

HOW to PLAY

ICEHOUSE



Designed by John Cooper

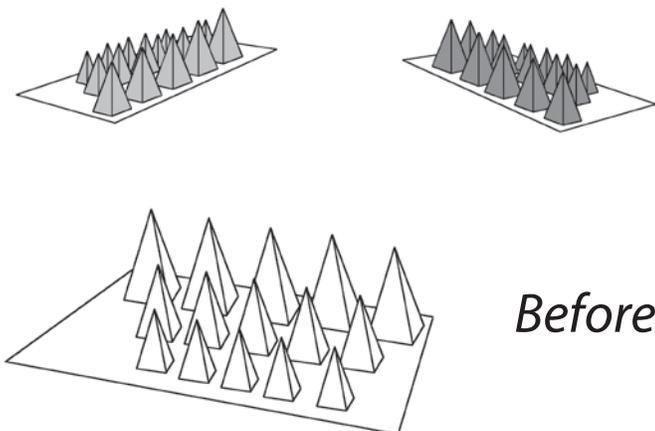
Complex	3-5 players
Medium	
Rainbow Stash x 5	
+ cards to mark "stash areas"	

Introduction: The original game for the pyramids is played without turns, and involves strategy, diplomacy, fast thinking, and physical dexterity.

Number of Players: 3-5

Equipment: 1 Monochrome Stash per player (i.e. 5 Rainbow Stashes or 5 Xeno Stashes), a timer, and an index card or small piece of paper for each player, which will be called "Stash Pads"

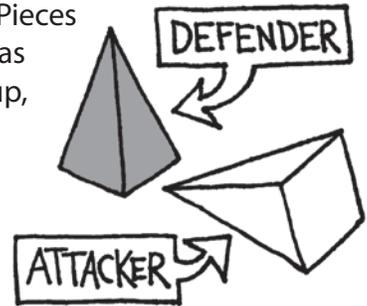
Setup: Each player places all 15 of their pyramids upon a Stash Pad. Each player's Stash Pad should be placed at one edge of the playing area and must never be moved at all during the game.



Before

Timer: Set a timer for 10 -15 minutes, and place it where no one can see how much time remains. Unless all players finish early, the game ends at the instant the timer rings.

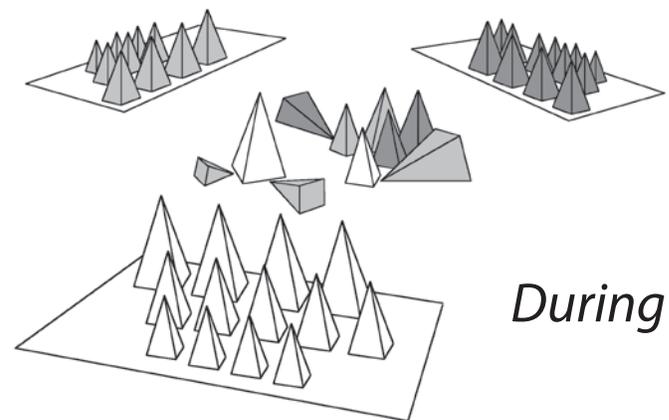
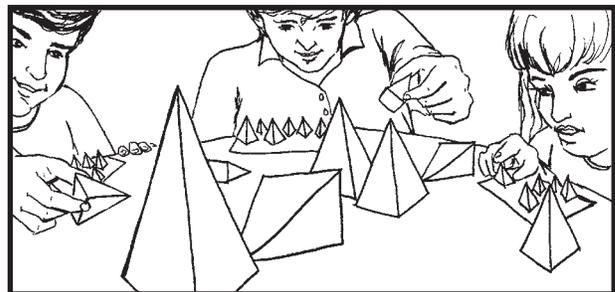
Placement Options: Pieces may be played either as Defenders, standing up, or as Attackers, which are placed on their sides, pointed at enemy Defenders.



Get Ready: Players indicate that they are ready to play by touching (but not lifting) one of their pieces. When all are ready, start the timer and begin playing!



No Turns: Everyone plays at the same time. Players move their pieces, one at a time, from their stash pads to any spot they choose in the playing area. Players play pieces whenever they want, acting slowly or quickly. Players decide between placing pieces as Defenders (which are never thereafter moved), or as Attackers (which can potentially be captured and replayed).



During

Goal: When the game ends, scores are awarded for safely placed Defenders and for successful Attackers, in each case equal to the pip count of that piece. High score wins!

The Meltdown Rule: The first two pieces you play MUST be played as defenders.

The Meltdown Penalty: If you play an attacker before you play your required pair of defenders, and someone calls you on it, you must take back all attackers you'd played, then play defenders. If you realize you've melted down, you should call it on yourself and comply with the penalty rather than trying to fix the situation by quickly playing defenders. That's just not Cool. (See Etiquette notes.)

The Crash Rule: Icehouse is a game of precise piece placement, so it's a big deal if you bump a piece with another piece and cause it to change positions. This is called a Crash.



The Crash Penalty: If you crash a piece, you must sacrifice the piece you crashed it with. The piece is given to another player (your choice) and becomes that player's Prisoner. (See Prisoners.) Crashed pieces should be moved back to their original positions (as best they can be) before the game continues. (It is considered Cool to acknowledge your own crashes rather than hoping no one noticed, and Uncool to argue if another player points out you that you crashed.)

Placement Rules: Defenders can be played anywhere you can fit them in without Crashing. Attackers on the other hand must be attacking something. More specifically, Attackers must be:

- Pointed at a defender of another color
- Within range i.e. closer to the defender than the length of the attacker

If you place a piece in the attack position without meeting these requirements, you must pick the piece up again and place it legally.



Iced Defenders: If a defender is worth fewer points than the total value of the attackers being pointed at it, the defender is said to be Iced, and will score zero points. Ties go to the defender.

Failed Attackers: As noted, you cannot place an attack piece in certain ways. Even so, it is very common for attackers to end up in these illegal positions, because pieces placed later, in legal ways, can cause illegal attacks to occur. These are called Failed attackers, and score zero points. Attackers can fail for 3 reasons:

- Pointed at defenders of own color
- Pointed at attackers of any color
- Under-Icing, i.e. pointed at an enemy defender that is inadequately attacked

Scoring: When the game ends, points are awarded for all successful attackers and for all un-iced defenders, equal to each piece's pip count. High score wins. A perfect score is 30. Ties are resolved via rematch.

No Stacking: This game was designed for first generation pyramids, which were always solid. Therefore, defending pieces cannot be stacked, and no part of any piece can penetrate the hollow space at the back of an attacker.

No Double Plays: You may never have more than one unplayed piece off of your stash pad at one time. You cannot be placing a piece with one hand while grabbing at the next with the other hand. It IS permissible to use both hands on a single piece, like when maneuvering a piece into or out of a tricky situation. Also, you can change the hand you are using by passing a pyramid from one hand to the other. But you cannot alternate hands in order to play quickly.

Touching = Unplayed: While placing a piece, it's considered unplayed as long as you are still touching it. You might set a piece down and slide it around on the table for awhile, testing out various placements, and even pick it up again, as long as you never stop touching it. But as soon as you let go, the piece is played, and cannot be moved again unless certain conditions allow it (see Over-icing).

Ganging Up: Two or more attackers can work together to ice a defender. (It's the only way for a large to get iced). Attackers own by different players each score points only for their owners.

Prisoners: Players can gain control of opponent pieces in several ways. These pieces are called Prisoners and they can be played in whatever way the controlling player chooses. That player loses control of the prisoner when they play it. The original owner always retains the point value.

Over-icing: To ice a pyramid, you must attack it with at least one point more than its own value. It's legal to use more force than required, but if an excessive number of pieces are used, the piece becomes "over-iced." This gives the owner of that piece a special power.

Capturing When Over-Iced: If there are so many attackers pointing at your piece that you can remove one and the piece will still be iced, then you get to do exactly that. You just pick up the redundant attacker and make it your prisoner. It's considered Cool to say something like "my piece is over-iced" as you make a capture.

Owner's Only: Just to be super clear, no one but the owner of an over-iced defender may capture over-icing attackers. (This is a common mistake.)

Rapid Replay: As soon as you touch a piece you are capturing, it's considered to be on your stash pad. But you don't have to move it there before replaying it, you can pick it up and immediately replay elsewhere. You can even slide an over-iced piece a tiny distance if you just want to nudge it.

Timing: You can capture an over-iced prisoner at any time you want, not just when it first happens or you first notice it. But it's a real-time game, so the situation might change if you wait too long!

Final Freeze: The game ends as soon as the last piece is played. Any over-ice situations that are noticed after the last play, or even created by the last play, cannot be acted upon.

The Icehouse Rule: Philosophically, defenders are like the civilians back home whom the troops are fighting to protect. If all of the civilians are dead or captured, the troops have failed at their job. In game terms, if a player has no un-iced defenders, they can automatically lose the game. This is called "being put in the icehouse," and if it happens to you, then you lose all your pieces and you get a score of zero.

The Stash Limit: In the first stages of the game, players are safe from being put in the icehouse. It can't happen to you until you've played at least half of your pyramids, i.e. you have 7 or fewer left on your pad (including prisoners). This cut-off point is called the "stash limit."

Calling Icehouse: If a player is under the stash limit and has no free defenders, someone must still notice and make the call to put you in the icehouse. If someone yells "icehouse" and:

- all of your defenders are iced, and
- you have fewer than 8 pieces on your pad;

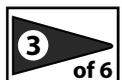
then you get an automatic score of zero, and the person who called Icehouse first gets all of your unplayed pieces as prisoners. If you call Icehouse and you yourself are in the Icehouse, your score goes to zero but you don't give your pieces away. A player in the icehouse remains active. They can be given prisoners and capture when over-iced.

The Icehouse Penalty: If you make an Icehouse call and, after pausing the game to evaluate the situation, it turns out you were wrong, you must pick a piece up from your pad (unless you have none) and put it onto another player's stashpad.

Game Over: The game ends when every stash pad is empty, or time runs out. If the timer rings, all pieces being touched are returned to their owner's stash pads, and do not score any points.

Counting Scores: It's often easier to count your iced defenders and failed attackers and subtract from 30 instead of counting up your successful scores. Be careful not to bump the table or move any pieces until all the scores are counted!

Wacky Timers: Instead of a clock, agree to end the game when the pizza arrives!



ETIQUETTE NOTES

Hovering: When two players race to play pyramids into the same spot, the one whose piece arrived first must be allowed to attempt placing it without being harrassed. You can't just push their hand away! But it's fine to hold your own piece in the air above, ready to drop it in if the other player crashes or backs off.

Playing it "Cool": Part of the mystique of Icehouse is the idea that a player's attitude is a vital element of the game. A good Icehouse player is not only skilled at using clever strategies and diplomacy, but also understands the importance of being "cool." Basically, this is just our word for being a good sport. Playing it cool means that no matter what kind of player you are, from friendly diplomat to evil executioner, you play with a style that makes others enjoy playing with you, even if you happen to win a lot. Being a cool player can even extend to matters well beyond the scope of the actual game, such as turning on some good mood music or making sure that everyone has a lovely beverage. You may even find that a cool style works well in other games!

What's "Uncool": The rules of this game are easily abused by those with the wrong attitude. The best examples of this are intentional bad plays, such as crashing on purpose, deliberately creating a meltdown, and calling Icehouse without believing someone is in the Icehouse. It may be very strategic to "accidentally" do this, and it can be faked well enough that no one will notice the "mistake" was done on purpose. But it's contrary to the spirit of Icehouse, and *extremely* uncool. Uncool players are encouraged not to play Icehouse.

HISTORICAL NOTES

This game started as a plot device in a short story. A five-paragraph description of a fictional game led to these rules for a real game, a system you can play hundreds of other games with, and Looney Labs itself. The original story became part of a novel Andy finished in 1991, called *The Empty City*.



STRATEGY TIPS

Good Attacks: Play your attackers as close to the defender as possible, touching if you can do so without crashing. If you leave space, someone could squander your attack later. For example, they might also attack that same defender, putting the point of their attacker right in front of the point of your attacker.

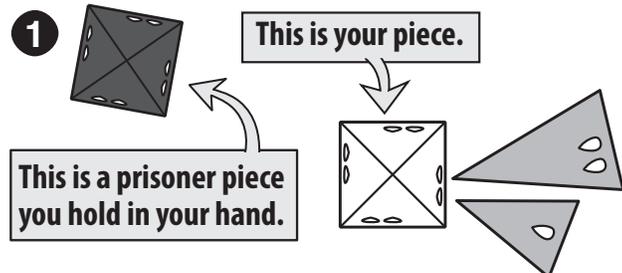
Preventing Trade-Ups: Play the minimum amount of attacks on a defender to ice it. Although it may seem like a six point play to ice a 3-point defender with two 3-point attackers, you are in danger of having those pieces easily restructured. If your piece was iced like this, and you had just a 1-point prisoner, you could use it to attack your own 3-point defender, over-icing it. You could then pick up one of the 3-point attackers as a prisoner, "trading up." Had your 3-pointer been iced by two 2-point attackers, you wouldn't be able to trade up using just your 1-pointer.

The Snowball and the Fortress: You must have a successful defender on the board, or someone will eventually put you in the icehouse. Often players build a large group of tightly packed pieces in the middle of the playing area, in a formation known as the "snowball." Each player hopes to find a niche in that space to place a small defender that cannot be attacked because it's surrounded by other pieces, in what is called an "ice fortress." You can also try to create a fortress around a piece, hoping that you will do so before someone ices it. One effective method of building the walls of a fortress is by placing large attackers that ice nearby enemy defenders and block other players from icing your defender.

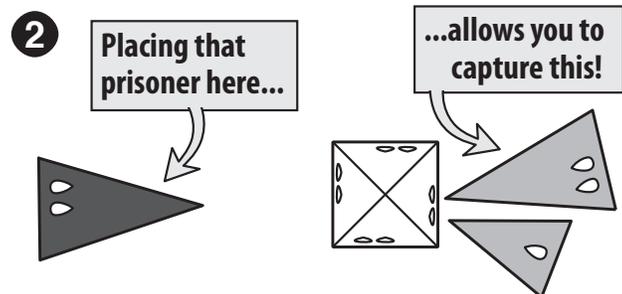
Slanted Attacks: When icing a piece in an incomplete fortress, you can often slant the attacker such that it is hard or impossible for the attacked player to later over-ice the defender and take out your piece. You might also need to play defenders of your own next to your attacker so that there is no space for an over-icing piece.

The Cheeseball: If you are desperate for a successful defender, you might decide to play a few defenders in the corner of the table such that nobody can attack one of them. This maneuver, called the "cheeseball," is perfectly legal, but rarely works against alert players, who will swarm in to attack your pieces as soon as you start to do it. Using this strategy might bring you scorn, but it's not Uncool, and it can be very useful when you're desperate for a fortress.

Restructuring Attacks: It may seem like Icehouse is a game of attacking, and that defending just sets you up to be attacked. But Defenders have an advantage Attackers don't have: they stay where you put them. Because of the over-icing rule, any attack you make can potentially be changed and squandered later by other players. Here are two detailed examples:

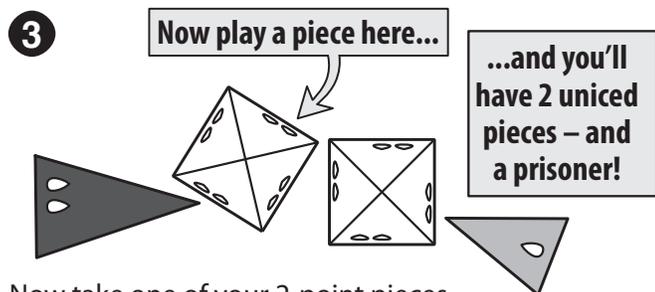


Suppose you have a 2-point defender which is being attacked by a 1-pointer and a 2-pointer, and somehow you've got a 2-point prisoner.



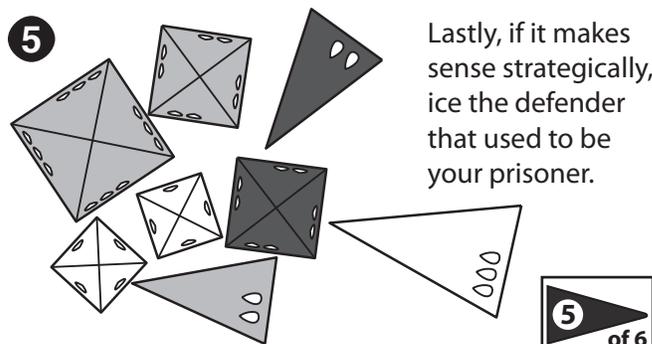
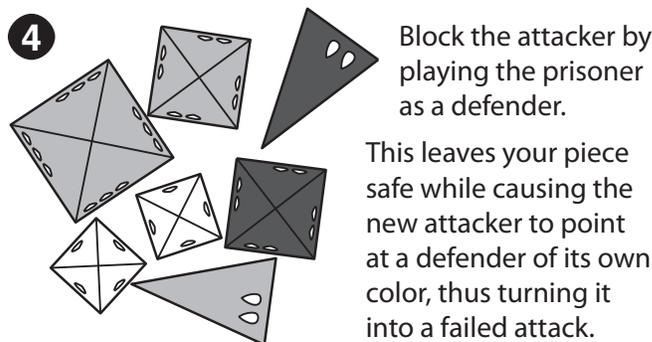
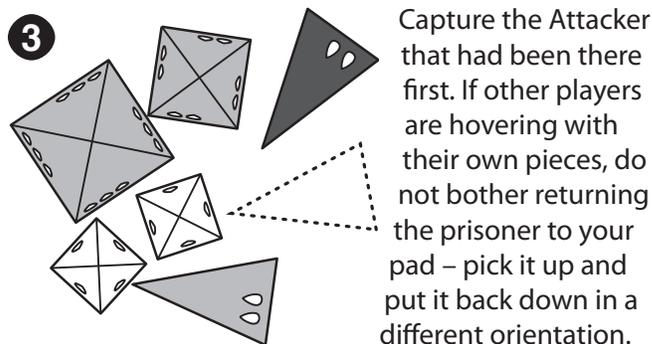
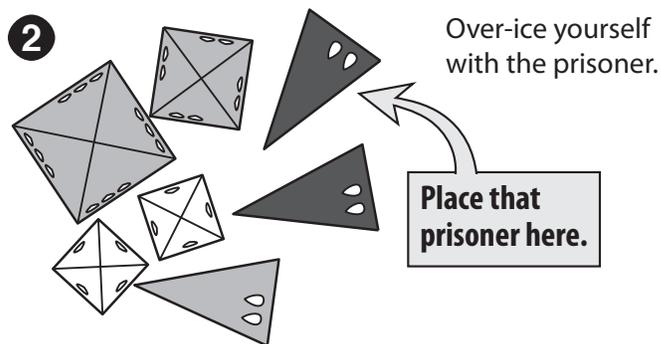
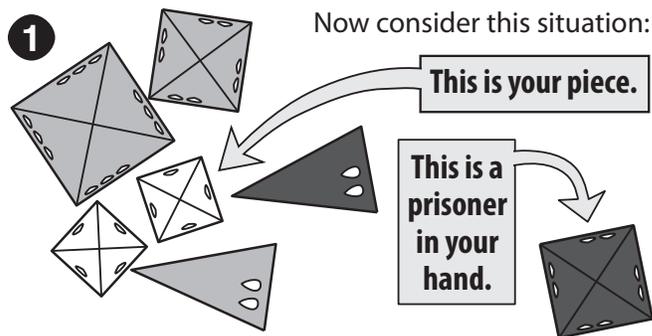
Take that prisoner and attack your defender, and unlike normal attacks, leave plenty of space between the prisoner and your defender.

Your defender is now over-iced. You may pick up the original 2-point attacker and put it on your stash pad.



Now take one of your 2-point pieces and play it as a defender in front of the original prisoner. You now have two successful 2-point defenders, one unsuccessfully attacked by a 2-pointer, the other by a 1-pointer.

And what if someone points another 2-pointer at one of your defenders? You still have a 2-point prisoner, so repeat. "Dividing attacks" quickly squanders attackers at little cost.



Capturing Prisoners: While all that restructuring is exciting, you need a prisoner to do any of it. How can you get one? While you can hope someone crashes and gives you one, there are other ways. When other players are doing attack restructuring, you may be able to jump in a 1-point defender in the middle of a place that has two large attackers pointed at it. This way you can steal prisoners from that player while preventing him from finishing his careful work.

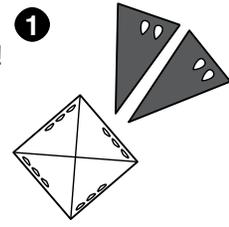
Make a Deal: As the game progresses, look around and figure out the current scores, at least roughly. If you are winning, you don't need a prisoner yet, and you should keep quiet unless you have a silver tongue. If you are losing, offer to trade prisoners with someone else who is losing. Once an agreement is made, usually to trade 2-point or 3-point prisoners, over-ice one of that player's already iced defenders, and he'll do the same for you. You will both have prisoners and can restructure attackers at the expense of the other two players. Diplomacy is a vital element of the game.

Hunt for Icehouse Calls: As you look around, also see if anyone has just a few successful defenders. If you can, you may want to quietly ice all of them. When that player has only seven or fewer pieces on his stash (remember that a piece he is still touching counts as being on his stash), call "Icehouse" and collect all his remaining pieces as prisoners. (As defense against this tactic, pay close attention to your own successful defenders.)

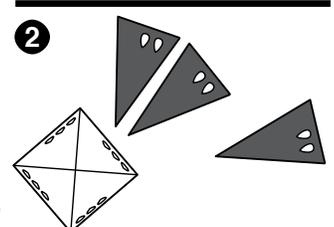
The Forced Retreat: Once you have the needed prisoner or prisoners, you should cause a "forced retreat" on any attackers that are icing your defenders. Say your 1-point defender is under attack by a 2-pointer, and you have a 3-point prisoner. Use your prisoner to over-ice your defender, allowing you to pick up the 2-point attacker. But don't actually pick it up, just scoot it back from your defender, leaving it attacking your prisoner. Then pick up your 3-point prisoner again. Your defender is still unsuccessful, but you are in position to do many good things. You might do a forced retreat on another nearby piece, and retreat that other piece right in front of the 2-point attacker, squandering it. You might play a big defender, or a prisoner, in front of the 2-point attacker. The player with the 2-point attacker might get nervous and plunk one of his 1-point prisoners in front of his attacker to insure that he will get the points.

The 2-For-1 Exchange: Turn one prisoner into two!

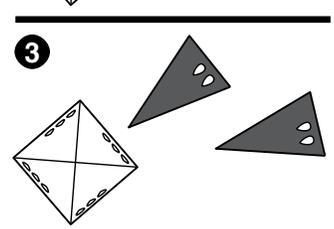
1: Suppose you have a 3-pointer being iced by two 2-pointers, and you have a 2-point prisoner.



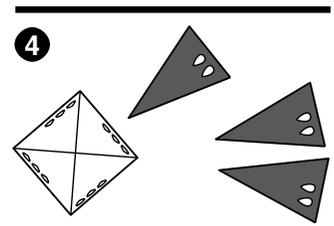
2: Over-ice your defender, attacking from far away.



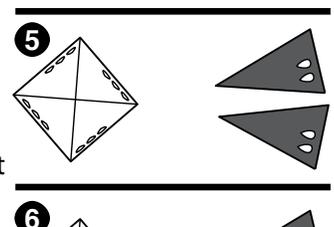
3: Capture one of the original attackers.



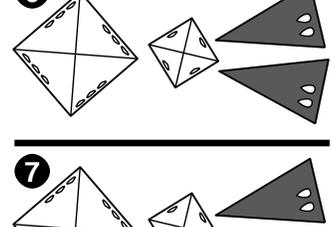
4: Point your new prisoner at the defender again, putting it right next to the first prisoner such that they are both pointing at roughly the same spot on the defender.



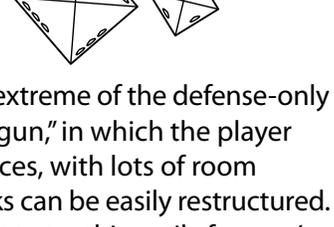
5: Now go grab the third attacker and put that prisoner on your stash pad. Your 3-pointer is now still being attacked by two 2-pointers, but there's a lot of space between them and the defender.



6: Take one of your 1-point defenders and plunk it right in front of those two attackers. Your large is now safe, and your small is over-iced!



7: Capture a 2-pointer. Now you have two, so you can continue to restructure attacks!



The Shotgun: The logical extreme of the defense-only strategy is called the "shotgun," in which the player scatters out defending pieces, with lots of room around them so that attacks can be easily restructured. However, you may not want to try this until after you've gotten a prisoner, since this strategy will backfire if you never gain one, and other players will become wary of giving prisoners to a shotgunner. Also, to use the shotgun, you *must* be skilled at restructuring attacks.