



OFFICIAL RULEBOOK

Asymmetric fantasy strategy on modular dungeon boards

2–4
PLAYERS

30–120
min
MINUTES

12+
AGE

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WHAT IS DUNGEON CHESS?

Dungeon Chess is an asymmetric strategy board game for 2–4 players. Four fantasy factions — each with unique abilities — battle on modular dungeon maps with terrain hazards. Players draft armies from a shared XP budget, then fight to capture the enemy King.

Core differences from standard chess:

- ♦ **Asymmetric armies** — each faction has unique unit abilities, not just reskinned pieces
- ♦ **XP drafting** — build your army from a budget, choosing quantity vs quality
- ♦ **King capture wins** — no checkmate; you must actually take the King
- ♦ **Terrain** — water blocks movement; voids create chokepoints; gaps affect diagonal slides
- ♦ **Cannon attacks** — some units attack at range using the XiangQi screen mechanic
- ♦ **Split move/attack** — some units move in one pattern but attack in another

THE FOUR FACTIONS

Each faction has 6 unit types corresponding to chess roles (Pawn, Castle, Knight, Bishop, Queen, King). Every faction plays differently.

HUMAN — BALANCED & RELIABLE

Heroes, knights and archers. No gimmicks, no weaknesses. Cheap Knight (12 XP), premium Archer that pierces through pieces, and a Wizard with asymmetric threat zones. The Princess is the most mobile King. You always know what you're getting.

UNDEAD — PHASE & SWARM

1 XP Skeletons let you field massive armies, but each dies to any adjacent touch. The Wraith moves with gaps and attacks with full slides, the Tomb phases through allies, and the Vampire moves diagonally but attacks orthogonally. Slippery, numerous, fragile.

REDSKIN — EXPLOSIVE FIREPOWER

Every unit hits hard but costs dearly. Cannon-equipped Pawns and Castles, a hit-and-run Salamander, and the Demonics — which explodes on death, taking adjacent enemies with it. Iron Golem is immune to enemy cannons. Fewer units, bigger impact per piece.

GREENSKIN — ATTRITION & DISRUPTION

Goblins and Orcs backed by disruptive abilities. The Ogre freezes adjacent enemy Pawns. The Troll survives its first death. The Shaman can immobilise a key target. The Orc has flexible movement. Designed to grind opponents down and control the tempo.

UNIT ROSTER

All units, organised by chess role. XP cost shown in brackets.

PAWNS

UNIT	FACTION	COST	MOVEMENT	ATTACK	SPECIAL
Hero	Human	2 XP	1 square, any direction (8-way)	Same as movement (8-way)	—
Skeleton	Undead	1 XP	1 square, any direction (8-way)	Same as movement (8-way)	Fragile: any adjacent enemy can capture it (auto-capture)
Kobold	Redskin	5 XP	1 square, any direction (8-way)	8-way (1 sq) + Cannon (rook line)	—
Goblin	Greenskin	5 XP	1 square, any direction (8-way)	8-way (1 sq) + Cannon (rook line)	—

All Pawns cannot step on water. Kobold and Goblin have an additional cannon attack along rook lines (must jump over exactly one piece to hit an enemy beyond). Skeletons cost only 1 XP but are fragile — any enemy adjacent to a Skeleton can capture it regardless of that enemy's normal attack pattern.

CASTLES

UNIT	FACTION	COST	MOVEMENT	ATTACK	SPECIAL
Stronghold	Human	10 XP	1 square orthogonally	Rook slide (unlimited orthogonal)	—
Tomb	Undead	12 XP	1 square orthogonally	1 sq ortho + Phasing rook slide	Phase: slides through one friendly piece, then attacks beyond it
Iron Golem	Redskin	18 XP	1 square orthogonally	Cannon (rook line)	Cannon-proof: cannot be targeted by cannon attacks
Ogre	Greenskin	14 XP	1 square orthogonally	Cannon (rook line)	Intimidate: adjacent enemies cannot attack

Stronghold moves cautiously but attacks along full rook lines. Tomb can phase through a friendly piece and attack beyond it. Iron Golem is a fortress immune to enemy cannons. Ogre paralyses all adjacent enemies — not just Pawns.

KNIGHTS

UNIT	FACTION	COST	MOVEMENT	ATTACK	SPECIAL
Knight	Human	12 XP	L-shaped jump (2+1)	Same as movement	—
Reaper	Undead	15 XP	L-shaped jump (2+1)	Same as movement	—
Salamander	Redskin	18 XP	L-shaped jump (2+1)	Same as movement	Retreat: after capturing, must move 1 square to an adjacent empty square
Orc	Greenskin	14 XP	L-shaped jump (2+1) OR 2 squares orthogonally	Same as movement	Flexible: can also move/attack 2 squares straight (first square must be empty)

All Knights leap over pieces and terrain (including water). Human Knight is cheap and reliable. Salamander must retreat after capturing — it cannot stay on the capture square. Orc has two movement modes for unpredictable positioning.

BISHOPS

UNIT	FACTION	COST	MOVEMENT	ATTACK	SPECIAL
Archer	Human	18 XP	Diagonal slide	Gapped diagonal (exactly 1 empty square between)	Ranged: attacks at distance — must have one empty square gap to target
Wraith	Undead	15 XP	Gapped bishop (1 empty square gap to destination)	Diagonal slide (unlimited)	Inverted: moves with gap, attacks without
Fire Elem.	Redskin	12 XP	Diagonal slide	Diagonal slide	—
Troll	Greenskin	16 XP	Diagonal slide	Diagonal slide	Thick-skinned: first hit wounds + pushes 1 sq backward; second hit captures

Archer attacks from a distance — exactly one empty square between it and the target. Wraith is inverted: moves gapped, attacks with full slides. Fire Elem. is cheap but water-blocked. Troll survives its first hit, pushed backward and only falling to the second.

QUEENS

UNIT	FACTION	COST	MOVEMENT	ATTACK	SPECIAL
Wizard	Human	20 XP	Rook slide (orthogonal)	Bishop slide (diagonal)	Split: moves orthogonally, attacks diagonally
Vampire	Undead	20 XP	Bishop slide (diagonal)	Rook slide (orthogonal)	Split: moves diagonally, attacks orthogonally
Demonics	Redskin	22 XP	Queen slide (all 8 directions)	Queen slide	Volatile: on death, explodes — destroys all adjacent enemy pieces
Shaman	Greenskin	20 XP	Queen slide (all 8 directions)	Queen slide	Hex: once per game, hex any enemy unit — target cannot move/attack for 2 turns

Wizard and Vampire have asymmetric threat zones — the directions they can move and attack are opposite. Demonics is expensive but its death explosion can swing the game. Shaman’s one-time hex can neutralise a key enemy at a critical moment. Both Demonics and Shaman are water-blocked.

KINGS

UNIT	FACTION	COST	MOVEMENT	ATTACK	BONUS
Princess	Human	15 XP	King step (1 sq, 8-way) + Bishop slide	King step only (1 sq, 8-way)	Mobile: diagonal slides for repositioning only
Warlock	Undead	20 XP	King step (1 sq, 8-way)	King step + Bishop slide	Ranged: attacks along diagonal lines
Red Dragon	Redskin	20 XP	King step (1 sq, 8-way)	King step + Knight jump	Strikes via L-shaped leap
Warlord	Greenskin	15 XP	King step (1 sq, 8-way)	King step + Knight jump	Strikes via L-shaped leap

Every King has a unique bonus ability beyond its basic 1-step move. Princess can slide diagonally for repositioning but only captures adjacent. Warlock and Red Dragon/Warlord have extended attack ranges. Kings are royal — lose yours and you lose the game.

HUMAN

HERO

2 XP

PAWN

MOVE 1 sq, any direction

ATTACK Same as move

TERRAIN *Blocked by water*

STRONGHOLD

10 XP

CASTLE

MOVE 1 sq orthogonal

ATTACK Rook slide (unlimited)

TERRAIN *Blocked by water*

KNIGHT

12 XP

KNIGHT

MOVE L-shaped jump (2+1)

ATTACK Same as move

TERRAIN *Leaps over water*

ARCHER

18 XP

BISHOP

MOVE Diagonal slide

ATTACK Gapped diagonal (1 empty sq gap)

SPECIAL *Ranged — attacks from distance*

WIZARD

20 XP

QUEEN

MOVE Rook slide (orthogonal)

ATTACK Bishop slide (diagonal)

SPECIAL *Split — moves and attacks differ*

PRINCESS

15 XP

KING

MOVE 1 sq any + bishop slide

ATTACK 1 sq only (no slide capture)

SPECIAL *Mobile — slides to reputation*

UNDEAD

SKELETON

1 XP

PAWN

MOVE 1 sq, any direction

ATTACK Same as move

SPECIAL *Fragile — dies to any adjacent enemy*

TOMB

12 XP

CASTLE

MOVE 1 sq orthogonal

ATTACK Phasing rook slide

SPECIAL *Phases through 1 friendly piece*

REAPER

15 XP

KNIGHT

MOVE L-shaped jump (2+1)

ATTACK Same as move

TERRAIN *Leaps over water*

WRAITH

15 XP

BISHOP

MOVE Gapped bishop (1 sq gap)

ATTACK Bishop slide (unlimited)

SPECIAL *Inverted — moves gapped, attacks full*

VAMPIRE

20 XP

QUEEN

MOVE Bishop slide (diagonal)

ATTACK Rook slide (orthogonal)

SPECIAL *Split — moves and attacks differ*

WARLOCK

20 XP

KING

MOVE 1 sq any direction

ATTACK 1 sq + bishop slide

SPECIAL *Ranged diagonal attack*

REDSKIN

KOBOLD

5 XP

PAWN

MOVE	1 sq, any direction
ATTACK	1 sq + Cannon (rook line)
SPECIAL	<i>Cannon — ranged rook attack</i>

IRON GOLEM

18 XP

CASTLE

MOVE	1 sq orthogonal
ATTACK	Cannon (rook line)
SPECIAL	<i>Cannon-proof — immune to cannons</i>

SALAMANDER

18 XP

KNIGHT

MOVE	L-shaped jump (2+1)
ATTACK	Same as move
SPECIAL	<i>Retreat — must move 1 sq after capture</i>

FIRE ELEM.

12 XP

BISHOP

MOVE	Diagonal slide
ATTACK	Same as move
TERRAIN	<i>Blocked by water</i>

DEMONICS

22 XP

QUEEN

MOVE	Queen slide (all 8 dirs)
ATTACK	Same as move
SPECIAL	<i>Volatile — explodes on death</i>

RED DRAGON

20 XP

KING

MOVE	1 sq any direction
ATTACK	1 sq + knight jump
SPECIAL	<i>Extended attack — L-shaped reach</i>

GREENSKIN

GOBLIN

5 XP

PAWN

MOVE	1 sq, any direction
ATTACK	1 sq + Cannon (rook line)
SPECIAL	<i>Cannon — ranged rook attack</i>

OGRE

14 XP

CASTLE

MOVE	1 sq orthogonal
ATTACK	Cannon (rook line)
SPECIAL	<i>Intimidate — adj enemies can't attack</i>

ORC

14 XP

KNIGHT

MOVE	L-jump OR 2 sq orthogonal
ATTACK	Same as move
SPECIAL	<i>Flexible — two movement modes</i>

TROLL

16 XP

BISHOP

MOVE	Diagonal slide
ATTACK	Same as move
SPECIAL	<i>Thick-skinned — survives first hit</i>

SHAMAN

20 XP

QUEEN

MOVE	Queen slide (all 8 dirs)
ATTACK	Same as move
SPECIAL	<i>Hex — immobilize enemy 2 turns (1/game)</i>

WARLORD

15 XP

KING

MOVE	1 sq any direction
ATTACK	1 sq + knight jump
SPECIAL	<i>Extended attack — L-shaped reach</i>

THE CANNON MECHANIC

Kobolds, Goblins, Iron Golems, and Ogres have cannon attacks — a ranged capture mechanic borrowed from XiangQi (Chinese Chess).

How it works:

- ♦ The cannon attacks along rook lines (straight orthogonal).
- ♦ It must pass over exactly ONE piece (the “screen”) between itself and the target.
- ♦ The screen can be friendly or enemy — it just needs to exist.
- ♦ Without a screen piece in the line, the cannon cannot capture.
- ♦ Water squares are skipped (not treated as blockers for cannon lines).
- ♦ The cannon jumps over the screen and lands on the target’s square (same as XiangQi).

Example: A Kobold on a1 wants to capture an enemy on a5. There must be exactly one piece on a2, a3, or a4 (the screen). If the line is empty or has two pieces between them, the cannon cannot fire.

TERRAIN

Dungeon maps use three terrain types:

FLOOR (NORMAL)

Standard passable squares. No restrictions.

WATER

- ♦ Most units CANNOT step onto or slide through water squares.
- ♦ Knights CAN leap over water (their jump ignores terrain).
- ♦ Tomb phasing ignores water (slides through it).
- ♦ Cannon lines skip over water (ranged attacks are not blocked by water).
- ♦ Placed as 4×4 blocks in the centre of maps.

VOID

- ♦ Off-board squares. Cannot be entered by any unit.
- ♦ Creates the dungeon's corridors and chokepoints.
- ♦ All sliding pieces stop at void boundaries — voids block slides for every unit equally.

DRAFTING

ARMY DRAFTING

Before each game, players secretly build their army from an XP budget. Draft on paper or use the companion app — reveal your army only at deployment.

Budget: 80 XP

Constraints:

- ♦ Must include exactly 1 King
- ♦ Must include at least 1 Pawn
- ♦ Your army must fit within your deployment zone (varies by map)
- ♦ Duplicates are allowed (e.g. 3 Knights is legal)

Example armies:

- ♦ Skeleton swarm: Warlock (20) + 15 Skeletons (15) + Tomb (12) + Reaper (15) + Wraith (15) + 3 Skeletons (3) = 80 XP
- ♦ Human balanced: Princess (15) + Wizard (20) + Archer (18) + Knight (12) + 7 Heroes (14) = 79 XP
- ♦ Redskin elite: Red Dragon (20) + Demonics (22) + Iron Golem (18) + 4 Kobolds (20) = 80 XP
- ♦ Greenskin midrange: Warlord (15) + Shaman (20) + Troll (16) + Orc (14) + 3 Goblins (15) = 80 XP

HOW TO PLAY

SETUP

- 1 Agree on a map and lay it out between all players
- 2 Each player chooses a faction (no duplicates)
- 3 Each player secretly drafts their army within the 80 XP budget
- 4 Determine turn order (youngest first, or roll a die)
- 5 Starting with the first player, each player deploys their army in their spawn zone (the 2 rows nearest their edge of the board)

Deployment is simultaneous if all players agree, or sequential in turn order if preferred.

ON YOUR TURN

Each turn you perform exactly one action: **move or attack with one unit**. If a unit's movement brings it onto an enemy-occupied square, that is both a move and a capture in a single action.

Play proceeds clockwise. In a 2-player game, turns simply alternate.

CHECK

- ♦ A King is in check if an enemy unit could capture it next turn.
- ♦ You cannot make a move that leaves your own King in check.
- ♦ You must resolve check on your turn — move your King, block the threat, or capture the attacker.
- ♦ There is no checkmate or stalemate. The game ends only when a King is actually captured.

WINNING THE GAME

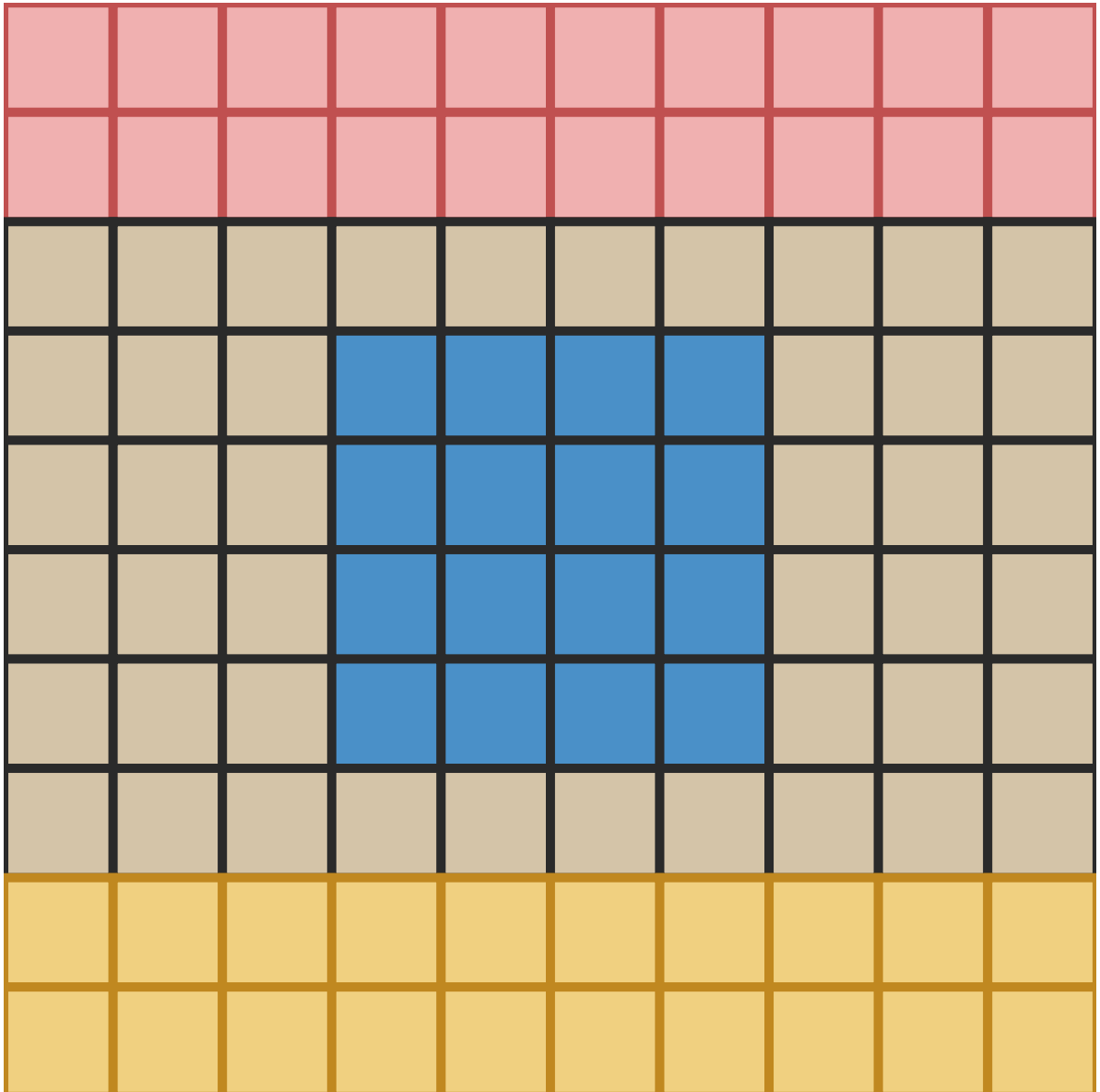
Capture an enemy King. The game ends immediately when any King is taken.

In a 4-player game, an eliminated player removes all their remaining pieces from the board. Play continues among surviving players until one King remains.

MAPS

Choose one map before the game begins. Each map uses square tiles laid out in the specified pattern. Water tiles are placed face-up; void spaces are simply left empty.

COMPACT SKIRMISH (2 PLAYERS)

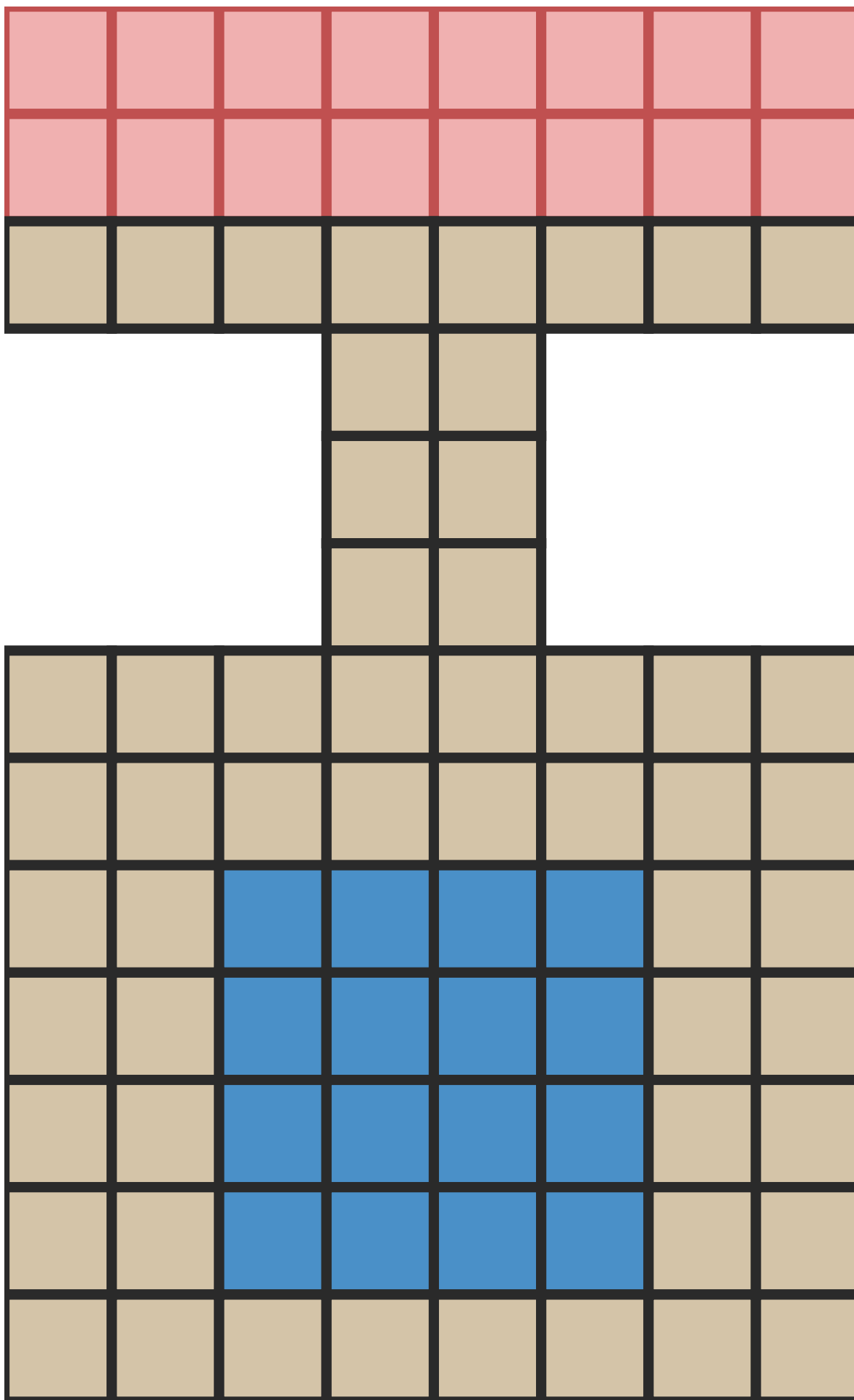


Compact Skirmish — 10×10 arena with central water hazard

<https://engine.moddable.games/play/?game=dungeon-chess&variant=compact>

A 10×10 open arena with a 4×4 water block in the centre. Each player deploys in the 2 rows nearest their edge. Fast, aggressive games where the water forces armies to split and flank.

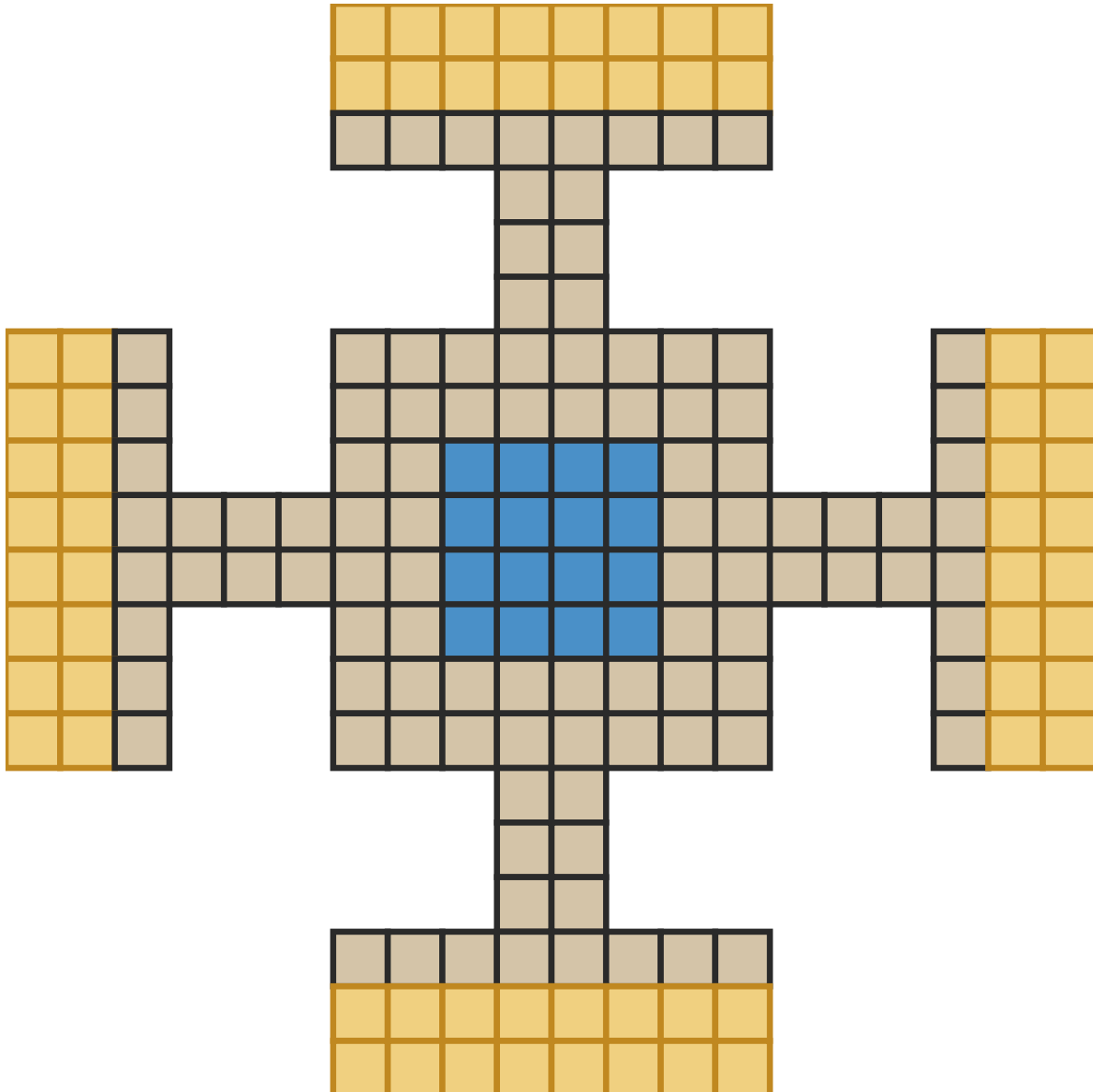
TWO PLAYER DUNGEON (2 PLAYERS)



- ♦ **North & South chambers:** 8×2 (deployment zones, one per player)
- ♦ **Centre chamber:** 8×8 with 4×4 water in the middle
- ♦ **Corridors:** 2 squares wide, connecting chambers vertically

Chokepoints force careful army composition. Knights and leaping units are valuable for bypassing the narrow passages.

FOUR PLAYER DUNGEON (4 PLAYERS)



Four Player Dungeon — symmetric cross with four deployment zones

<https://engine.moddable.games/play/?game=dungeon-chess&variant=four-player>

A symmetric cross with four arms. Each player claims one arm as their deployment zone (2 rows at the end of each arm). A central 8×8 arena with 4×4 water connects all four corridors.

The largest and most complex map. Multi-front warfare, temporary alliances, and last-player-standing dynamics.



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