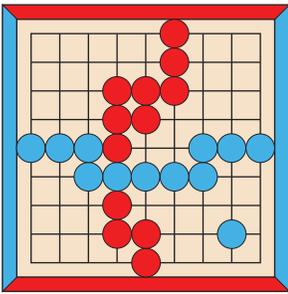
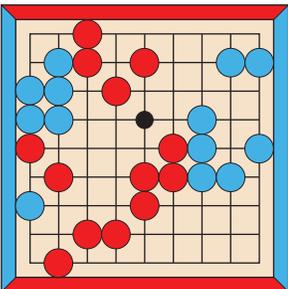


# CLEAR PATH

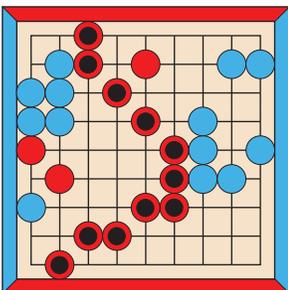
by Mark Steere



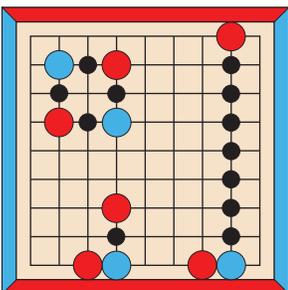
**Figure 1**  
Blue wins



**Figure 2**  
Illegal placement



**Figure 3**  
Illegal path



**Figure 4**  
Prohibited glyphs

## INTRODUCTION

Clear Path is a two-player connection game played on a square grid of any size, initially empty. The top and bottom board edges are colored red. The left and right edges are colored blue. The two players, Red and Blue, take turns placing their own stones onto unoccupied points, one stone per turn, starting with Red. Passing is not allowed, but if you have no legal placements available, your turn is skipped. Mark Steere designed Clear Path in March 2026.

**OIP:** Orthogonally (horizontally and/or vertically) Interconnected Path.

**ODIP:** Ortho-diagonally (horizontally, vertically, and/or diagonally) Interconnected Path.

## OBJECT OF THE GAME

You win if you form an OIP of your stones touching the two opposite board edges of your color. In **Figure 1**, Blue has won.

## CLEAR PATH RULE

You aren't allowed to completely block your opponent from connecting his two sides, unless you simultaneously form a winning path of your stones. In other words, you can't form an ODIP connecting your sides unless in doing so you also form an OIP connecting your sides. In **Figure 2**, Red is not allowed to place a stone on the point marked with a black dot. If Red did place a stone there, he would form the path marked with black dots in **Figure 3**. This ODIP completely blocks Blue from forming an OIP connecting the blue sides, but Red hasn't formed a winning OIP for himself. Therefore it was an illegal placement.

## PROHIBITED GLYPHS

The glyphs in **Figure 4** are the "exploded crosscut" and the "slender L." The black dots represent unoccupied points. Slender Ls of lengths 2 through N (the board size) are prohibited. Your placement must not form an exploded crosscut or a slender L of length 2 or more (in any reflection or rotation, or with reversed colors).

## PIE RULE

To make the game fair, Blue will have the option, on his first turn only, to swap colors with Red instead of placing a checker.

## DESIGN NOTES

Clear Path is an OOSCG (Orthogonal Only Square Connection Game). Almost all existing OOSCGs operate on the same principle: preventing deadlocks (where neither player can win) by preventing crosscuts (a 2x2 formation with two red stones on diagonally opposite points and two blue stones on the other two diagonally opposite points). Various techniques are used to prevent crosscuts from forming. Clear Path is radically different. You can form as many crosscuts as you like. In fact, doing so can be a useful tactic. Deadlocks are prevented by the clear path rule, together with the prohibited glyphs rule.

## AUTHOR'S NOTE

Feel free to publish this rule sheet and to program the game of Clear Path. No licensing fee or royalties are expected. However, please don't change the name or the rules, and please attribute the game to me, Mark Steere. My other games can be found at [marksteeregames.com](http://marksteeregames.com).