

FOUR BLIND MICE

a multiplayer puzzle designed for the piecepack

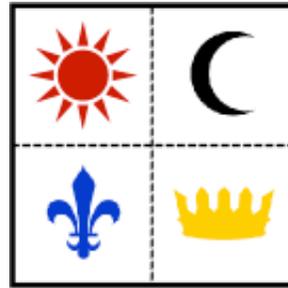
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Adapted for the piecepack by Tim Farley
Based of a game concept by Alex
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For one or more players, ages 10 to adult
Playing time, 30-60 minutes

Requires a single piecepack and a time
keeping device



Four blind mice are loose inside a cheese factory, but these furry little fellows need your help! Find the shortest route for each mouse to claim his rightful piece of cheese and win the game! The fame, glory and fortune of a million mice is in your reach.

Objective

Each player must determine the shortest possible route to get the currently selected mouse to the appropriate chunk of cheese. The player who finds the shortest route, collects the cheese as his reward! The player with the most cheese at the end of the game is the winner.

Setup

Place the square tiles face down to create a square 8x8 playing surface. Gather the eight Null and Ace valued coins, these coins will become the cheese.

Randomly select a player to go first. The player places one coin onto the board, with the Ace or Null symbol showing (see placement rules below). Proceed clockwise around the table until all eight coins have been placed.

Coin placement rules:

- a) No coin may be placed on the outermost edge of the board
- b) No coin may be placed on top of an existing coin
- c) No two coins may be orthogonally adjacent one another. Diagonal is acceptable

Place the four colored pawns (mice) in the same manner, observing the same rules for coin placement.

Playing the Game

At the conclusion of the placement phase, the next player begins play by turning over his choice of one Ace or Null tile located on the playing surface. One of the four suits will be displayed, thus a piece of cheese is uncovered. Each player must now determine the shortest possible route to get the mouse of identical color to his piece of cheese. This portion of the turn occurs in your head. The pieces are not actually touched yet.

Remember, our furry little friends are blind however, they may only move orthogonally, (horizontally or vertically) and **must** continue moving until they hit an obstacle or another mouse. Obstacles are represented by the other cheese which is not yet uncovered. Once a mouse reaches an obstacle, he may turn right or left to avoid the obstacle and continue his search for the cheese, again moving until he comes to an obstacle. Other mice may be moved to aide the current mouse, but only mice of matching color may claim the cheese.

Each time a mouse moves or changes direction it is considered one move. Moving additional mice also counts as a move each time they move or change direction.

In addition to being blind, our cute little dairy fiends do not possess a great sense of smell either. Therefore if it is possible for a mouse to make it to the cheese without turning at least twice, the player must find an alternate route for the mouse to take.

When a player finds a suitable route for the mouse, he may announce the number of moves required to the other players. The other players in turn have one minute to announce the number of moves they think are required to get the mouse to his cheese.

The other players may suggest numbers which are higher than the original number. This is useful in instances where the lowest suggested number of moves proves impossible.

After one minute has passed, the player claiming the lowest number of moves, gets to move the mice around the board according to his plan. If the mouse reaches his cheese in the amount of moves that he suggested, the player collects the cheese and adds it to his score pile.

If the player's suggestion proves incorrect, he must return the mice to their original position and the player with the next lowest suggestion attempts his move. In the event that two players suggest the same number of moves, the player who made his suggestion first gets to move.

Once a player has successfully guided his mouse to the cheese and claimed the cheese in his score, the turn is over. The mice are left where they ended their last move, and the next player chooses a coin to turn over.

If no player is capable of finding a solution after 4-5 minutes, remove the cheese counter in question, no one scores this counter. The next player chooses a coin to turn over and play continues as usual.

Ending the Game

The game continues until a commonly agreed upon goal is reached. For instance, the game may be ended when one player has accumulated 3 pieces of cheese. Players may also wish to impose time limits of say 30 minutes. The player with the most cheese after 30 minutes of play becomes the winner; ties are decided in a final round.

Variations

In the rules above, the puzzle becomes increasingly difficult as more coins are removed. You may wish to use an additional ruling that whenever a player scores a piece of cheese, he may count it into his score and then replace the cheese elsewhere on the board. This newly placed cheese may not be the next piece of cheese uncovered.

If you like FOUR BLIND MICE, you'll love Ricochet Robots© designed by Alex Randolph and published by Rio Grande Games. Look for it wherever quality board games are sold!