

Noughts and Crosses: Pair Challenge

Host card | 2 per board; rotate pairs for a group players | Approx. 10-15 minutes | 1.0.0

Take turns marking a three-by-three grid. Play a short match, swap who starts, and discuss a move before trying again.

Bring and set up

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

Draw two vertical and two horizontal lines to make nine spaces. One player uses X and the other O.

Choose who starts and agree to switch the starting player for the next game. Keep one mark in each occupied space.

How to play

1. Players alternate placing one mark in an empty space. A placed mark stays where it is.
2. Three of your marks in one row, column or diagonal wins immediately. If all nine spaces fill without a line, the game is a draw.
3. Record the outcome and switch the starting player. After two games, a group can rotate partners without ranking players who have played different numbers of games.

Recognising the diagonal

If X occupies the top-left, center and bottom-right spaces, X has won even if the bottom row is incomplete. If a square already contains O, X must choose an empty square rather than overwrite it.

Three-part session

1. Learn the grid: Play one game and check all rows, columns and diagonals after each move.
2. Swap the first turn: Start a new grid. The other player goes first; discuss a possible immediate win or block before placing a mark.
3. Explain a choice: Play a third game if both players want to. Pause once and explain which line a proposed move helps or blocks.

Offer support

Point out all eight possible winning lines before play. Let a child say or point to a space while an adult marks it.

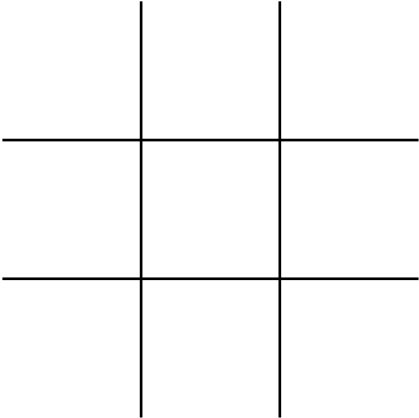
If something goes wrong

If a winning line was overlooked, stop at the first established win and begin a fresh grid. Agree to check after every move to avoid disputes.

Finish together

Count wins and draws separately and switch who starts. Ask each player to explain one defensive move.

Blank practice board



Party Puzzle Parcel | Free host materials | Adult-led session; time is a planning estimate.
Rules reference: Project Gutenberg 25660; naughts and crosses. Original modern host instructions.