

Diplomacy

What's the best way to learn Diplomacy and become good at it?

Dive in and start swimming. Diplomacy is easy to learn. The basics of moving, attacking, and supporting can be mastered pretty quickly by setting up the board and some pieces and then working out a few sample moves, either with friends or solitaire. Becoming an accomplished player, however, takes practice and experience. Many helpful articles on how to play Diplomacy well can be found here and on other web sites. There's also an excellent booklet, *The Gamer's Guide to Diplomacy* by Rod Walker. If you're lucky enough to find a copy, it's well worth buying.

There's no substitute, however, for playing the game with good players. Don't expect to win your first few games against experienced players, but do expect to learn a lot. Whatever happens, don't take it personally. Be friendly, ask questions, pay attention to what others are saying and doing, remember that it's just a game, and your understanding and your play will improve rapidly.

Can I dislodge my own unit?

No. There is no situation where a unit can be dislodged by another unit of the same country, no matter how much support the attacking unit has. Furthermore, you can't support another country's unit in an attack against one of your units. Such an order is invalid.

What happens when two units are ordered to retreat to the same space?

Both units are disbanded. This happens fairly frequently and not always by accident.

Does any attack against a fleet disrupt a convoy?

No. A convoy is not disrupted unless one of the convoying fleets is dislodged. (A "convoying fleet" is one that an army actually passes through, not just one that is supporting the convoy).

Can a unit be disbanded voluntarily in a winter phase in order to be rebuilt somewhere else or as something different?

Not unless it was dislodged. Only dislodged units and units that can't be supplied can be voluntarily disbanded.

I've heard of Diplomacy variants; what are they?

Diplomacy variants are games that use the same basic rules as Diplomacy but a different map or, in some cases, altered rules. Variants can shift the game to a different historical period (ancient Rome or feudal Japan, for example), to a fictional setting (Middle-Earth or Barsoom), make the game larger or adapt it for more or fewer players, or add different types of units, money, and other special rules. Hundreds of variants are played online. Diplomacy can easily be modified to fit a game of almost any size, in almost any setting; that's one of its great strengths. Playing a variant is a fun way to inject interesting new strategic problems into the game.

Where can I find more Diplomacy resources online?

The online magazine [The Diplomatic Pouch](#) is a tremendous one-stop resource for Diplomacy players. If you can't find what you want there, the site has links to most other Diplomacy-related web sites.

Try [rec.games.Diplomacy](#) for an open, unmoderated discussion forum. There are also Diplomacy email lists at [Yahogroups.com](#) and [MSN.com](#), plus a Diplomacy webbing and numerous other Diplomacy-related bulletin boards.

Can I get Diplomacy maps to view or print out with my computer?

Hundreds of different electronic maps, both for standard and variant games, can be found at [The Diplomatic Pouch](#) maps page and other web sites.

What are FTF, PBM, and PBEM Diplomacy?

These are the three main ways Diplomacy is played.

FTF stands for "face to face." It refers to games played the traditional way, by a group of people sitting around a table. An FTF game of Diplomacy can be played in an evening and is often more like a raucous party than a boardgame, with people sneaking off in groups for secret conferences and furious last-minute negotiations.

PBM stands for "play by mail." It refers to games that are played by sending letters back and forth between players or calling each other on the phone. Players in PBM games often never actually meet one another. PBM games are played at a stately pace and can take a very long time (years) to conclude. There's something about writing letters, however, that gives a PBM game a distinctive grace and gravitas.

PBEM stands for "play by electronic mail." It refers to games that are played via the worldwide web using email. This is now probably the most common means of playing Diplomacy. At any given time there are hundreds or thousands of PBEM games going on. Geography is no barrier; players from around the world can participate as easily as players from down the street. PBEM is considerably faster than PBM, but online games can still take months to reach a conclusion. Electronic maps make variants easy to play online.

Which type of game turns out to be best for you is largely a matter of taste.

What's the best way to link up with other people interested in playing Diplomacy?

[The Diplomatic Pouch](#) web site lists clubs and organizations around the world that are accepting new players for all types of games. "Players Wanted" listings are a common feature of most Diplomacy-related web pages, bulletin boards, and emailing lists. For players in your area, check at local game and hobby stores and university bookstores or common areas. Many have a bulletin board where customers and students can tack up notices seeking players for any sort of game. If there are no notices already, post one of your own.

We have a complex situation and can't figure out how to implement the orders. Where can we get help?

The first thing to do is check the rule book. The rules are short, but a lot of information is crammed into them. You're probably just forgetting a rule and need your memory refreshed. Also look at the examples and see whether one of those is similar to your situation.

Walk through the orders step by step.

Usually, the action can be broken down into discrete sections on the map. A complex set of actions between England and Germany, for example, might not have any effect on, or be affected by, nearby actions between French and Italian units. That lets you focus entirely on England and Germany, ignoring those other units until the first situation is resolved.

Simple techniques for displaying orders right on the board often help. For example, a unit with orders to attack can be placed with its nose edging slightly into the space it's attacking; a unit that is holding can be placed as close as possible to the center of its space; a unit that is supporting can be positioned near (but not quite touching) the border where its support is directed; and a unit that is dislodged can be laid on its side (or stood on end, if you have the old wooden blocks). Such visual cues clarify the actions and often make a murky situation suddenly clear.

If you still can't get to a resolution, then you probably need outside help. The best approach is to place a simple, short message on one of the Diplomacy newsgroups, bulletin boards, or mailing lists. Don't go into detail on the problem, just state its nature briefly and ask anyone who's willing to help to email you directly. There are plenty of friendly people online who will be happy to help. All they ask is that you don't clutter the community bandwidth with lengthy, detailed descriptions in your requests for aid.

[Download the rules](#) to *Diplomacy*.