take-back-toe

A groovy little game by James Ernest

Take-Back-Toe was the winner of Daniel Solis' "1000-Year Games" contest in 2011.

Based on its average duration of six minutes, it falls short of the suggested 1000-year play time by approximately 525 million minutes.

We suggest that you use the extra hours to play every game in the world. You may then state with confidence that this one is awesome.

Or at least above average.

Components and Setup:

Take-Back-Toe is an abstract game for two players. You will need the following components:

40 Small Objects: stones, chips, coins, etc.
One 6-Sided Die

The playing area is an imaginary 3x4 grid. You can use a printed board if you wish, such as the one on page 2.

Put a stack of 10 chips in each of the four spaces across the middle row, as shown below. We say "stack of chips" but if your objects don't stack, that doesn't matter. All that matters is the number of objects in each space.

Player 1's row

Neutral Row

Player 2's row

Rules:

Players take turns. Start with a random player.

Start your turn by rolling the die.

You must now move *that number of chips* from one space to an adjacent space (orthogonally, not diagonally).

You can move chips from any single space.

No Short Moves: You must move exactly as many chips as the number you roll. If you can't move (for example, you roll a 6 and all the stacks are 5 or less), you skip your turn.

No Take-Backs: You cannot make a move that reverses your opponent's last move. You don't have to remember any farther back; revisiting older game states is legal.

Winning: To win, you must end a turn with three stacks of the same size, anywhere within your row.

Extended Play:

Alternate which player goes first.

After each game, the winner scores points based on the height of his winning stacks. For example, if you won with stacks of five, you earn five points.

Strategy:

This game has a chaotic driver (the die), but there is still a good deal of strategy, mostly in arranging things so that the majority of rolls will benefit you.

Try to arrange your side of the board so that different rolls can give you a winning move, and try to prevent your opponent from doing the same.

Take-Back-Toe was designed in 2011 by James Ernest and the Cheapass Games guinea pigs. Art by James Ernest. This version distributed by Crab Fragment Labs, Seattle WA.

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