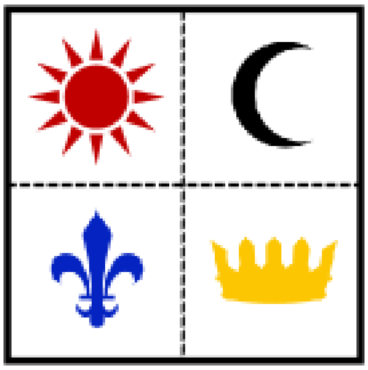
Easy Slider

A Changing Landscapes game
by RANDM Axes Games
(Ron and Marty Hale-Evans)



Version 0.3.0, 2003-03-09

Any number of players.
15 minutes and up.
Requires: One piecepack per player, an opaque bag, and a smooth, flat surface.

Introduction

Easy Slider is the first game in a new piecepack genre: the "B.Y.O.P.", or "Bring Your Own Piecepack" game. It can be played solitaire, or with as many players as there are piecepacks available. It can even be played over the phone or via online chat.

Players agree on how many rounds of the game they will play. (Three is a good number for beginners.) On each round, a Caller is chosen. (Callers need not rotate.) The Caller creates a random layout of tiles and randomly designates a strict order in which the tiles must be placed. All players then try to slide the tiles on their boards one at a time into the proper positions. The player who does so the fastest over the specified number of rounds is the winner.

Setup

The main goal for setup is for the Caller to generate a randomly arranged board and help all the players set up identical versions of it. This provides all the players with identical puzzles to solve.

1. The Caller shuffles all 24 tiles of his piecepack face down and lays them in a 5x5 board on the table, with a "hole" where the 25th tile would be in the lower right-hand corner.

2. The Caller throws all the coins in one suit except the Null into the bag, along with the four pawns. The other players set aside the Ace through 5 coins of one suit and their own pawns.

3. The Caller draws the four pawns from the bag one by one, announcing the color of each one as it emerges. He places them to the left of rows 1 through 4 of his board, in the order they were drawn. The other players place their pawns in a manner corresponding to the Caller's pawns.

4. The Caller draws the five coins from the bag one by one, announcing the value of each one as it emerges. He places them above columns 1 through 5 of his board, in the order they were drawn. The other players place their coins in order corresponding to the Caller's coins.

5. The Caller flips his face-down tiles over, moving from left to right on the top row, then moving to the second row, and so on down to the bottom, announcing the color and value of each tile as he does so. Example: "Blue 5, Green Null, Green 2, Red Ace...". The other players place the same tiles from their own sets into the corresponding positions.

6. For easier sliding, you should leave a little space between adjacent tiles (1/4 inch or 0.5 centimeters). If all your tiles are touching, their edges and corners will catch and snag on one another, making effective sliding next to impossible.

7. Each player's board should now resemble the following diagram. (It will probably differ in the order of pawns and coins, but every player's board should look the same as every other's.)

```
  2 4 5 A 3
K T T T T T
R T T T T T
B T T T T T
G T T T T T
  T T T T

Key: K = black pawn, A = ace coin, T= tile.
```

Game Play

1. At the Caller's signal, all players (including the Caller) now attempt to slide the tiles on their boards to their proper positions as designated by the pawns and coins around the outside of the board. For example, in the above diagram, the tile in the top left corner should be the Black 2 (2 of Moons), the second tile in that row should be the Black 4, the tile at the end of the second row should be the Red 3 (3 of Suns), and so on.

2. Tiles may not be picked up, but must be slid across the playing surface. Players move tiles sequentially around the 5x5 grid into the shifting "hole". (This may remind you of the "15 Puzzle", the little set of tiles held in a frame with numbers to put in order.) Players must slide only one tile at a time, and must keep each tile in only one column and one row at a time (except the tile currently being moved). Players must use only one hand to slide tiles.

3. All null tiles must be placed in the bottom row. They may be placed in any order, and the hole may be anywhere in the row. (This row is known as the "parity sponge", and guarantees that every Easy Slider board is solvable.)

4. The first player to finish his board calls "Done!" and the other players check his board to make sure it is correct.

5. If his board is correct, he receives a number of points equal to the number of other players he beat (for example, four points in a five-player game), and play continues.

6. If his board is incorrect, he receives zero points, and play continues. This is called a "fumble".

7. The next player to finish calls "Done!" and the process just described is repeated. (In a five-player game, the second player to finish would normally receive three points, because he beat three other players.)

8. Players continue to go out of the game until only one player is still trying to solve his board. That player receives zero points, and the round is over.
9. At the end of the round, every player who did not fumble, including the player who did not finish his board, receives one bonus point for every player who did fumble that round; all other players are considered to have beat every player who fumbled.
10. Play continues until the agreed-upon number of rounds has been played. The points gained by the players on each round are added to the points they gained on previous rounds. At the end of the last round, the player with the most points wins the game.
11. If there is a tie among players at the end of the agreed-upon number of rounds, the tied players engage in a final playoff round. At the end of the playoff round, the player with the most points wins the game.

Variants

This section contains alternate ways to play Easy Slider. If you have a suggestion for an Easy Slider variant, please email it to `rwhe@ludism.org`.

"Slide!"

The rules for Easy Slider, as written, make it into a fast-thinking, logical reasoning, dexterity game because of the speed aspect. During playtesting it was realized that an interesting variant is to take away the dexterity aspect and some portion of the fast-thinking aspect by preventing the various players from seeing each other's boards and then having the caller announce "Slide!" at equal time intervals, at which times each player *must* immediately slide a tile. Sliding at other times is not allowed. Thus, at the moment one player wins, all players will have made an identical number of moves. With short intervals the fast-thinking aspect is still there but the pressure isn't quite so high and there's more time for deeper planning. The character of the game changes because mistakes are more damaging but there's also more time to think before moving. It also somehow *feels* like there's more player interaction.

—Mike Schoessow and the Changing Landscapes playtesters

Antecedents

As mentioned in the rules, Easy Slider resembles the classic 15 Puzzle, often called the "19th-Century Rubik's Cube". In fact, the strongest influences on this game were the 15 Puzzle itself (Anonymous; popularized by Sam Loyd in the 1870s); Square Off (Alex Randolph; Parker Brothers, 1972); and Take It Easy (Peter Burley; FX Schmid, 1994), in that order.

The best way to improve at Easy Slider, besides playing it solitaire, is to practice the 15 Puzzle. Here are some links to web pages that give tips on solving the 15 Puzzle, and by extension, Easy Slider. (The first two pages should also clarify why the "parity sponge" row is necessary.)

`http://www.jimloy.com/puzz/15.htm`

`http://rec-puzzles.org/new/sol.pl/competition/games/15.puzzle`

`http://www.javaonthebrain.com/java/puzz15/technical.html`

During the design of this game, the designers became fond of a pocket edition of the puzzle from Binary Arts. It is made of enameled stainless steel, with a "chunky" solid feel, and only costs about US 10.00. (This is not a paid endorsement.)

`http://binaryarts.com/OurProducts/BA/01p_fifteen.htm`

Other Links

Official piecepack site:
`http://www.piecepack.org/`

Latest version of this ruleset in several formats, including HTML, PDF, and LaTeX :
`http://www.ludism.org/piecepack/easy-slider/`

Credits

Thanks to the members of Seattle Cosmic Game Night for playtesting Easy Slider, especially Tim Schutz, Steve and Nat Dupree, and Mark Haggerty. Thanks also to Mike Schoessow, the judge of the Changing Landscapes contest, and the playtesters for the contest: Lisa, Reinhard, Gabi, Shay, Wei-Hwa, Arik, Barry, and Santiago, for the "Slide!" variant and a rule clarification.

History

0.3.0, 2003-03-09: First post-contest version. Changed to $\LaTeX$ format. Added "Slide!" variant. Clarified that there should be spaces between tiles. Updated Credits. Added Other Links section.

0.2.4, 2003-01-16: Current version's text slightly revised and submitted to the Changing Landscapes piecepack game design contest.

0.2.3, 2002-10-20: Added "Confidential" notices; postponed FDL until release. Added History section.

0.2.2, 2002-09-11: Game more or less finalized.

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