

Chaos Cruisers

A Changing Landscapes game for the piecepack by Paul Elliot

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3-4 players – variable length

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Equipment: 1 piecepack, a pen & paper

Story

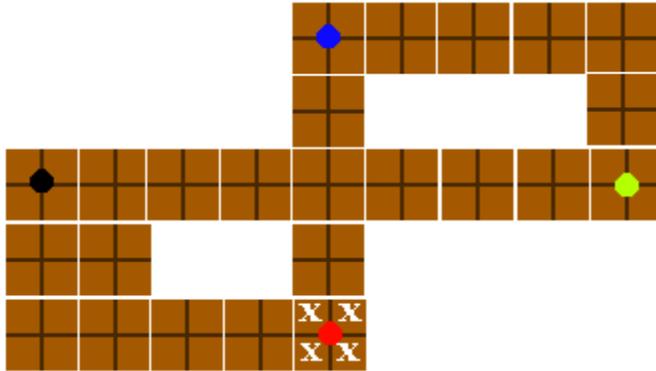
In the far future, ordinary racing has become obsolete. The fans have grown bored with driving around in loops at high speeds. So, a new genre of racing is born—the Chaos Cruiser. These unique hover-vehicles are designed for pure speed and maneuverability. And they'll need every bit of it because the racetrack is not what it seems. The track is made up of individual modules that shuffle about, ratcheting up the difficulty. Also, each driver has radio-controlled drones that can be placed as obstacles in their opponents' paths. In the midst of all this chaos, one wily cruiser will prove to be the fastest, most agile, and most crafty of them all. Who will earn the Chaos Cup?

Summary of Play

The piecepack tiles are laid out, so as to create a racetrack. Each player controls one cruiser, represented by a piecepack die. The number that is face-up on the die designates the speed of that cruiser. The coins have two uses. The null and ace coins are placed on the track as impassible obstacles. The 2, 3, 4, and 5 coins are used as nitro-boosts or shock-breaks, which greatly increase or decrease your speed. The pawns stand for the gates along the course. When a cruiser enters the tile containing a gate, he checks that gate off on the race progress chart. When all the cruisers have reached a certain gate, a chaos round is initiated, in which each player can move the two obstacles of his color. Also, the player in last place can move 3 tiles of the racetrack to entirely new locations. The first player to complete the race by passing through each of the four gates twice in the correct sequence is the winner.

Setup

First, each player takes the die and six coins of a single color. If only 3 players will be racing, remove the tokens of the fourth player from the game. Then, arrange the tiles in order to create the initial racecourse. The tiles should be place with the grid side up. Place a pawn on the middle point of the grid on each tile where a gate will be. This is the suggested initial setup:



The players each place a cruiser on one of the four squares of the tile containing the sun gate (on the Xs in the above diagram). The youngest player places his cruiser first, and the other players do likewise in age order. Alternatively, roll to determine the order. Either way, the cruisers begin with the null side face-up (that is, they have a speed of zero).

Play

The game begins with a cruising round. Cruising rounds continue until all the cruisers have completed a given gate, in which case a chaos round will commence. Then, cruising rounds will continue until the next chaos round is initiated, and so forth.

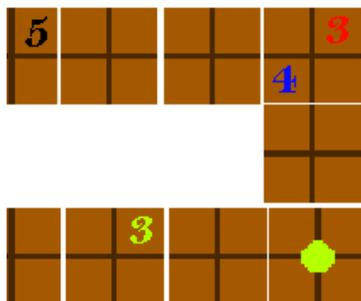
Cruising Round

The players each move their cruiser, starting with the cruiser in the lead and proceeding down to the cruiser in last place. At this point the cruising round is complete.

To determine which cruiser is in the lead:

1. The cruiser in the lead is the one that has reached the most gates (in the proper order) on the race progress chart.
2. In case of a tie on rule 1, the cruiser in the lead is the one that has the fewest spaces to traverse to reach the next gate in the race.
3. In case of a tie on rule 2, the cruiser in the lead is the one that has the highest speed (largest number showing on the die).
4. In case of a tie on rule 3, then flip a coin or roll a die to determine which cruiser is in the lead.

Use this same method to determine who goes second, third, and fourth in the cruising round.



In this example, the crown gate is next for all the cruisers. The yellow and blue cruisers are tied for distance to the gate (3 spaces). However, the blue cruiser has a higher speed (4 as opposed to 3), so he will move first. The yellow cruiser is next. Then, the red cruiser is third, and the black cruiser will take his turn last.

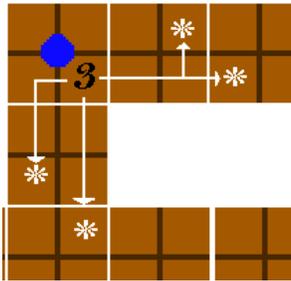
How to Move

First, the cruiser adjusts its speed. The player may choose one of the following options:

1. Increase by one (move the die to the next higher number).
2. Decrease by one (move the die to the next lower number).
3. Stay the same speed.
4. Play a speed coin (see below).

The speed of the cruiser can never be above 5 or below 0. If the action would raise the cruiser's speed to a number greater than 5, place the die at 5 instead. Likewise, if the action would lower the cruiser's speed below 0, place the die at null instead.

Then, the cruiser must move a number of spaces on the track equal to the number on its die. Null counts as zero (the cruiser stands still), and ace counts as one. The cruiser may move in any direction in a straight line (no diagonal movement). The cruiser is allowed to change direction by 90 degrees one time in the course of a single movement. There is no need to keep track of a cruiser's facing, however, as it may begin to move in any direction at the beginning of its next turn.



In this example, the black cruiser has set his speed to 3 for this cruising round. He can legally move to any of the spaces marked with stars (move 3 spaces with only one 90 degree turn allowed). This cruiser cannot legally reach any other spaces.

Moving Out-of-Bounds

A cruiser is out-of-bounds if it leaves the course or enters a space containing an obstacle. This may happen intentionally, but usually it will occur if a cruiser is going too fast or gets rammed by an opponent. If a cruiser's movement would cause it to move off of the course or to move into or through an obstacle, place the cruiser on the tile of the last gate that they passed. If they haven't passed a gate yet, the cruiser is returned to the starting tile of the race (sun gate). The player may choose which of the four squares of that tile to place his cruiser. Reset the speed of the cruiser to zero (null side up). On the next cruising round, that cruiser may continue the race normally.

Playing a Speed Coin

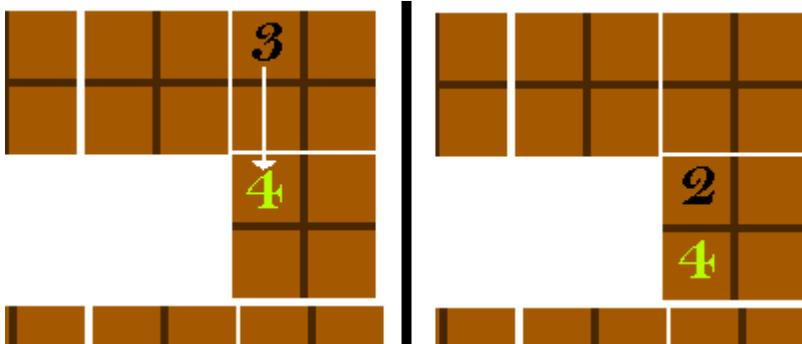
If a cruiser elects to play a speed coin when adjusting its speed, it may be used in one of two ways:

1. Nitro-boost: add the value of the coin to speed of the cruiser (to a maximum of 5).
2. Shock-breaks: subtract the value of the coin from the speed of the cruiser (to a minimum of 0).

After using a speed coin in either fashion, discard it. The null and ace coins cannot be played to adjust speed. Rather, they are used only as obstacles.

Ramming Another Cruiser

If your cruiser moves onto the same square occupied by another cruiser, immediately end your movement for the round (even if you have not moved the full number of spaces that are designated by the die). Move the cruiser into which you collided one square in the direction of travel. If this causes that cruiser to leave the course or enter a space containing an obstacle, note that it will be treated as above (i.e. they will be returned to the last gate that they passed). Also, reduce the speed of the cruiser that caused the collision by one (to a minimum of zero).



In this example, the black cruiser rams into the yellow cruiser. The black cruiser stops at the point of collision and reduces his speed from 3 to 2. The yellow cruiser is moved one space in the direction of travel. If that space had contained an obstacle or had been over the edge of the board, yellow would have been sent back to the last gate!

Race Progress Chart

Each time that a cruiser reaches a gate, place a check in the appropriate location on this chart:

| | Red Cruiser | Black Cruiser | Yellow Cruiser | Blue Cruiser |
|--------------|-------------|---------------|----------------|--------------|
| Moon Gate 1 | | | | |
| Crown Gate 1 | | | | |
| Arms Gate 1 | | | | |
| Sun Gate 1 | | | | |
| Moon Gate 2 | | | | |
| Crown Gate 2 | | | | |
| Arms Gate 2 | | | | |
| Sun Gate 2 | | | | |

Only place a check if the cruiser reaches the gates in this exact order.

Chaos Round

Once every single cruiser has reached a given gate on the race progress chart, a chaos round is initiated. It will begin as soon as the current cruising round is complete. These are the steps of the chaos round:

1. If the gate that was completed was the sun gate, every player retrieves the speed coins that have been previously discarded. These may be used as usual.
2. Remove all obstacle coins from the course, and return the coins of each color to the player whose cruiser is the same color. On the first chaos round of the game, this step will be unnecessary because the obstacle coins are not used in the initial setup.

3. The last player to have reached the gate that initiated this chaos round gets to rearrange the course. He may pick up and place 3 tiles in different locations, following these rules:
 - A. No tile containing a cruiser may be moved.
 - B. The four gate tiles may not be moved.
 - C. No tile may be moved or placed, so as to isolate a tile on the board. Every tile must be situated so that any cruiser can reach it.
 - D. Tiles must be placed in alignment with the other tiles, and at least one square on the tile that is being placed must be adjacent to at least one square on a tile that was previously on the board.
4. Determine the playing order for the next cruising round. Starting with the lead player and continuing to the player in last place, each player places one of their two obstacles (ace and null coins). Then, go around in the same order with players placing the other of their two obstacles. In both of these placements, these rules must be followed:
 - A. Obstacle coins must be placed within one square on a tile.
 - B. Obstacle coins may not be placed in a tile containing a cruiser.
 - C. Obstacle coins may not be placed in one of the four gate tiles.
 - D. Obstacle coins may not be placed, so as to isolate a portion of the board. Once again, every tile must be situated so that any cruiser can reach it.
5. Following these changes to the course, proceed with the next cruising round.

Game End

The game ends when one cruiser reaches the sun gate for the second time, having previously reached all the gates in the proper order, as shown on the race progress chart. That player is the champion and receives the Chaos Cup.

Variants

1. Try setting up the initial racecourse in all sorts of eclectic shapes. Be careful, though, not to make the board too impossible to complete.
2. Change the number of tiles that are moved during the chaos round. If more are moved, the game is more chaotic, and last place becomes rather appealing. If fewer are moved, it will be far more strategic. Try it without any movement of tiles for a twist.
3. Allow players to retrieve used coins on every chaos round. Alternatively, don't let players ever retrieve used coins.
4. To vary the game length, play with more gates and laps or fewer gates and laps.
5. For a two-player version, each player may control two cruisers. The winner is the first to complete the race with both of the cruisers.