

# BASIC PLAY, RULES AND STRATEGY GUIDE



**PENTAGO**<sup>™</sup>  
THE MIND TWISTING GAME



**MINDTWISTERUSA**<sup>™</sup>  
A EULERS PATH GAME COMPANY

## BASIC PLAY, RULES GUIDE

Welcome to Pentago, the mind twisting game from Sweden. In just minutes, this guide will show you how to play, explain the few rules that applies to Pentago play and give you some insight to basic Pentago strategy.

**STARTING/** The game starts with an empty game board, consisting of the base and the four twistable game blocks. Decide marble color of each player. To determine who goes first, disguise one of each color marble in your hands and have your opponent choose one hand. The chosen color goes first and places a marble anywhere on the game board.

**OBJECT/** The object is to get five marbles in a row before your opponent does. The mind twisting part of Pentago is that each player will also twist one of the four game blocks 90 degrees (one “notch”), clockwise or counter clockwise, as part of each turn. A 180 degree (double “notch”) twist is not allowed. The twist is the key to create winning positions in Pentago.

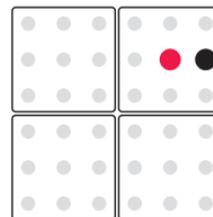
**PLAYING/** Players take turns at placing marbles on the game board and twisting the game blocks. A player is free to twist any of the game blocks, regardless of which game block the player placed the marble on. In the beginning of the game, there will be neutral game blocks, allowing a player to ignore the twist portion of their turn. A neutral game block is one that is empty or has only one marble in the middle of it. Twisting a neutral game block will have no effect on the positional nature of the game board so the twisting part of a move is optional while there are neutral game blocks.

**WINNING/** A winning row of five marbles can occur vertically, horizontally or diagonally, anywhere on the board and will span two or three game blocks. What seems like a simple five-in-a-row game quickly gets mind twisting as the board fills up and both players are twisting the game blocks, creating a constantly changing and challenging game scenario. You’ll want to really watch your opponents position as it relates to yours and play as much defensive as you do offense.

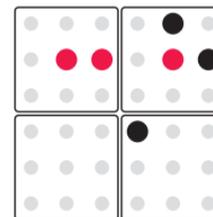
**SAMPLE GAME/** Here is an example of a game played between Red and Black (the colors of your marbles may be different). In this game, Red went first.



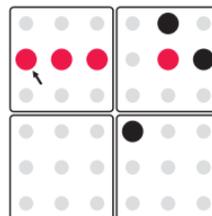
The game starts with an empty game board. This guides refers to positions on the game board as indicated by the numbers. Example; Position 2/5 refers to game block 2, the middle position.



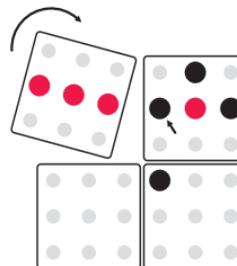
Red went first at 2/5, followed by Black at 2/6.



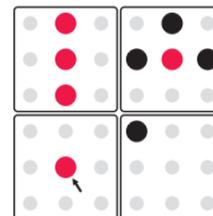
Both players have made three moves but neither has twisted a game block, since there hasn't been a need and one game block still remains neutral.



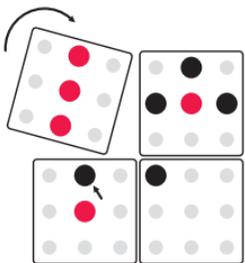
Red places a marble at 1/4 with no twist and goes on the offensive by getting three in a row on game block 1 and threatens to get five-in-a-row on the next turn. Now Black is in trouble.



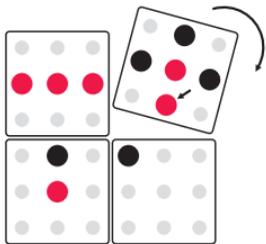
Black counters with blocking Red by placing a marble at 2/4 and twisting game block 1 right.



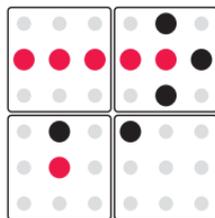
Red continues the offensive by placing a marble at 3/5. Red does not twist because game block 3 is still neutral and does not benefit from twisting at this point.



Black counters Red again by blocking Red at 3/2 with a marble and twists game block 2 right.



Red now delivers the final blow by placing a marble at 2/8 and twisting that game block right for the win.



The final position of the Red vs. Black game.

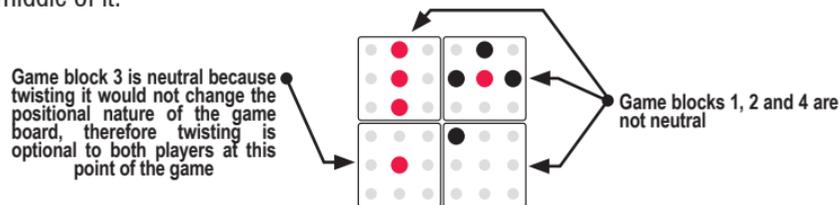
As this game shows, don't let your opponent get three in a row on one game block, or you'll be on the defensive, sometimes with losing results. On the other hand, sometimes playing defense for a few moves creates opportunities for you that your opponent may miss because he/she can get too busy trying to run the game.

At this point, play a few games to get a feel for Pentago play and the various strategies and logic used to create good game technique. The constantly changing game board will take a few games to get used to. Once you do, you'll love to explore all the perplexingly complex and deep logic that is required to conquer another seasoned player.

**TIES/** A tie can occur if both players have played all marbles and neither player has five-in-a-row. A tie can also occur if one player twists his/her marbles into a row of five, but also creates a row of five for the opponent. However, should one player be able to win by simply placing a marble on the board for a row of five, without twisting a game block, then that game is over, without that player having

to twist a game block, even if doing so would have resulted in the opponent also getting five-in-a-row.

**TWISTING THE GAME BLOCKS/** A player can choose to ignore twisting a game block in the first few moves of the game, while there are neutral game blocks. A neutral game block is one that is empty or has only one marble in the middle of it.



Twisting a neutral game block will have no effect on the positional nature of the game board so the twisting part of a move is optional while there are neutral game blocks.

This does not mean that the player cannot twist a game block in the beginning of the game, it is simply optional until such time that all game blocks have at least one marble on it that isn't in the middle, then you have to twist a game block as part of your turn.

**MATCH PLAY/** Playing a match is a common way to play Pentago. Match play consists of playing best out of five games, meaning the first player to win three games wins the match. Players alternate the start, since there is a slight advantage to go first. Determine who goes first in the first match (see page 2). The chosen color goes first in the first game of the match, then it alternates until the match is finished.

The rules to Pentago are also printed inside the box, in case you lose this guide. You can also download this guide in PDF format at [Pentago.com](http://Pentago.com).

## BASIC STRATEGY GUIDE

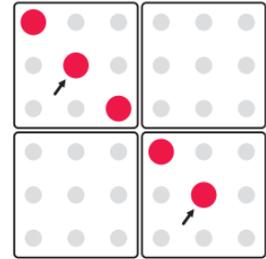
In Pentago, there are four ways to connect five marbles in a row for a win. Each one is illustrated on pages 7 and 8, with a few comments on its relative strength as a play, along with some inherent advantages and disadvantages.

The game board can get infinitely complex and provide a challenge to the most logically minded people. Because Pentago is so easy to learn, beginners can play the game right away and enjoy the simpler nuances of Pentago strategy and game play.

In three of the four ways to win, you need three marbles in a row on one game block, in order to complete the winning five-in-a-row. In most basic strategies, you'll want to place marbles in ways that creates three in a row on any one game block while preventing your opponent from achieving the same. You'll also need some strategically placed marbles on other game blocks to work with your set-up. Then on your turn, you strategically place a marble on another game block and twist a game block to almost magically form a winning row of five.

The play example on page 3 is a good example of first forming three in a row on one game block, then creating a winning move by placing a marble on another game block and twisting it into a victory.

Lets take a look at the four ways that a winning row of five marbles can occur on the Pentago board...



**[1] MONICA'S FIVE** [relative strength/3]  
 This is one of two diagonals plays and it goes right down the diagonal middle. It's a fairly obvious strategy and it's easy to defend against. It's called Monica's five because one of the designers girlfriend favored this technique. The designer considered this a weak strategy and mostly ignored it and ended up losing many a games to Monica. So while it is considered the easiest strategy to defend against, it can obviously be rather effective in certain situations.

**Advantage/** your opponent can consider this position weak and easy to defend against and ignore it.

**Disadvantage/** it is easy to defend against by placing just one marble in the middle of the cross corner opposite the game block that your opponent is building this set-up on, that stops your opponent from winning on this strategy.

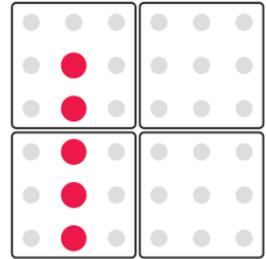
**Ways to increase its effectiveness/** place marbles on both middle positions of the cross corner game blocks (as indicated by the arrows), before developing three in a row on one game block.

**[2] THE MIDDLE FIVE** [relative strength/5]  
 This play is a horizontal or vertical row of five in the middle of two game blocks. Like Monica's five, it's fairly easy to defend against,

**Advantage/** if you have three marbles and the middle of an adjacent game block, it is a powerful position, especially if you have both middles of both adjacent game blocks, then it's almost always a certain victory (see play example on page 3).

**Disadvantage/** It's fairly easy to defend against and it's somewhat obvious. You just need to block two positions on the game board, the middle positions of the adjacent game blocks from the one that your opponent is building a three on.

**Ways to increase its effectiveness/** use in combination with other plays, especially the Triple Power Play.



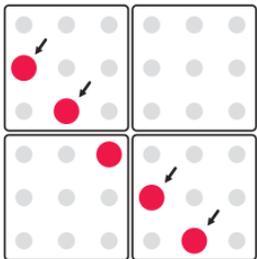
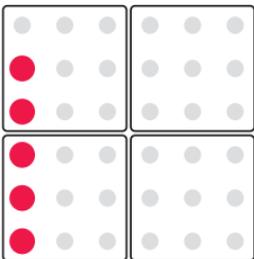
**[3] THE STRAIGHT FIVE** [relative strength/7]

The straight five is one of the most powerful plays on the board in that it takes a lot to defend against it, and even though the three in a row on one game block is obvious, its versatility makes for a powerful play.

**Advantage/** versatility that results in a powerful position that creates many deceptive ways of winning.

**Disadvantage/** it's not too hard to always make sure that you prevent an opponent from ever achieving the three in a row necessary to make this play. If your opponent does achieve three in a row on one game block, it's not too hard to make sure it's always twisted out of the way to prevent a win.

**Ways to increase its effectiveness/** after building three in a row on one game block, achieve several set-up positions for the win by strategically placing marbles on the adjacent game blocks that causes you to win no matter which way your opponent attempts to twist the game blocks away from defeat.

**[4] THE TRIPLE POWER PLAY** [relative strength/9]

This is the most powerful play of the game in that it is deceptive and versatile and it doesn't require three in a row on any one game block in order to set it up. It's fairly hard to defend against, and it has several different ways to set it up.

**Advantage/** deceptive, versatile and hard to defend against. While seasoned players will be able to spot the set-up early in the game, it is very deceptive once the board fills up.

**Disadvantage/** it's a bit vulnerable to your opponent twisting your set-up out of shape, even inadvertently.

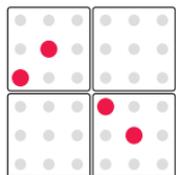
**Ways to increase its effectiveness/** make sure that you build positions where indicated by the arrows on cross corner game blocks, as the game develops.

**SETTING UP EACH WINNING PLAY**

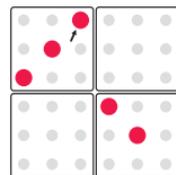
Below is a step-by-step guide of examples to set-up each of the four winning plays. There are many ways to build towards each formation, though we've just shown one example of each play below, except in the Triple Power Play, which is so versatile that it cannot adequately be illustrated with just one example.

Remember that Pentago is both simple and complex at the same time, which means that it is always good if you can use a measure of deception in disguising your moves, or forcing your opponent to play defense while you build a better positional advantage.

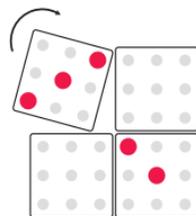
To keep things simple, only one player's marble color is shown in the examples, to illustrate how the set-up works. The idea is to build towards these positions, starting with the opening moves and throughout the game. Just remember to defend against your opponent doing the same.

**MONICA'S FIVE** [the set-up]**1**

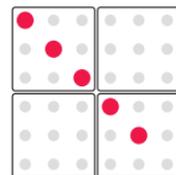
Build this set-up.

**2**

On your turn, place a marble at position 1/3, indicated by the arrow.

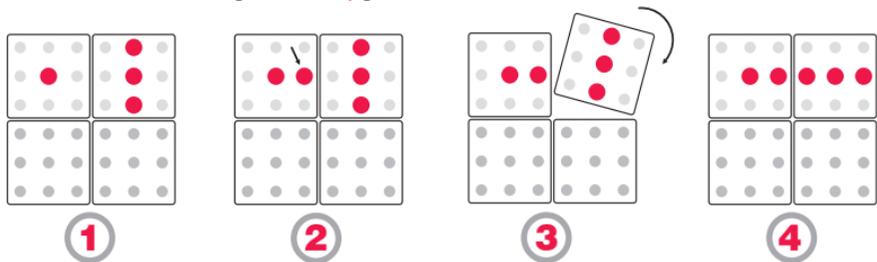
**3**

On the same turn, twist the game block 1 according to the arrow.

**4**

You just won by using Monica's Five!

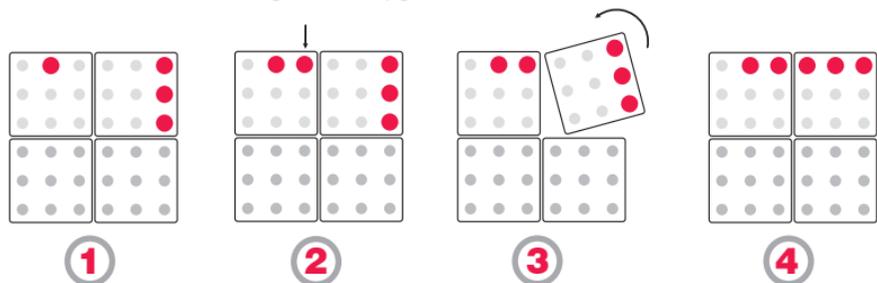
### THE MIDDLE FIVE [the set-up]



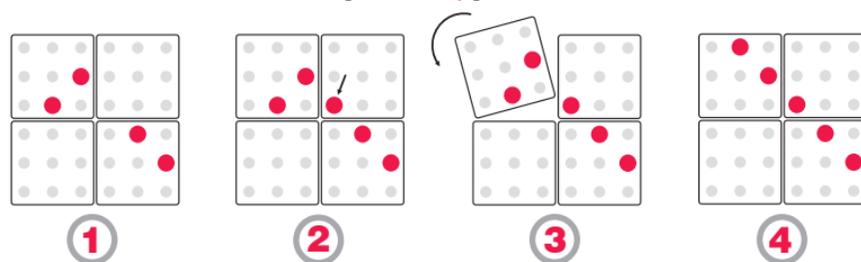
Every example is set-up just like the first one, in terms of;

- 1) Build towards this set-up as you play the game.
- 2) On your turn, place the marble..
- 3) ..Make the twist..
- 4) ..The win!

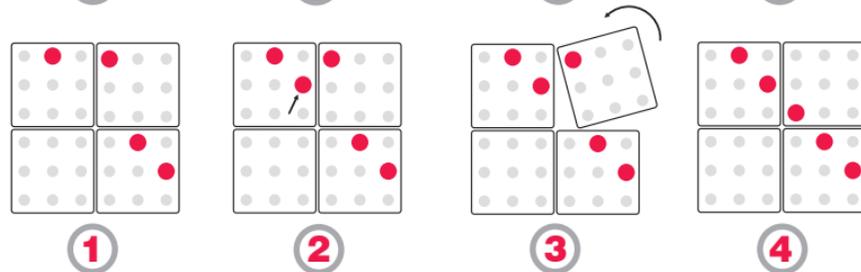
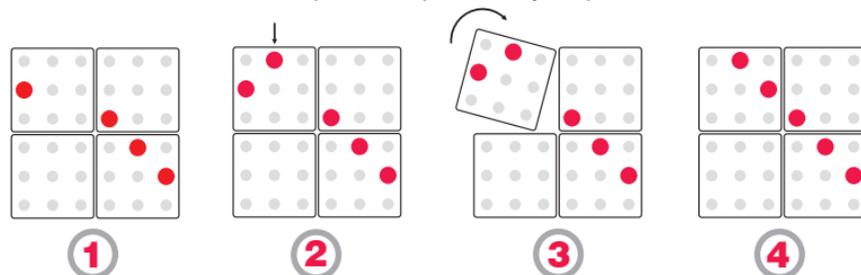
### THE STRAIGHT FIVE [the set-up]



### THE TRIPLE POWER PLAY [the set-up]



The Triple Power Play is very versatile and there are several ways to set it up. Shown below is two more examples of the Triple Power Play set-up.



# PENTAGO™

THE MIND TWISTING GAME

Now that you have the basic idea of playing Pentago, you'll have fun for hours with this simple yet complex and mind twisting game. For more information on Pentago and more advanced playing tips, see [Pentago.com](http://Pentago.com)



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