

Taxicab

A game for the piecepack by Mark A. Biggar

Version 1.2, August 2004

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2-4 players, 60-90 min

Equipment

- A cup or bag for drawing coins
- ~150 tokens used to represent ticks on taximeters and money
- Optional: the board at the end of the rules

Background

Welcome to Pp City, where you are making your living as a taxicab driver. In fact, you have done so well at your chosen profession that you have been invited to participate in the Pp City's annual "**Best Taxicab Driver of the Year**" contest. You and the other contestants will be given one eight-hour shift to see who can earn the most money. An observer will ride along with you to see that you don't cheat and that you strictly follow all the traffic laws. In addition, bonuses will be rewarded based on how many passengers each contestant delivers.

Downtown Pp City was designed by a city planning commission with some very strange ideas for city layout. Instead of naming the streets like normal, they decided to name the city blocks instead. They also decided that each city block would have at most eight buildings built around a central open space. Instead of using building numbers they decided to use compass-point directions to label each building on a block. So the address of a building in Pp City will be something like "Crown 3 NW" or "Moon Ace S".

Setting Up The City

Give each player a pawn, null coin and null tile, all of the same color. The pawns are used as taxicabs. The null tiles are used as taximeters and the null coins are used as destination markers. Put the remaining coins in the cup or bag; this will be used as the passenger pickup and destination drawing pool. Each player places the null tile in front of them suit-side up and places their destination marker suit-side up on the tile. During the game having a destination marker on a taximeter means that the player's taxicab is not currently carrying a passenger. Put the tokens in a pile with in reach of all players.

Construct downtown Pp City with the remaining 20 tiles (all but the null tiles) suit-side up in a four-row by five-column grid in any pattern you like. See diagram 1. Tiles should be placed about two-thirds of a tile width apart to leave room for the road network. Rotate all the tiles so that the top of each tile is oriented to the top of the grid. The top of the grid will be considered north. Placing the tiles in a

systematic manner (such as each row is a single suit in order from ace to 5) will make finding addresses easier.

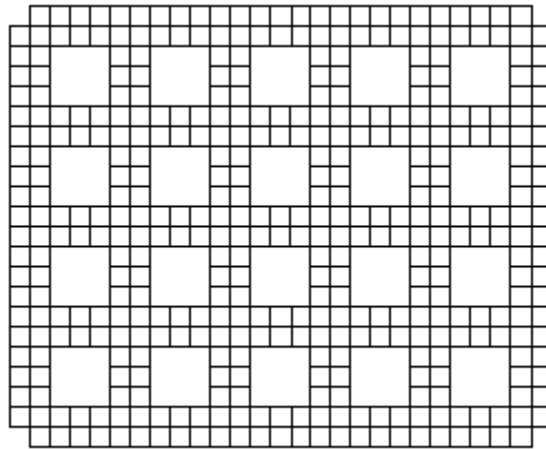


Diagram 1.
City setup and road Network

Either pretend that the road network of squares exists or print out the board at the end of these rules. If no board is used, then represent the position of a taxicab by placing the pawn against the edge of the closest tile, touching the tile at a spot corresponding to the square, i.e., against the center of the edge, the edge near the corner or just touching the corner. For taxicabs in the outer lane of the outside ring road, pretend there is a tile outside the city and place the pawn accordingly.

Pp City Traffic Laws

Traffic laws in Pp City are strictly enforced. On each player's turn a taxicab moves up to eight squares and must obey the following traffic rules.

1. All taxicabs must be driven on the right side of the road (Pp City is a US city, if you really want to play an English city please flip everything left-for-right in your head).
2. Taxicabs may not pass other taxicabs.
3. All turns must be made as shown in diagram 2 below. Note that none of the legal turns involves a taxicab entering the second square of the intersection that the taxicab would enter if it were going straight; if a taxicab enters that second square, it is too late to make a turn in this intersection and the taxicab must continue straight. Note specifically that taxicabs are not allowed to make U-turns in the middle of the block.
4. A taxicab must use all eight squares of its movement if possible.

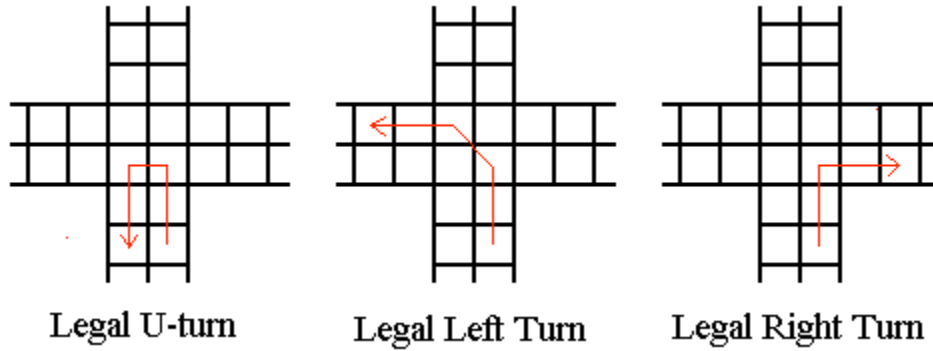


Diagram 2. Rules of the Road

Finding Passengers and Destinations

The 20 coins corresponding to the city blocks (all but the null coins) are kept in a cup or bag called the address pool. The following procedure is used to locate the address for passengers to be picked up and to determine destination addresses for those passengers:

1. A coin is drawn from the address pool after mixing thoroughly. The suit and number on the coin determine which city block (tile) contains the address.
2. Roll two dice (after stating which die corresponds to the rows and which to the columns) and consult the Address Table below. The passenger pickup or destination address will be the corner or edge of the tile specified by the table. A result of 'C' means that the player is free to choose any of the eight addresses on the tile.
3. For a passenger, the drawn coin is placed on the specified address on the city block (tile) number-side up; it now represents a passenger available for pickup. For a destination, the drawn coin is put back in the address pool and the player's destination marker is placed on the address suit-side up instead. See Diagram 3 for the corresponding locations on the tile.

It is all right if a passenger and multiple destination markers are located at the same address.

Address Table

		A	2	3	4	5
	NW	NW	N	N	NE	NE
A	NW	NW	N	N	NE	NE
2	W	W	C	C	E	E
3	W	W	C	C	E	E
4	SW	SW	S	S	SE	SE
5	SW	SW	S	S	SE	SE

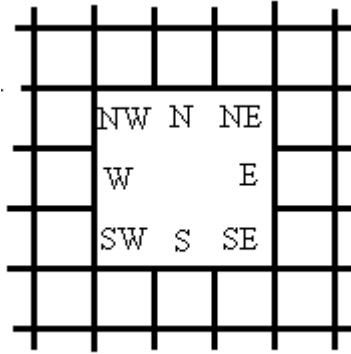


Diagram 3. Address locations on city blocks

Starting the Game

Choose a first player by any mutually agreed method. Each player, starting with the player to the first player's right, going around the table counterclockwise, places their taxicab (pawn) anywhere in the city they choose. A taxicab's initial starting position may not be placed in a position that would block any other taxicab from making its whole movement on its first turn.

Next, starting with the first player and going around the table clockwise, each player adds a passenger to the city using the procedure described above. Note that there should always be as many passengers available in the city as there are players in the game. If it is ever noticed that there are fewer passengers than there are players, the current player should immediately add enough additional passengers to make the number of passengers available for pickup equal to the number of players.

The first player now takes his first turn. Turns go around the table clockwise. Each turn consists of a player moving his taxicab, being sure to obey all the traffic rules, picking up and dropping off passengers and collecting payments. The first player is responsible for keeping track of the number of rounds played.

Taximeters

The null tile of the same color as a player's taxicab (pawn) is used to represent the taxicab's taximeter. While carrying a passenger, tick tokens are accumulated on the taximeter to record how much the passenger owes at the end of the trip. At the end of each player's turn, while his taxicab is carrying a passenger, the player adds a tick token to his taximeter. In addition there is a flat fee of one token to start any trip and another token is added at the end of the trip to round the fare up to the nearest dollar. These tokens will also be used to represent the money earned for the trip.

Picking Up Passengers

Whenever an empty taxicab is in a square directly next to a passenger in the city, it must pick up the passenger. Use the following procedure to pick up a passenger.

1. Determine the passenger's destination address using the procedure above. If the destination is only one block away repeat the procedure until you have a destination more than one block away.
2. Place your destination marker (null coin suit-side up) at the destination.
3. Place the coin for the passenger on your taximeter.
4. Add a tick token to your taximeter.
5. Add a new passenger to the city.

The taxicab then continues with the rest of its movement for the turn, if any. Remember to add tick tokens to your taximeter at the end of each turn until you drop off the passenger. A taxicab can only carry one passenger at a time.

Dropping off Passengers

When a taxicab carrying a passenger reaches a square directly next to its destination marker, it drops off its passenger using the following procedure:

1. Add a tick token to your taximeter.
2. Count the number of city blocks (tiles) from the passenger's pick up address to the destination address including both the starting and ending blocks (the count will always be at least three).
3. The number of tokens on your taximeter will be the base payment in dollars.
4. Compute the tip. If the base payment is more than twice the city block count, then the passenger thinks you are padding the amount by taking a longer than necessary route and refuses to pay a tip; otherwise the tip is 20% of the base payment rounded up. The tip will always be at least one dollar.
5. Add the tip in tokens to your taximeter.
6. Remove all the tokens from your taximeter and place them aside in a pile to represent the payment for the passenger. Either keep each of these piles separate so that you know how many passengers you have carried or keep two piles, one to track the passenger count and the other to keep the remainder of your money.
7. Put your destination marker back on your taximeter.
8. Put the passenger coin back in the address pool.

The taxicab then continues with the rest of its movement for the turn, if any.

Game Length

A standard game is 32 rounds long, representing an eight-hour shift of 15-minute segments. The first player keeps track of how many rounds have been played and after all players have finished their 32 turns, the game ends and final scoring is done. Players may agree on a different game length before play starts.

End of Game Scoring

Each player's final score is the money (tokens) they have earned in fares plus a bonus based on how many passengers they carried. The player who carried the most passengers earns a \$15 bonus, the second most earns \$10 and the third most earns \$5. Ties divide up the corresponding bonuses rounded up. The player with the most money wins the game.

Optional Rule - Traffic Jams

With this optional rule, a single street segment in the city will be blocked each round due to an accident or other traffic jam. Taxicabs may not enter the street segment with the jam. Taxicabs already in the segment are stuck and may not move until the jam goes away. The last player is responsible for determining the new location of the jam and moving it after each of his turns. To determine the location of the jam, draw a coin from the address pool. The jam will be somewhere next to that city block. Then roll two dice and consult the Address Table, the jams location will be either the six-square street segment or the four-square intersection corresponding to the table entry. Place one of the dice in this street segment to represent the jam. For a more difficult game use two traffic jams, moving both at the start of each round.

Making Up the Board

The last two pages of these rules are parts of a full size board for playing this game. Make two copies of each page and join them together to look like the grid in diagram 1.

Design Notes

1. Once I knew I wanted to write a pick-up-and-delivery game where the source and destination were tiles selected by drawing coins, I tried various movement methods. Putting all the tiles together and moving from tile to tile made for too small a board. Then I thought about spreading the tiles apart and moving in the spaces between the tiles.
2. The pawns that come with my [Mesomorph Games](#) 2nd edition set have a diameter that is just under a third of the width of a tile. This leads directly to the board layout used in the game.
3. At this point I decided on a taxicab game and that the tiles were the city blocks of a large city downtown.
4. Some numbers in the game may still need tweaking: the number of spaces each taxi moves per turn and the tip refusal threshold are the most likely things that may need changing.

History

20021102	mab	0.5	first posted version
20021107	mab	0.6	added front story, minor typo correction
20021210	mab	0.7	corrections from playtest comments
20030127	mab	1.0	final version for www.piecepack.org
20030322	mab	1.1	update for web page
20040807	mab	1.2	annual update and added design notes

Thank you for playing my game. Please report rules problems or variant suggestions to mark@biggar.org.

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