

Influence

An Icehouse Game

Basics: Influence is game of push and pull in which players play their pyramids onto a hex grid to exert influence on stones of three different colors. Whoever exerts the most influence on a stone, captures it. Capturing stones gives the players points, and the one with the most points at the end of the game, wins.

Materials: In 3 player games, each player needs 4 nests of a color of their choice, and one large and one medium pyramid from the 5th nest. In 4 player games, each player needs 3 nests of a color of their choice and one large pyramid from the 4th nest. You will also need 2 large pyramids of a fifth color (black or white is recommended) for a 4-player game. You will also need the following:

- A gameboard (see below)
- One Black stone
- Six Green stones
- Twelve White stones

(I find that the stones from Zendo are ideal, indeed this game was designed with only a Zendo set and a set of black stashes, but other stones may, of course, be used. You should be sure to use three colors and the correct number of stones)

Gameboard: The game is played on a hexagonal grid. You can get 1" hex maps at various local hobby stores, or print the later pages of this document on tabloid (11x17) paper, or on standard pages and tape them together. If you use a hex map from a hobby store, you may find it helpful to color the appropriate starting spaces for the stones as shown on the later pages of this document.

Setup: Place the black stone in the center hex, then place the six green stones in the six similarly colored spaces in the middle of the board (exactly two hexes straight out from the center). Finally, place the twelve white stones in the twelve similarly colored spaces around the edge of the board (each exactly two spaces out from the middle ring of stones).

Game play: Players should decide on who should go first. Often this is whoever lost the last game (as there can be an advantage to playing first. The first player chooses one of their pyramids and places it on an empty hex. Play then moves clockwise around the table.

Each pyramid played exerts a certain amount of influence on the stones next to it. This influence is equal to the number of pips on the pyramid (thus, 3 points for a large pyramid, 2 for a medium, and 1 for a small). When a stone is completely surrounded, add up the number of points of influence for each player and award the stone to the player with the most influence on the stone. If two or more players are tied for the most influence, then award the stone to the player with the next highest influence. If no one has

the next highest influence, or if players are tied for the next highest influence, then the stone remains on the board.

For example, in a 4 player game, Bob can play the sixth pyramid to surround a stone. He counts quickly and sees that David and Noreen both have 4 points of influence on the stone, Carol has 2 points of influence, and he has none. He plays a large (3-point) pyramid, and takes the stone since David and Noreen's scores cancel each other out, and his influence of 3 points makes him the next highest. If Bob had played a medium (2-point) pyramid, the stone would remain on the board as both he and Carol would have 2 points of influence.

Special: In a 4-player game, the players do not have enough pyramids to fill all of the empty hexes on the board. After the last player places his last pyramid, fill the remaining spaces with the 2 large pyramids of a fifth color (black or white is recommended). These pyramids exert 3 points of influence on the stones near them, and may even win a stone, or prevent another player from winning one (by tying or exceeding their influence).

Scoring: Once all stones have been awarded, award points as follows:
For each stone you have, you gain one point. For having the most white stones, gain 2 bonus points. For having the most green stones, gain 3 bonus points, and for having the most black stones, gain 4 bonus points (thus, the winner of the single black stone gains 5 points!). If two or more players are tied for the most stones of a color, award the bonus points to the player with the next highest number of stones of that color (if 2 players are tied for the next highest number of stones of that color, the bonus points are not awarded). The player with the most points, wins. In the case of a tie, the player who has the least number of stones wins (that is, whoever achieved that score using the fewest stones).

Strategy Tips:

While it can be tempting to get your 3-point pieces into play very quickly, they are often more powerful when played later in the game so that the owner may win a stone by forcing a tie for first and gaining second highest influence, as shown in the example above.

If you have already been awarded 7 white stones, or 4 green stones, you have guaranteed yourself the sole majority in those stones. Try to concentrate on winning stones of other colors once you have done this. Also, keep track of what stones each player has won. If, in a 4-player game, you notice that all the other players have 2 white stones, while you have 5, then you have the sole majority, and can safely concentrate on green stones hereafter.

Also, it is important to note that the green and black stones have 6 spaces where players can influence them, but the white stones have only 3 or 4 spaces.

You may wish to place the stones on their starting places randomly, rather than as prescribed above, as you become more familiar with the game.

