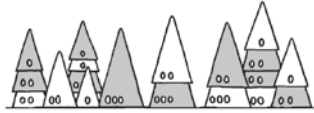


# HOW to PLAY



# ICE TOWERS

Designed by Andrew Looney

<b>Simple</b>	<b>2-5</b> players	
<b>Fast</b>		
<b>Rainbow Stash x 5</b>		
<b>nothing</b>		

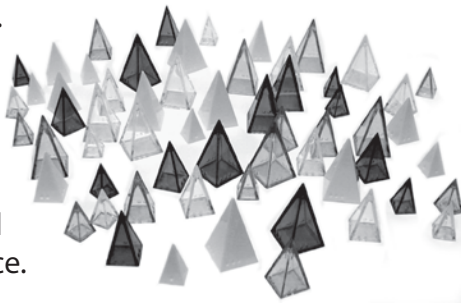
**Introduction:** IceTowers is a fast-paced game of pyramid stacking, played without turns on any flat surface. If yours is the top piece on a tower at the end of the game, you control that tower, and you get points for each piece it contains. As the towers grow taller, you can sometimes take your pieces out and replay them, or even split some towers in two. The game ends when no more plays will be made.

**Number of Players:** 2-5

**Equipment:** 1 Monochrome Stash per player (i.e. 5 Rainbow Stashes or 5 Xeno Stashes)

**Setup:** Each player chooses a color. Set aside any unused colors.

Randomly scatter the pieces across the tabletop. Stand them all upright in place.



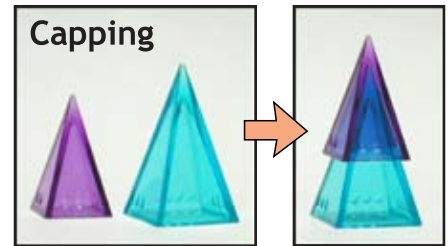
Players indicate they are ready to start by touching (but not picking up) a pyramid of their color.

**No Turns:** In IceTowers, everyone plays at the same time. As soon as all players show they are ready to begin, you can start playing. You may then take any legal action at any time you want.



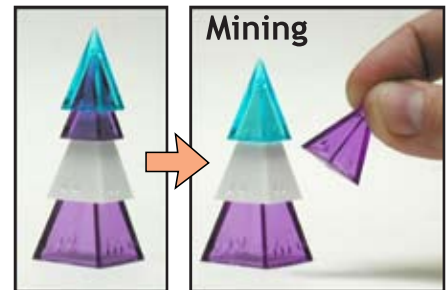
**Play Options:** There are 3 basic actions, called Capping, Mining, and Splitting. You may only perform one option at a time.

**Capping:** Stacking one of your pieces on someone else's to take control of it is the most



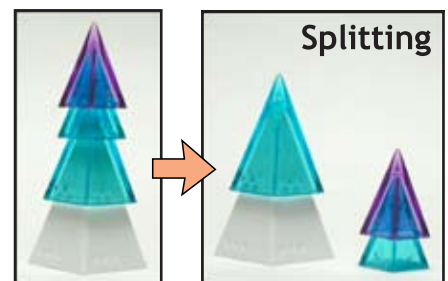
common action in IceTowers. You may only pick up and move free-standing pieces of your own color. In order to cap, your piece must be the same size or smaller and a different color than the topmost piece in the tower you are capping.

**Mining:** If you don't control a tower (i.e. you don't have the top piece), but two or more of your pieces are inside the



tower, you may open up the stack and remove one of your pieces (your choice). Reassemble the rest of the tower and continue playing (but see the No Minebacks rule on the next page).

**Splitting:** Whenever two pieces of any other player's color are next to each other in a tower, you may split the tower in two,



by separating the pair of same-colored pyramids. However, you cannot split your own pieces, so if no one else chooses to do so, a tower may remain unsplit at the end of the game.

**Scoring:** When the game ends, you get points for every tower where your piece is at the top. For each tower you control, your score is the pip-value for every piece in the tower. Highest score wins!

**No Double Plays:** Sometimes it will be necessary to use both hands (notably when mining), but as a rule, you can only use one hand at a time.

**No Minebacks:** When you mine out a piece, you must immediately use it to cap a different tower. If there are no legal plays available, just set the piece down; it becomes a free-stander.

**Post-Mining Etiquette:** It's fine to take a moment after mining to consider your options, but you aren't allowed to stall. You can't just hold onto that piece, waiting for a good spot to open up; if you take too long, others may insist that you play a mined piece before they take their next actions.

**Tower Wars:** Players can sometimes get into mine & recapture exchanges that can seem endless, but these usually resolve themselves, often faster than you might think. Keep playing until you can split a tower, or create a new tower by fleeing.

**Ending the Game:** The game ends when all players agree that no more plays will be made. Often this will happen automatically, when no more moves are possible, but generally the players will need to agree that the game is over, since not all splitting opportunities will be used.

**Counting Scores:** When adding up the scores, feel free to dismantle and re-stack the towers you captured. We find that it's fastest if you stack the pieces back up into 10-point towers. (Just make sure everyone has the correct towers first!) Anything over 30 is a good score.

**Final Piece Showdown:** If two players with no other moves left each end up with an unplayed piece in their hands, with nowhere they can be played and neither player wanting to set their piece down because it would just be capped by the other, then the players set their pieces down simultaneously, and the game ends.

**Timed Endings:** During high-pressure games like tournaments, "analysis paralysis" may cause the game to drag. If necessary, you can add a timer to the game: when it rings, anyone holding a piece must set it down. Towers are scored as they are.

**When Playing with Two:** IceTowers is considered best with four players, but can easily be played with just two. New players may even find it easier to follow the action in a simple two-player game. That said, at some point you'll probably want to increase the complexity and excitement of a two player game. For that we suggest adding a Ghost.

**The Ghost Player:** Since ghosts have no physical form, such players can only move their pieces by mentally commanding the other players to carry out their moves for them.



**Special Rules for the Ghost:** Begin by naming your imaginary friend and selecting a color for the ghost to use. (The ghost can be any color, but white is obviously ideal.) During the game, either player may move for the ghost at any time, with the following restrictions:

- The ghost never caps a free-standing piece.
- The ghost never splits a tower.

And if the ghost scores the most, the ghost wins!

#### Reminders and Clarifications:

- When capping, towers must always grow taller.
- You can't cap a tower if your piece is already on top.
- You can only mine if your color is NOT on top, and you have at least TWO pieces in the tower.
- When mining, you can remove ANY one of your pieces, but you MUST replay the piece elsewhere.
- You cannot split your own color; only others can.
- Splitting is NOT mandatory. The game can end with many splitting options untaken.
- You DON'T have to be on top of a tower in order to split it. There just has to be a different color than yours at the split-point.
- If you have free standers when the game ends, they're not worthless – they're just short towers.
- If you have a piece in your hand, you CANNOT split a tower! You must first do something with the piece you are holding!
- It is NOT necessary to finish all capping before starting to mine.
- You can play your pieces in ANY order.
- You get points for ALL of the pieces in the towers you capture.

**STRATEGY TIPS**

**Start Big:** The most powerful pieces are the smalls, which can cap anything, so save them until the end. Play your 3-pointers first, then play your 2-pointers.

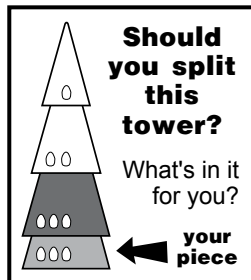
**Invest in the Future:** Set up mining opportunities by getting at least two pieces into every tower you join.

**Limit Your Opponents' Options:** Think through the mining opportunities you'll create for others when you cap a tower. Look for towers where the top piece is the only one of its color, and try not to cap towers that will allow someone else to mine multiple pieces.

**Mine to Create Splits:** Splitting a tower can often stop your opponent cold, so look for chances to remove a piece that will create a splitting situation.

**Mine to Prevent Splits:** Look for situations where a split of pieces you own might occur. Unless such a split would be good for you (which is rare), then hurry, mine out a piece before someone splits you!

**Think Before You Split:** Make sure it's best for YOU before you choose to split a tower. (Just because you can doesn't mean you should.) Be cautious about splitting off singleton pieces, since you'll just give control of that piece back to its owner. Why give the enemy a free play?

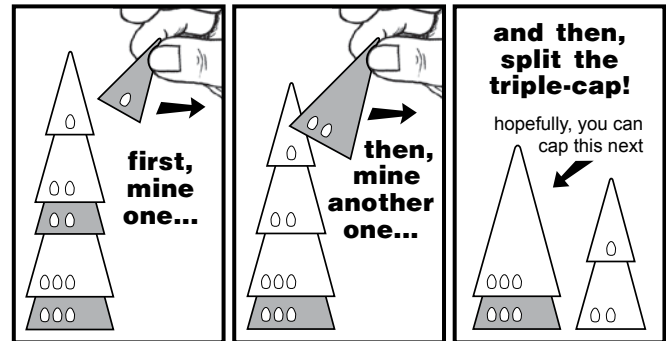
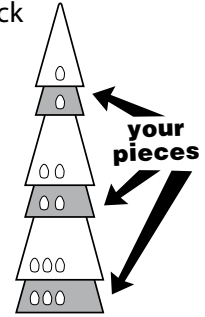


**Diplomatic Splitting:** Splitting off a singleton can be a great maneuver if you make a deal with someone else to do the same thing to your piece elsewhere. Making a deal can be as easy as saying "I'll split you here if you split me there, OK?"

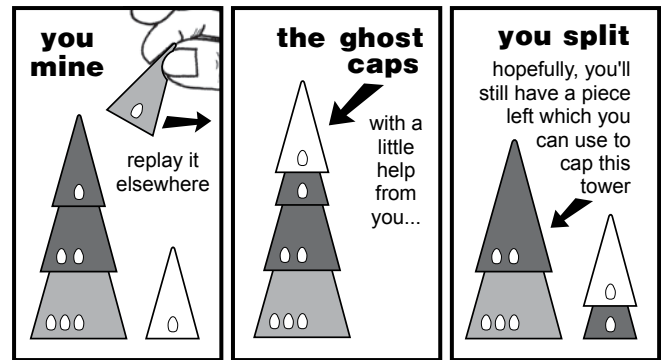
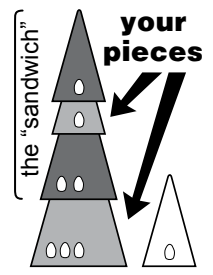
**Look Before You Mine:** The No Minebacks rule says you must cap a different tower after mining, and you need to do so without too much delay. So, figure out your plan BEFORE you get that piece into your hand.

**Fleeing:** When you mine out a medium or large piece, you may find that no towers are available for you to cap it with, since most towers will be topped by small pieces as the game draws to an end. If so, you must re-play the piece by just setting it down. Doing this deliberately (i.e. mining out a large when you know it can't cap anything) is called "fleeing" (or "running away") and is often a good move.

**The Triple-Cap Split:** Two of your pieces in one a tower is good, but three is better. (This is particularly true in a 2-player game, where this trick becomes a trap you can set for your opponent.) After you get capped, mine twice to leave your opponent with three pieces stacked up together at the top of the tower. You can then split the tower, creating a big tower (ripe for capture) and a small tower (which you can ignore).



**The Empty Sandwich:** If you're using the ghost rule, look for a spot where there's a "sandwich" (with your piece as the "filling") at the top of a tower. Make sure the ghost still has a small available, then mine out your piece, creating an empty sandwich. Replay it as fast as you can, then cap the empty sandwich with a ghostly small. You can then immediately split the tower – without even letting go of the piece! This leaves the bottom of the tower ready for recapping while squandering one of your enemy's strongest pieces.



**Sandwich Counter-Strategy:** After your opponent mines out the sandwich "filling" and is busy replaying it, cap for the ghost yourself and immediately mine out one of the "bread" pieces.