BOOK 1



ZENDO

GETTING STARTED

HOW TO PLAY ZENDO

EQUIPMENT

- Pieces: 27 pyramids, 27 wedges, 27 blocks (9 per color)
- Tokens: 27 black disks, 27 white disks, 27 green cubes
- Rules: 40 cards, 2 clips, 2 instruction booklets

OVERVIEW

Zendo is an inductive logic game in which the players compete to figure out a secret rule. One person will moderate, providing answers to questions about the secret rule. Players take turns building new structures of game pieces, each of which will give them insights about the unknown attributes of the secret rule.

SETUP

Get out all the pieces and give each player two answering tokens, one black and one white. Choose one person to be the Moderator. This should be the most experienced Zendo player or the person who has read these rules.

SUMMARY OF PLAY

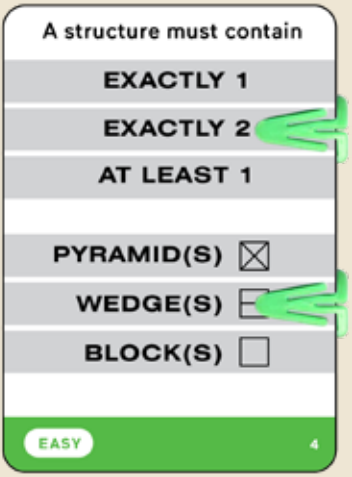
The Moderator begins by selecting a secret rule and marking the card with the provided clips. Always start with Easy cards when there are new players. The Moderator then creates the first two structures, using one or more pieces for each. One of these structures will follow the secret rule, and the other will not. If a structure follows the rule, it will be marked with a white token, and if not, it will be marked with a black token. Players will then take turns, each time building a new structure, finding out if it follows the rule or not, and optionally making a guess at the secret rule. But to make an official guess, players must spend "guessing tokens," which are earned by correctly predicting whether or not a new structure follows the secret rule.

GOAL

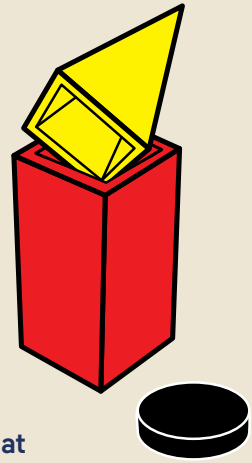
The first player to correctly guess the secret rule wins!

EXAMPLE

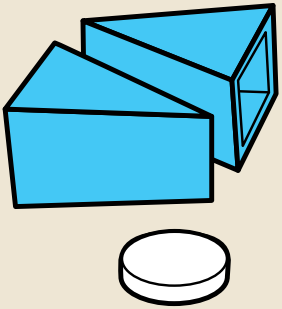
Suppose the Moderator chooses this rule card, and marks it as shown:



The correct answer will then be that a structure must contain exactly two wedges. The Moderator then builds and marks this pair of structures:



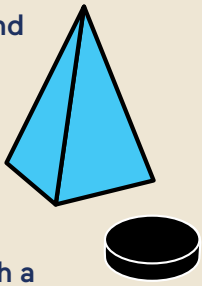
Next, the players will start formulating theories about what the rule could be.



Here are some of the possibilities the players might think of:

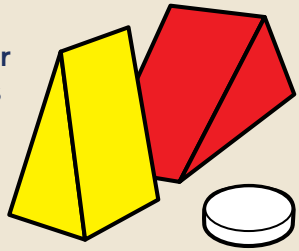
- Must contain only blue pieces.
- Must contain two pieces not touching.
- Must contain two pieces pointing in opposite directions.
- Must contain zero pyramids, or zero weird pieces.
- Must contain zero red pieces, or zero yellow pieces.
- Must contain at least one flat piece.

The first player creates this structure, and says "Tell":



It doesn't follow the rule, so the Moderator marks it with a black token.

Then the next player builds this structure, and says "Quiz."



After everyone guesses, the Moderator marks it with a white token.

TURN ORDER

Each player's turn has three phases:

1) Build a new structure
2) Choose "Tell" or "Quiz"
3) Make a guess, or pass

1) BUILD A NEW STRUCTURE

Create a new structure using one or more pieces from the global supply. Place it near the others, but not too near. You may arrange its pieces in any fashion, including leaning pieces against each other and stacked up in various ways.

2) CHOOSE "TELL" OR "QUIZ"

Tell: If you choose "Tell," the Moderator will mark your new structure with a white or black token to indicate whether your structure follows or does not follow the hidden rule.

Quiz: If you choose "Quiz," all players must guess whether your new structure follows the rule or not. Each player picks up their pair of answering tokens and hides their answer (black or white) in one fist. Hold that fist out over the playing field, and wait for everyone else to do the same. When everyone is ready, all will reveal their guesses. The Moderator will mark the structure with the correct answer, then they will award a guessing token to each player who answered the Quiz correctly.

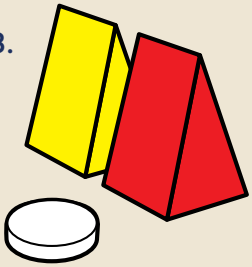
3) MAKE A GUESS, OR PASS

Payment Required: You can only make an official guess if you've earned a guessing token in a Quiz. You may choose to spend one or more guessing tokens to try to guess the Moderator's rule, or you can pass and save up your guesses for later. To make a guess, hand a guessing token to the Moderator, then state your guess as clearly as you can.

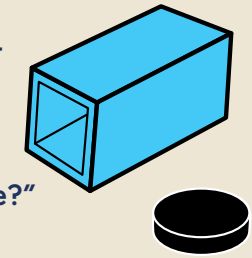
Clarify the Guess: If the Moderator does not fully understand your guess, or if it is ambiguous in some way, the Moderator will ask clarifying questions until the uncertainty has been resolved. Your guess is not considered to be official until both you and the Moderator agree that it is official. At any time before that, you may retract your guess and take back your token, or you may change your guess. If any structure on the table contradicts your

guess, the Moderator should point this out, and you may take back your token or change your guess. It is the Moderator's responsibility to make certain that a guess is unambiguous and is not contradicted by an existing structure. All players are encouraged to help the Moderator with this process.

Moderator Disproves Guess: After you and the Moderator agree upon an official guess, the Moderator will disprove it, if possible. The Moderator can disprove a guess in two ways: by building a structure which follows the rule but which your guess says does not, or by building a structure which does not follow the rule but which your guess says does.



Example: Consider the game shown on page 3. Suppose a player makes this guess: "The structure must contain at least one flat piece." The Moderator could disprove this guess in either of two ways: by building a structure, marked white, which contains no flat pieces, or by building a structure, marked black, that contains a flat piece. Either of these possibilities will show you that the guess is incorrect. A common exchange tends to occur when a Moderator sets up a counter-example:



Moderator: "According to your guess, would this structure follow the rule?"
Player: "Yes."
Moderator (marking the new structure with a black token): "Well, in fact, it does NOT follow the rule."

Option to Repeat: Once the Moderator has built a counter-example and marked it appropriately, you may spend another guessing token, if you have one, to take another guess. You may spend as many of your guessing tokens as you wish during this portion of your turn. When you are finished, the action passes to the next player.

HOW TO WIN

If the Moderator is unable to disprove your official guess, you win!

ADDITIONAL RULES

ALWAYS USE BOTH CLIPS

More than half of the rule cards feature two decision points for the Moderator to choose between before starting. Clips are used to "lock in" the exact details of each rule. But the Moderator must always attach both clips to the rule card, even if it has fewer than two choices, in order to avoid giving away any sort of clue about the secret rule. Note that rule cards with fewer than two choices have a spot labeled "decoy" as a reminder. Clips can be placed on either side of the card.

NO EMBELLISHMENTS

The Moderator must only consider the properties listed on the card. Follow the words on the card exactly. Do not change, add to, or embellish the rule as you play. (If you're feeling creative and wish to invent your own secret rules, please read the advice on page 12 of book 2, "Be Cafeful When Going Off-Card.")

BREAKING DOWN OLD STRUCTURES

As the game progresses and the table fills up with structures, specific pieces may become scarce. If you are building a new structure and the piece(s) you'd like to use are not available, tell everyone what you're looking for. The Moderator will choose a structure to break down to provide you with the parts you need. The Moderator will try to take into account the input of the players, who may have opinions about which structures are more important to keep intact.

MOVING STRUCTURES

Once a structure has been established, it's important for it never to be changed. If space is needed (either to help distinguish a structure from another, or to make room for new structures) then a structure may be moved, but only by the Moderator. If someone accidentally knocks over or disturbs a structure's pieces, it is up to the Moderator to restore the table to its previous state. There is no penalty for such an accident. The Moderator must make sure that any moved or rebuilt structures are as similar as possible to the way they had been before. No player is allowed to touch a structure after it's been marked.

NO OUTSIDE REFERENCES

Rules may not refer to anything outside of the structure itself. This "no outside references" rule includes things or people in the room, other structures on the table, time (especially the order in which things were done as the structure was being built), and the marking tokens. The structure should be able to be rotated or even moved to another room without affecting whether or not it follows the rule. There is one exception: the playing surface can be used as a reference point for groundedness and orientation.

EQUIVALENT SECRET RULES

Note that you win simply by guessing a rule that the Moderator is unable to disprove. This may or may not be the same rule the Moderator had chosen. For example, perhaps the secret rule was, "The structure must contain zero yellow pieces." A player can win the game with the guess, "The structure must contain only red and/or blue pieces." These two secret rules are not stated in the same way, but are identical in effect.

GOING DEEPER

At this point, you should have enough information to get started, but as you continue to play Zendo, you will need to know more. When you are ready, check out Book 2, "Going Deeper," for:

- Attribute Definitions
- Advice for Players
- Advice for Moderators
- Playing with Two
- Historical Notes

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Zendo Turn Summary

- Build a New Structure
- Choose "Tell" or "Quiz"
- Guess the Rule, or Pass

Attribute Possibilites

(not a complete list)

Color:

- blue
- yellow
- red

Shape:

- pyramid
- wedge
- block

Quantity:

- zero
- at least 1
- exactly 1
- exactly 2
- exactly 3

Orientation:

- flat
- vertical
- upright
- upside-down
- weird

Interaction:

- touching / not touching
- grounded / ungrounded
- pointing / not pointing
- one on top of another
- more of a certain type

See Book 2 for full definitions

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