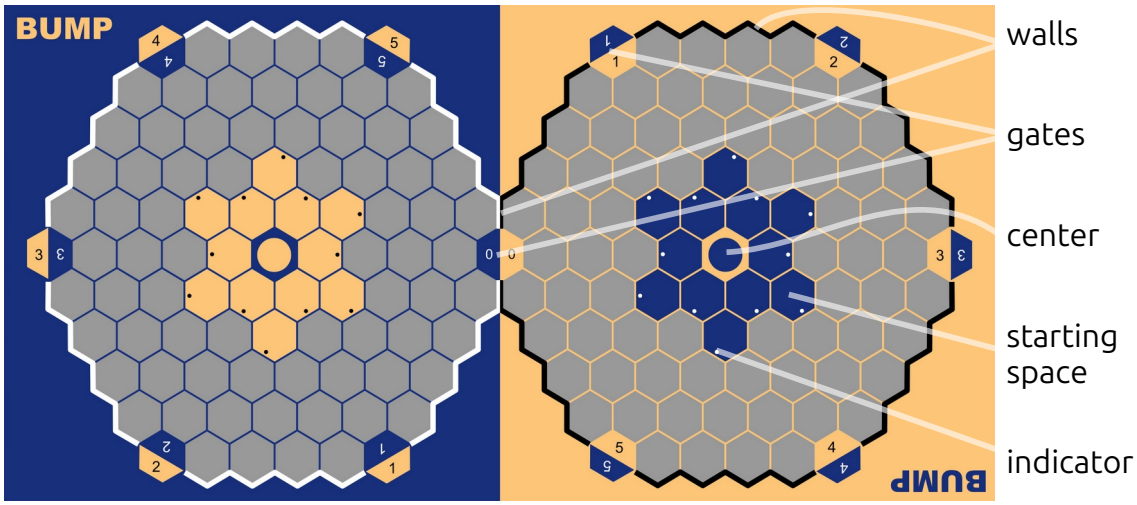
Bump

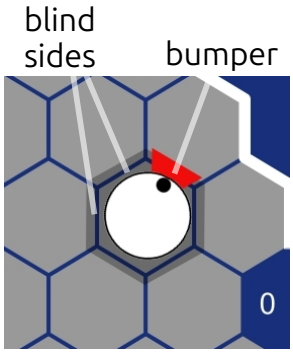
Bump is an abstract strategy game for two players. Pieces are moved and interact in a novel way with other pieces and the board, as each player attempts to occupy their opponent's center.

The Board

The board is divided into two areas, which are further divided into hexagonal spaces. The areas are separated by walls, and connected by gates. In the middle of an area is the center space for that player, and surrounding this are starting spaces with indicators.



Pieces



Each piece must clearly occupy one space at a time, and this can only be changed by shifting. A piece's bumper must point clearly to one side of the space, and this can only be changed by rotating.

The five sides of a piece without a bumper are its blind sides.

Set-up and Play

A player sets up their 12 pieces on the starting spaces around their center, each bumper facing the same side as the indicator. The players decide who will take the first turn, either randomly or by agreement. The players then alternate taking turns until the game ends in a victory or a draw.

Turns

Your turn consists of three phases: The victory phase, the movement phase, and the bump phase.

Victory

During this phase, if one of your pieces occupies your opponent's center, then you win the game. Alternatively, one player may resign, or the players may agree to a draw at this time, especially if neither side is able to make progress.

Movement

You're not required to move during this phase. If you choose to move, you are given up to three points to move one piece. Not all of these points must be spent. When you’re done moving that piece, go on the bump phase.

Shifting

A point can be spent shifting the piece to an empty space in any direction. As long as you have points left, you may shift the piece again. Shifting does not change a piece’s facing.

A piece can't be shifted into or through a space containing another piece, or its own center, and can't be shifted through a wall side.

If one of your pieces occupied your opponent's center at the end of your last turn, then none of your pieces can be shifted into or through their center this turn.

Rotating

If you didn’t use them all shifting, then you can use any remaining points to rotate the piece. Each facing change by one side takes one point.

Once you are done moving the piece, you lose any unspent points and then move on to your bump phase.

Bumping

If your movement phase resulted in one piece's bumper facing the blind side of an adjacent piece, that first piece bumps the adjacent piece, regardless of the color of the pieces. The bumped piece is shifted one space directly away from the bumping piece.

Bumper to bumper

When two pieces are adjacent and their bumpers face each other they are stable. If either is bumped into the other, it is captured.

Bump sequence

Any bump may result in a sequence. If a bump shifts a piece so that further bumps are created, resolve the subsequent bumps as well.

Option

If a piece is being bumped simultaneously by two or more pieces, you decide which bump is actually resolved.

Bumping before being bumped

If a piece is simultaneously bumping one piece and being bumped by another, resolve the bumping, and any resulting sequence, before returning to resolve where it is bumped to.

Capturing

A piece cannot be shifted in a way that is prohibited during movement. If such a bump is resolved, the bumped piece is captured instead.

Stasis

When a piece is bumped in a sequence that repeats three time, that piece is captured in stasis.

Stability

If no bumps remain to be resolved, the board is stable and the turn passes to the other player.

Walls

The areas are separated by walls, shown as thicker lines on the board. A piece can't be shifted through a wall side, and does not bump a piece on the other side of a wall.

Gates

Each gate is represented on the board twice (except for gate 0). The two parts of a gate are treated as the same space for all intents and purposes. A piece in a gate is placed in the area to which its bumper faces.

When a piece is being transferred from one part of a gate to the other, it doesn't cost a movement point, and the player announces "transfer" as they place the piece into the other part of the gate. The piece's facing is maintained when transferred.

A piece can be shifted into or out of a gate. The piece may be shifted further into the other area if the player has points left.

A piece can be bumped into or out of a gate. Determine which direction the bump is coming from and then shift the bumped piece directly away from that side, transferring the piece first if needed.

The Center

If at the end of your bump phase you have a piece in the opposing center, you announce, "Guard your center." This tells the other player that they have their turn to find a way to bump the piece out.

Reinforcements

If the players want to have a longer game, or if one player is more experienced, one or both sides can have up to three pieces in reserve.

To bring on a reinforcement, you place it during movement instead of moving a piece. The reinforcement must come on in any of its starting spaces, with any facing you choose, as long as it doesn't result in any bumps.

Bumping Examples

Foreseeing the potential bumping implications for more than one move in advance presents a challenge. If you're familiar with the possibilities, they will be easier to spot and anticipate. These are some of the ideas that we have given names:

Bump chain

If a piece is bumped to a space where it then bumps another piece, it's called a bump chain.

Bump ladder

If a piece is bumped to a space where it is then bumped again, the piece is being passed along by a bump ladder.

Double bump chain

If two or more pieces are one space apart with their bumpers aligned in the same direction, another piece can be moved in between, also with the same facing. This creates a first chain, before returning to resolve a second chain, and it results in the forward-most piece being shifted two spaces.

Multiple Captures

It's possible, though rare, for a bump phase to result in more than one piece being captured.

Partial Stasis

This illustrates an interesting feature of the option rule. If a piece is being bumped in what could be a repeating pattern, it may be in a position to cycle through the spaces, possibly triggering other bump sequences along the way. Then during the second repetition, there may be another bump to choose that breaks the repeating cycle, sparing the piece from stasis capture.

Luring

You may be able to occupy the opposing center, with other pieces in position to capture a defender that moves to bump the occupier out. Luring is a standard end game tactic.

Strategy

Bump offers unique challenges in trying to formulate a plan of action. These are some ideas that will help get you started.

General Strategy

Early in the game, your position is cramped. Pieces crowded in the middle of your area are vulnerable to capture against each other and against your center. Thus, early moves should be to gain space for your pieces.

You should then prepare to invade your opponent's area a quickly as possible and conduct a coordinated attack in an effort to win. Such an attack has a better chance of success with multiple invaders from a variety of directions.

Some defenders should be left in safe positions poised to bump an invader out of your center if possible, and also to potentially threaten invaders.

Attacking

If you invade with one piece without other pieces in position to support it, your opponent will be able to threaten the invader and simultaneously defend by gaining space and possibly approaching gates. At least one other piece should be in position to come through to coordinate in the attack. Pieces coming through adjacent gates can make tactical sense if you time it right, but without specific justification, coming through widely separated gates will be more flexible.

Keep an eye out for moves that threaten more than one capture. Such moves can be hard to counter, and even if the defender saves all of the threatened pieces, you may emerge with a positional advantage.

When your opponent is set up to respond to captures, you can look for a move to bump the opponent's pieces out of position to defend, or you can bring in another attacker.

Be conscious of the full consequences of a capture. An exchange may not be advisable. Losing an invader in which you've invested two or more moves can be more costly for you than losing a defender is for them, so try to keep your attackers on the board.

Keep track of how many pieces have been captured. In some situations it can be worth it to sacrifice a piece for the attack, possibly even more, but you should have a clear way to attack their center as a result.

Try to get pieces in safe spaces close to the opponent's center, both to be ready to occupy it, and to screen other invaders' blind sides. They can also make bumping you out of the center more difficult. Be aware that your own pieces can potentially be used to bump out your invaders when they occupy the center. Use your opponent's center when possible to help keep your invaders safe.

Don't just occupy the center because you can, even if your occupying piece is safe from immediate capture. Have a good reason to do so. It’s usually worth it if by doing so you bump a piece out of position to defend their center. It's often a better idea to get pieces in position to take advantage of luring when you are ready.

Defending

The first defensive objective is getting space for your pieces. It may be possible to safely leave some pieces adjacent to your center, to capture an occupier against. Other defenders should have space between them and the center, and be positioned so as to permit each to cover multiple sides of your center.

Be aware of the gates your opponent is threatening to come through. Anticipate threats and make the moves that will neutralize those threats before they happen.

The number of defenders to keep in position around your center should depend on the number of attackers and pieces in position to become attackers. Usually, three defenders should be a minimum, unless your opponent is just not threatening to come through into your area.

When you have multiple pieces being threatened, there may be ways to save all of them. You might for example move a threatened piece so that it covers the blind side of another threatened piece. You might also move so that the pieces are bumped into safer positions.

Another possibility is to ignore the immediate threat, and instead move to threaten a counter-capture. If this can lead to an exchange, remember the high value of their attackers, but also the minimum number of defenders you need.

It's possible that no sufficient defense will present itself. You may need to press your attack in their area, which you will be aiming to do anyway, hoping to gain time or distract them, and hopefully win.

Distant threats

A piece can be in jeopardy even when it's not adacent to the wall, a piece or its center. This can happen by double bump chain or by stasis. These moves can be hard to spot, especially if the threat is from a piece in the other area coming through.

The threat doesn’t need to be a capture. You can use long-range tactics to create positional advantages or long-term threats.

Skirmishing

A piece may be kept as a defender, ready to bump an occupying piece out of your center, or it may instead head straight for a gate and become an invader quickly. A third option is to threaten invaders in your area, against walls or other pieces. Be careful you don't strand your pieces, where they can neither invade nor defend.

Challenging a gate

When your opponent moves to challenge a gate you have already approached, you can of course ignore it and make a move elsewhere. If you do decide to respond, there are two main choices: passing through; and occupying.

When you pass through, you will have to choose a side of their piece to do it on. You usually want to pass on the left side, to avoid being captured by a starting piece. As the position evolves, you may see that the right side has become safe.

If you occupy the gate, you can stay, responding to each bump by moving back in again and turning to face the opposing piece. Unless they want to settle for a draw, they will eventually have to stop bumping you out. You can then wait until the right time to move further into their area.

Two of your opponent's pieces can get your piece out of the gate, but the time it takes can be used to pursue your attack or improve your defense.

Rapid development

Double bump development can be used if your opponent allows it. You can keep a piece facing out from your center, then feed a chain through the gate. The defender can guard against it by challenging that gate, but as the game progresses, the chain may become available again if the challenging piece is moved. Be careful, as pieces nearby can be vulnerable to being capture if bumped between two of the chain pieces.

Endgame

Moved properly, one of your opponent's pieces can defend their center against two of your attackers, so be careful not to allow your potential attackers to fall below three unless you can win right away by doing so.

A well-played game will probably result in a race to reduce your opposition so that, no matter which direction they bump your piece out from, you can respond by capturing a defender. Of course they will be trying to do the same in your area.

You can also use pieces to screen sides of their center so that when you do occupy it, your opponent has fewer options for bumping you out.

Notation

Games can be recorded and positions represented by using a notation system.

Each space has a designation. Each center is represented by a capital C, and others spaces are numbered.

Any gate is on an axis between the two centers, and spaces along that axis have two numbers. The first number denotes the axis, and the second is numbered from 1 to 9, counting up from the space adjacent to the first player's center. Thus, the gate is the 5th space along the axis, and the space adjacent to the second player's center is the 9th space.

If there is a third number, then count that many spaces from the axis, to the right and outward from the center of the area the space is in.

When signifying a move, include the space the piece starts in, followed by a comma, then the destination space, appended by a hyphen and the new facing if needed.

When a bump option must be shown, also include in parentheses a chosen destination space.