



Linos: The Game of Twelve Stones

Rules V 1.3, 5/4/2024, James Ernest

Introduction: In the *Dew Point* Universe ([Shipwrights of Marino](#), [After the Fog](#)) there is a forgotten game called *Linos*. Sets of these twelve stones have been found in all corners of the map, but with no record of the rules.

We are fortunate to be able to share Galliard Gaspar-Ewen's best approximation of the method of play for *Linos*, collected through years of travel across the forty skies.

Linos is still in open beta at Crab Fragment Labs, and we're pretty happy with it so far. We hope you'll try it out, and please [send us your thoughts](#).

Summary: *Linos* is a classic-style abstract game played with twelve stacking pieces called stones. Over the course of the game, each player will play six stones, scoring points for each.

The Name: Some scholars believe that "*Linos*" gets its name from the linen sack that holds the pieces. Others believe "*Linos*" refers to the stones themselves. Some claim that the word *Linos* refers to the "line" of stones. These guesses cannot all be right, but they might all be wrong.



The Pieces: *Linos* is played with a set of twelve oblong pieces called stones, six dark and six light. Each piece has the proportions 1 x 1 x 2. Our standard sets are roughly 20 x 20 x 40 mm, and our smaller “travel” sets are approximately 17 x 17 x 34 mm. You will also need one 6-sided die and 25 coins or other tokens for keeping score.

The Goal: Players take turns drawing stones from a line and playing them into a stack in the center of the table. Each play scores points, and the goal is to finish with the most points. Because there is a slight disadvantage for the first player, a fair match is composed of two games, with each player starting once.

The List: In the earliest forms of this game, players drew their stones from a sack. However, due to the many opportunities for cheating, this was replaced with a formal dice-driven mechanic, in which the pieces are taken from a line called *the list*.

Setting Up: Clear a space in the center of the table. Build the list, a line of stones, to one side, in an order as shown below: One white stone (O) at the front of the list, then alternating two of each black (X) and white (O), finishing with one white at the back.

Front → **O X X O O X X O O X X O**

The Pot: Place 25 coins or tokens in a *pot* beside the list. These coins are used for scoring.

On Each Turn:

Roll: Roll the die and count into the list from the front, pulling that stone to play. Close up the space where the piece was removed. If you roll *beyond the end of the list*, take the *first piece*.

Note: *When all remaining pieces are the same color, there is no need to roll.*

Place: Add your piece to the stack. The rules for placement are as follows:

General: A new piece can be played in any orientation, standing up or lying down, as long as it conforms to the grid of the existing pieces, with the exception of the *royal plays* described below.

The Basket: All pieces must be contained within a 3x4 footprint called the “basket,” the boundaries of which are established through play. No new piece can exceed this area.

Touching: Pieces are not required to touch. Early plays can be separated from the others, as long as they don't break the basket. Later on, contact will be inevitable.

Stacking: You may stack a new piece on other pieces. The new piece must be entirely supported by existing pieces, and it must conform to the grid.

Royal Plays: Two types of parallel plays are not permitted unless no other plays are available. These are called the “royal plays” or simply “royals.”

- **Jack:** Two pieces in a line, either standing up or lying down, is a *Jack*, and is a royal play. If the square ends of two stones are touching, this is a Jack.
- **Bales:** Two pieces alongside each other, with their entire side faces touching, is a *Bale*. This is also a royal play.
- Royal plays are permitted only when there are *no other options*.

Closed Boards: When only royal moves are available, this is a “closed board,” and royal moves may now be played. Such plays can often be very high-scoring. It can be to your advantage to force your opponent to leave a royal board, though this goal can be difficult to achieve.

Score: You score points based on two elements of the piece you play: its *neighbors* (pieces it touches) and its *height* (distance off the table).

Neighbors: The basic value of a play is calculated by adding the total number of *squares* where the new piece touches another piece *of a different color* (each side face has two squares, and each end face is one square).

The table (“the ground”) counts as a different color, which means that each square where a piece touches the table is worth one point. For example, if a new piece lies flat on the table, it scores two points from the ground.

Height: The value above is multiplied by the *height of the piece*, which is the level of the highest part of the piece. Pieces that are flat on the table are at level 1, a piece standing up on the table is at level 2, and so on. For example, if you play a piece that scores 3 points, and it reaches level 3, this earns a total of 9 points.

Note: The first play of the game will always be worth 2 points. It is either lying flat, and scoring two points on level 1, or standing up, and scoring 1 point on level 2.

Tracking Your Score: When you score points, you take coins from the pot if you can. Once the pot is empty, you *take them from your opponent instead*. This means that the value of later plays is twice the value of earlier plays, since your opponent moves back each time you move ahead. If you ever score more points than your opponent can provide, *the game ends immediately*.

The Final Play: The 12th move scores only *half value*, rounding down. This rule helps nullify the disadvantage of going first, though a perfect balance still requires two games.

Winning: Take turns until the last piece is played, or until a player scores more points than their opponent can pay. For a fair game, play twice, with each player leading once, and compare your total scores. (A fast finish counts as 25 points, no matter how many extra coins were owed.)

Origins: *Linos* is a forgotten game in the *Dew Point* universe, a world in which ancient cultures lie buried in an ever-rising fog. The game will be described in *The Conscript*, an epistolary novel by Galliard Gaspar-Ewen, a naval officer exploring the world of Skye.

Design Notes: James Ernest created the first prototype of *Linos* in 2019, but was stymied in his first attempts to bring the game to life. This new version was created in July 2023, and we're excited to see it moving forward again.

The "fire point" scoring system was developed with help from Greg Whitehead, whose analysis shows the first player with an *almost* 50% win rate.

This is still a preliminary rulebook. We hope to create something prettier once we have absolutely nailed down the rules. Meanwhile, please enjoy this rough version, and consider showing your support for Crab Fragment Labs by becoming a member on Patreon:

<https://www.patreon.com/crabfragment>

Playtesters Included: Tim Beach, Jessica Blair, Debbie Guskin, Joe Kisenwether, Roman Kutuzov, Lauri Miller, Carol Monahan, Lauren Tozer-Kilts, Shel Tozer-Kilts, Greg Whitehead, Jeff Wilcox