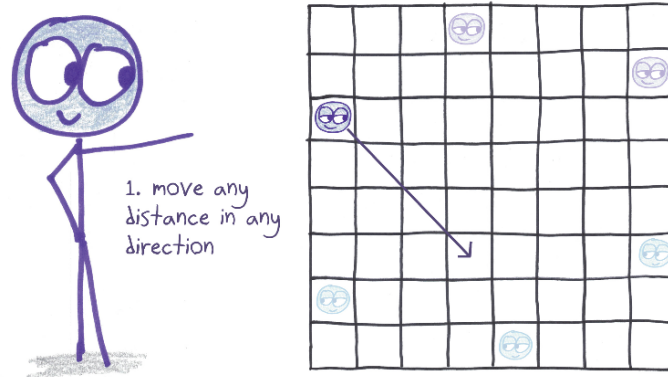
Either way, here’s how the six pieces begin:



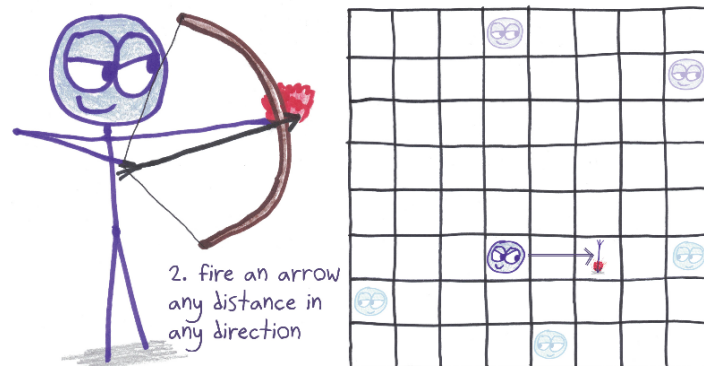
What’s the goal? Have the last Amazon left standing when the board’s destruction is complete.

What are the rules?

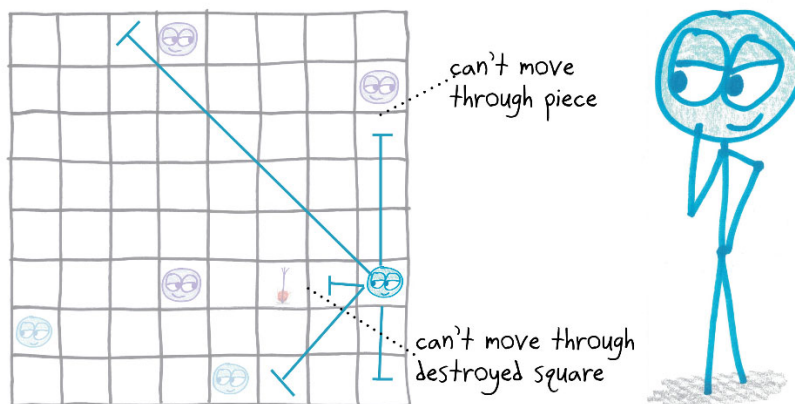
1. On each turn, select one of your Amazons, and move it as you would a queen in chess: **as far as you want in any direction**, including diagonals.



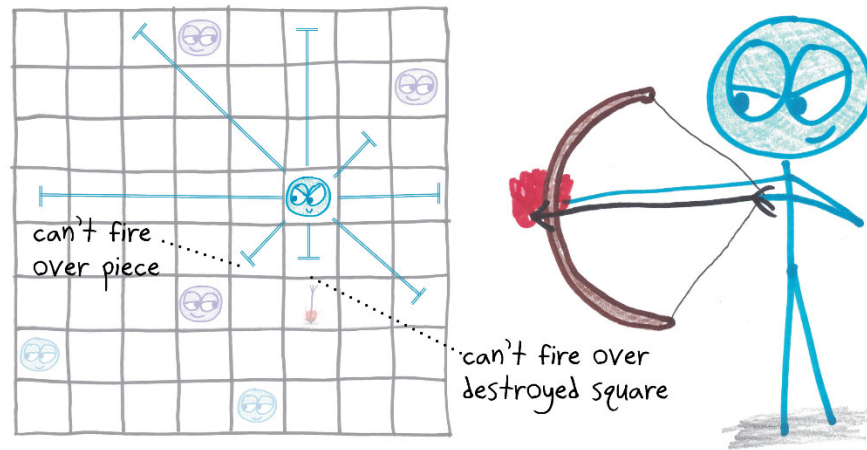
After moving, **your Amazon fires off a “burning arrow”** from its new location. This arrow also moves like a queen, and it destroys the square where it lands.



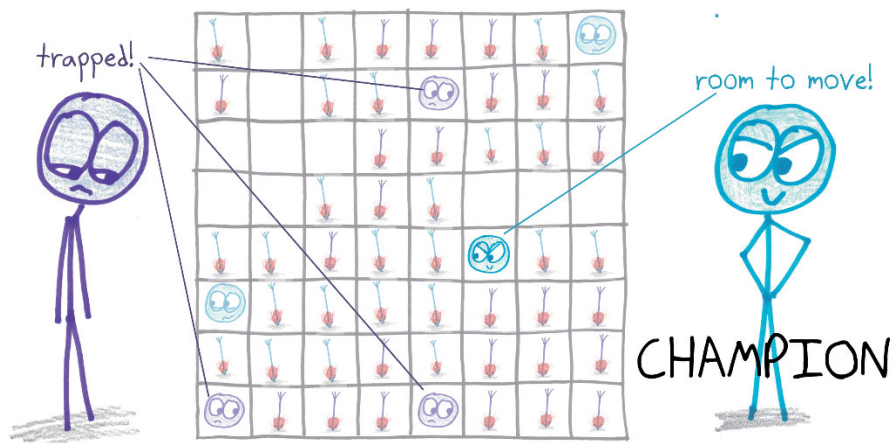
2. Continue in this manner. **Destroyed squares and all pieces act as insurmountable obstacles.** Thus, an amazon cannot move through them...



... and an arrow cannot be fired across them.

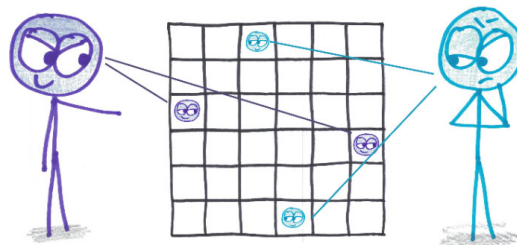


3. Eventually, the entire board will be destroyed or unreachable, leaving all the Amazons trapped. Whoever has the **last Amazon able to move** is the winner.

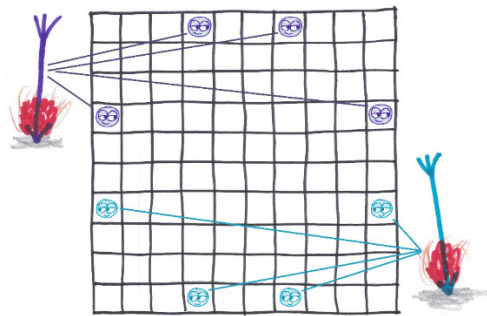


Variations

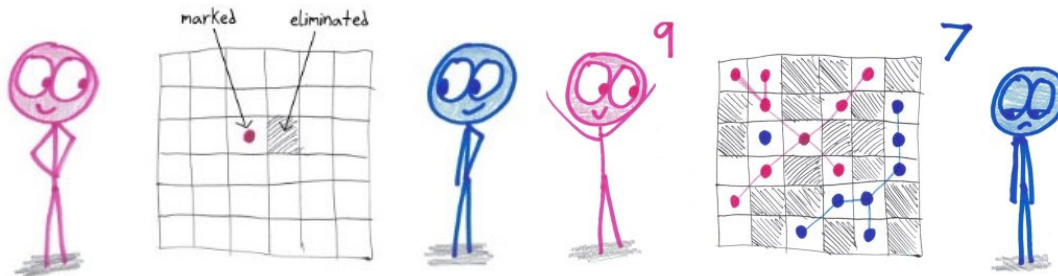
6-BY-6 AMAZONS: For a quicker game, play on a 6-by-6 board, with two pieces each, in the starting position below.



10-BY-10 AMAZONS: Longer and more involved than the 8-by-8 version, this is Amazons as Walter Zamkaskas originally published it. Begin from the starting position below.



COLLECTOR: Play on a 6-by-6 grid. On each turn, (1) mark any box you like, and (2) eliminate any empty neighboring box (including diagonals). Play until no more moves are possible; the winner is whoever creates the largest group of connected marks. Diagonals count. (By Walter Joris.)



QUADRAPHAGE: The great-grandparent of Amazons. More a family of puzzles than a game, but still good fun.

1. The first player begins with a piece (let's say a king) anywhere on the chessboard. On each turn, they **move the piece**.
2. The second player begins with a handful of coins. On each turn, they **place a coin on a square of their choice**, thereby marking it off-limits to the first player.
3. The first player, **upon escaping off the edge of the board, scores one point per coin** that has been played. If trapped and unable to escape, they score zero points.
4. After playing, **switch roles**. Whoever scores more points is the winner.

PFERDEÄPPEL: Each player controls a knight. They begin in opposite corners of an 8-by-8 chessboard. On each turn, move your knight, and place a marker on the square you just vacated, signifying that it can never be occupied again. Whoever captures the opposing knight (by landing on it) or traps it (by leaving it unable to move) is the winner.