

Zilch Dice Game

Zilch is a dice rolling game that is fun to play for any number of players of all ages. Winning requires good luck, greed, and strategy. It is easy to play but the scoring is somewhat complicated.

Object

The object of the game is to have the highest score after reaching the game score.

Equipment

Six standard dice, score sheets (print as many of the enclosed Score Sheets [page 5] as needed and a copy of the Scoring Reference [page 6]), a pencil or pen, rules (print these rules), and a dice cup (optional). The game is best played on a hard surface to assure brisk random rolls of the dice.

Terminology

- **Die.** A die is one dice.
- **Dice.** Dice are more than one die.
- **Turn.** A turn starts when a player begins rolling the dice and it finishes when the player *zilches* or banks a score. Turns rotate clockwise from the starting player.
- **Round.** A round is completed when each player has completed a turn.
- **Counter.** Counters are dice that may used to accumulate points during a turn.
- **Points.** Points are the value of counters. The points may be accumulated if the player so desires.
- **Accumulated Points.** These are the points a player has accumulated during a turn but has not yet banked.
- **Frozen die/dice.** Frozen die/dice are counters that have been added to the accumulated points. These counters are put aside and not rolled again during the turn.
- **Bank.** To bank, a player quits rolling, end the turn, and uses the accumulated points as a final score for the turn. This score is added to the player's total score. The first accumulated points to be banked must be at least 500 points.
- **Get on the Board.** Once a player is on the board, the player is allowed to bank points. To get on the board, the first accumulated points to be banked must be at least 500 points. After a player is on the board, the player must accumulate a minimum of 300 points before banking is allowed.
- **Total Score.** The total score is the running total score of each player.
- **Game Score.** The game score is the previously agreed upon total score a player needs to reach to be declared the winner of the game. Usually 10,000 points.
- **Zilch.** A *zilch* occurs when there are no points are accumulated during a turn or a player does not roll at least one counter on any roll. When *zilched*, the player scores zero points and the turn ends.
- **Turning the Corner (turnover).** Any time ALL six dice are *counters*, the points are banked, and the player rolls ALL six dice again for another turn. If a player *zilches* after turning the corner, the accumulated score for the extra turn is lost but the points for the corner-turning turn are still banked. The first turnover is called *Greater Glory*. A turnover while in *Greater Glory* is called *Greater Greater Glory*. It is possible to have even more *Greater Glories*.

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Absolute Integrity of Rolls

All rolls must be complete. Dice release must be simultaneous and well controlled. The dice must land flat on the rolling surface. An exception occurs when a die/dice lands on score paper that is flat on the table and of virtually no thickness. In this case, the roll is not disqualified.

Active interference with the dice is not allowed. Passive accidental interference is allowed, as long as the die/dice position was clearly established before the interference.

Players are expected to observe each roll carefully and politely call attention to invalid rolls. Upon determination by the players that a roll is invalid, the roll (NOT the whole turn) must be repeated.

Before beginning play

- Establish the game score for the game, such as 5,000, 10,000, or 15,000.
- Establish any optional rules that will be used.
- Select the starting player (using any method). There is no advantage or disadvantage to going first.

To play a turn

- **Player rolls all six dice on the first roll.**
- **At least one counter must be put aside (frozen) with each roll.** When no counters are rolled, the player *zilches*, receives a zero score, and the turn ends.
- **Player rolls remaining unfrozen dice.**
- **Continue rolling.** A player may continue to roll unfrozen dice and accumulate points as long as the player rolls at least one counter and freezes at least one counter on each roll.
- **Once points have accumulated (must have at least 500 points to initially get on the board), a player may choose to bank the points and end the turn, or the player may choose to continue rolling.**
- **If a player uses all six dice as counters** (on a single or multiple rolls), the player can roll all six dice again to add more points, but a *zilch* will cause the all the accumulated points to be lost, unless they were earned by turning the corner. In this case, the new accumulated points are lost but the corner-turning points remain banked.
- **When a player banks the accumulated points or rolls a *zilch*,** the next player to the left rolls.
- **Once a player reaches the game score,** other players are allowed one more turns to try to catch the lead player. The player with the highest total score at the end of the round wins.
- **In case of a tie,** the tied players play a round until a winner emerges. It is customary to circle the score of the first player to reach the game score to serve as a visible target for the other players to roll for. Any subsequent winning scores are circled more boldly.

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Scoring System

- **One** = 100 points
- **Five** = 50 points
- **Three Ones** = 1000 points
- **Three of a kind** = the value of the dice multiplied by 100. For example: three 2's = 200 points or three 6's = 600 points.
- **Four, five, or six of a kind** = the three of a kind value multiplied by 2 for each extra die. For example: for five 2's, take the score for three 2's, which is 200 points, and double it once for the fourth 2 to get 400 points, and then double it again for the fifth 2 for a final result of 800 points.
- **Special combinations of six dice** (all dice must be thrown in one roll):
 - **1, 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6** = 1500 points
 - **Any three pairs** (e.g. 1, 1, 4, 4, 6, 6) = 1500 points
 - **No scoring dice** (e.g. 2, 2, 3, 4, 4, 6) = 1500 points
- **After three consecutive zilches**, subtract 500 points.

Optional rules

- **Pyramiding**. This option gives the players the opportunity to *pyramid* counters. Frozen die/dice may be used with a counter(s) of a following roll. For example, after freezing a 1 on roll one with an accumulated score of 100 points, roll two of the five remaining dice results in two more 1's. Combining these two 1's with the already frozen 1 would result in three 1's and an additional 1,000 points or a total of 1,100 points, etc.
- **Challenging**. This option gives each player the opportunity to use one or two turns during a game as a *challenge turn*. The player must announce the player to be challenged before rolling the dice. For that turn only, the player banks the accumulated points and subtracts the same amount from the challenged player's total score.
 - On the first challenge, the player must be on the board and not have reached the game score. If the player *zilches*, 600 points are subtracted from the player's total score.
 - On the second challenge, the player must have reached the game score. If the player *zilches*, 2000 points are subtracted from the player's total score.
- **Surpassing**. This rule option requires a player not only to have the minimum accumulated score to bank the score, but the minimum accumulated score must also must top the previous player's turn score.

Late players

It is customary to allow late players to join the game as long as the game is not too close to being completed. This is called *rabbiting*. The player joins the table. Whenever it is the late player's turn, the player takes turns until caught up with the previous player's number of turns. Similarly, if a player is unable to return to the game when it is time to take one or more turns, that player is entitled to catch up on turns by rabbiting. Catching up takes place only when it is that player's turn.

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Strategy

While there is a strong element of chance when playing *Zilch*, it is still possible to use strategy to improve the possibility of winning the game. However, some successful players ignore strategy and odds, and just rely on luck and intuition.

- **If two consecutive *zilches* have already been made**, the player should bank any accumulated points as soon as they reach the 300-point threshold to avoid the penalty for three consecutive *zilches*.
 - **The more dice used in each roll, the better the odds of rolling counters.** For example, taking out two 1's and one 5 from a first roll leaves only three dice for the second roll. Consider taking only one or both 1s and leaving the 5 with the remaining dice to increase the odds of rolling something better. In a similar way, three 2's uses up three dice but score only 200 points. If possible, take out one of the 2's and to increase the odds for better points on the next roll.
 - **If only rolling one die, there is a two in three chance of *zilching*.** When only one die remains, if there are enough points to bank, bank them and end the turn.
 - **Once a player has reached the game score, take risks to earn as many points as possible.** There is nothing to lose and a lucky roll could see a player coming from behind to take the lead. Strategically, until your score exceeds the highest opponent's score, you should not worry about rolling a *zilch* on your last turn.
 - **Close to reaching the game score.** Once you reach the game score, you are done; you cannot score any more points. Since the other players will get one last roll, if your total would only make or barely break the game score, you may want to purposely *zilch*. When you *zilch* while trying for a more secure margin of victory, you get one or more opportunities on subsequent turns to do even better. You want to break the game score by a large margin, especially if other players are close to the game score.
 - **Probability.** The chances of *zilching* immediately are:
 - 6 dice - 2.3%
 - 5 dice - 4.6%
 - 4 dice - 15.8%
 - 3 dice - 27.8%
 - 2 dice - 44.4%
 - 1 die - 66.7%
- If you keep going until you *zilch* or turnover:
- 3 dice - turnover 24.5% - *zilch* 75.5%
 - 2 dice - turnover 25.9% - *zilch* 74.1%
 - 1 die - turnover 33.3% - *zilch* 66.7%
- **Greed.** Players with large leads typically are not as greedy as players who are far behind.
 - **Freezing.** Often players discard extra 1's or 5's or even low scoring a 3 of a kind so as to roll as many dice as possible. For example, a high scoring 3 of a kind is more likely with 5 dice than with 3 dice. The chance of *zilching* with a lot of points (after turnovers) is greatly reduced when rolling at least 4 dice.
 - **Number of dice.** It is usually better to roll 1 die or 3 dice instead of 2 dice. 3 dice have fewer immediate *zilches* than 2 dice; however, 1 die offers a much better chance at reaching Greater Glory.

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Total:						
Score:						
Total:						

Scoring Reference

Players must first accumulate at least 500 points to bank them and get on the board.

Once on the board, players must accumulate at least 300 points to bank them.

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