

Mexican Train Rules

Preparation

A match may begin on the Double 0 with the series played forward or on the Double 12 with the series played backward. Players begin a match by starting the first game with the Double 12, the second game with the Double 11 and thence on to the final 13th game of the match that starts with the Double blank domino or the reverse beginning with the Double 0 and ending with the Double 12.

To begin, the dominoes are shuffled face down in circles with the flat of the hand. Players locate the Double 12 or the Double 0 to begin the game and place it in the centre of the Mexican Train Hub.

Depending on the number of players, each player draws a set number of dominoes. Up to 4 players take 15 dominoes each, 5 or 6 take 12 each, 7 or 8 take 10 each.

The remaining dominoes are termed "sleeping" tiles or the "Boneyard".

The hub is placed in the middle of the table and each player selects a slot on the outer edge that is facing them to be the starting point for their train.

One additional slot is chosen to be the starting point for the 'Mexican Train' and the Mexican Train marker is placed in this slot to denote it as such.

The First Turn

Each player chooses one domino from the "Boneyard". The player with the highest number on either side of a domino starts and players then take turns in a clockwise direction.

The player starts their 'train' by putting their first domino into their chosen slot on the hub. The end pointing towards the middle must match the central hub domino. They then continue to extend this 'train' by adding more dominoes from their hand until they can't put down any more.

Subsequent Turns

At each subsequent turn, a player can put down only one domino on any of the trains that are available to that player. The turn proceeds as follows:

1. If possible, the player plays a domino to one of the available trains (see below) and that is the end of the turn.
2. Otherwise, the player takes a domino from the boneyard. If possible, the new domino from the boneyard is played to one of the available trains (see below) and that is the end of the turn.

3. If the player still cannot play, then the player places a marker on the domino at the end of their train, thus making that player's train available for all the other player's to use.
4. Whenever a player plays a domino to their own train, if their train has a marker on it, the marker is removed.
5. If a player plays a Double, then that player immediately has another turn to "satisfy" the double.

If a player is unable to start their train in their first turn, they simply put their train marker next to their slot. If, in a later turn, the player draws a domino that enables them to start their train, they can only play this one domino and remove their marker. The opportunity to play multiple dominoes only happens on the first turn.

Upon their turn, another player may play a domino to start an empty train slot if the train is down.

Available Trains

Any of the following trains are available to the player:

- The player's own train.
- The Mexican Train (if not yet started, the player can start the train with a domino matching the central Double, but only when all players have started their own train.
- Another player's train but only if it has a marker on it.

Playing Doubles

The basic and most common rule for Doubles play is that where a Double exists at the end of any train, the Double must then be 'satisfied' (laid against) in the next turn, even if the Double is on another player's train that is not marked. All other available trains are ignored, and if the player cannot play against the Double immediately or after drawing from the Boneyard, the player must place a marker on their train and play passes to the next player who must also try to "satisfy" the Double from either their remaining set of tiles or draw one from the Boneyard. If they cannot "satisfy" they must place a marker on their train and play again passes to the next player – continuing until such time as the Double is "satisfied". This rule would not normally apply during the special first round of play.

When playing the compulsory Double play rule, it can happen that a Double is placed at the end of a train and that all dominoes to match that Double have already been laid. This Double has to then be ignored from that point on (otherwise the game would come to a halt). Some people will then stack the double on the previous tile of the train to indicate that the train has permanently stopped.

Winning/Scoring

The aim is to be the first player to get rid of all the dominoes in their hand. As soon as this happens, even if the last tile is a Double, the game ends.

The winning player scores zero; the other players score the total of the number of spots on the dominoes still left in their hands.

The double 0 remaining in a player's hand counts as 50 points.

A series of games are played going backward from the double 12 or forward from the double 0, and whoever has the least points at the end of the series, wins the match.

Special Situations

If there are 8 players, there won't be a slot available on the hub for the Mexican Train so it has to start by itself a little way away from the hub.

If a player is unable to play and the Boneyard is empty, the player must simply pass and ensure that a marker is placed upon their train.

In the rare case that a player plays out all their dominoes in their first turn, the other players are all allowed to also complete their first turn. Only once each player has completed their first turn does the game end and scores are counted up.