

Dots and Boxes

Host card | 2 per board players | Approx. 10-15 minutes | 1.0.0

Join neighboring dots with one line at a time. Complete a box to claim it and take another turn.

Bring and set up

Paper and pencils, or the on-screen practice board.

Draw three rows of three dots, evenly spaced. This creates four possible boxes. Choose a different initial or symbol for each player.

Agree who takes the first turn. Lines may connect only immediately neighboring dots horizontally or vertically, never diagonally.

How to play

1. On your turn, draw one missing line between neighboring dots. If it completes no box, the turn passes to the other player.
2. If your line completes one or two boxes, place your symbol inside each completed box and take another turn. Repeat while you keep completing boxes.
3. When all boxes are claimed, count the boxes belonging to each player. More boxes wins; equal counts are a draw.

Two boxes from one line

Two neighboring boxes can share their last missing side. Drawing that shared line completes both boxes, so the player claims both and keeps the turn. Each box counts once even though one line completed two.

Three-part session

1. Four boxes: Play on a three-by-three dot grid. Say whether each line completes a box before passing the turn.
2. Swap the start: Use a fresh grid and let the other player begin. Watch for a line that gives the opponent an easy box.
3. Explain the extra turn: At the first completed box, pause and explain why the same player goes again. Finish and compare the four claimed boxes.

Offer support

Use the four-box grid and let the adult mark completed boxes immediately. Point out legal neighboring dots before each turn.

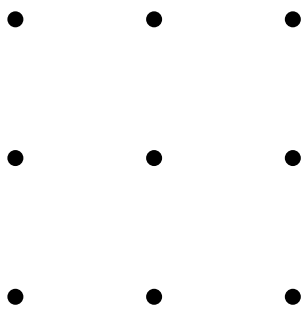
If something goes wrong

Do not count a three-sided box. If a line completes two boxes, award both immediately; if the board is full, the game ends even though the last player would otherwise keep the turn.

Finish together

Count all boxes: the two scores must add to four on the small board. Discuss where a long chain became available.

Blank practice board



Party Puzzle Parcel | Free host materials | Adult-led session; time is a planning estimate.
Rules reference: Project Gutenberg 8439; making squares. Original modern host instructions.