

What Blind Ninjas?

An Icehouse game of moving silently.

Authors: Matthew Chmielewski and Payton Swick

Players: 2-4

Last updated: 2004-11-16

Overview:

Each player has sent their ninjas into a room to hunt the enemy ninjas. Unfortunately the ninjas are all blind, and therefore can use only their amazing sense of hearing to locate their enemies.

Materials:

- One Icehouse stash per player.
- For a two player game, each player needs a 4 x 8 grid (half a chess board).
- For a three or four player game, each player needs a 8 x 8 grid (a full chess board).
- A folder or other divider for each player to hide their grid.

Setup:

- Each player's grid needs to be labeled so that each grid square has a unique label. For example, the vertical columns could be A, B, C, D, etc. and the horizontal rows could be 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8. All of the grids need to look the same.
- Each player puts their grid in front of them.
- Use the dividers to hide the grids so that each player can see only their grid.
- Each player places four small icehouse pieces ("ninjas") lying on their sides, on the bottom of that player's grid pointing toward the rest of the grid.
- The player who last gave food or drink to the other players goes first.

Goal:

To be the last player with a ninja remaining on their grid.

Gameplay:

- Conceptually, all of the ninjas are in the same room and on the same grid. Because they cannot see, however, the separate grids are used.
- Players take turns giving orders to their ninjas, and then play proceeds to the right.
- On their turn, each player may give each of their ninjas one of four possible orders: Move, Turn, Stand, or Slash! Any Slash! orders must be given at the end of a player's turn, after all other orders have been given.

Orders:

- Only the Slash! order is spoken out loud. The other orders are completely silent.
- Move: Move the ninja one square in the direction they are pointing. They move slowly for stealth. A ninja may not occupy the same space as another ninja of that same player. Ninjas of different players may occupy the same space on the grid, because they don't see each other and pass right by.
- Turn: Turn the ninja to face any other direction (horizontal or vertical only).
- Stand: The ninja does not move at all.
- Slash!: The ninja slashes with his sword at the square directly in front of him. The player says "Slash!" and then the label of the grid square where he slashes. (Eg: "Slash! B-3!".) If any ninjas are in that grid square, they are instantly slain and removed from the grid. Each player who loses a ninja must make a grunting sound, otherwise, they should make a swishing sound, like this: "Swish!". In any case, all the other ninjas hear the hiss of the sword slash and know exactly where it was, although they do not know where the ninja is who made the slash.

Strategy:

During the game, it will be essential to figure out where the other players' ninjas are hiding. To help, whenever a slash is heard, each player should mark that grid square with an upright medium pyramid. At the beginning of a player's turn, they may wish to remove these "markers", as the more time that has passed since the mark was made, the more likely the ninja who made the slash is no longer near it.

More "marks" can be made as necessary, even using multiple colors and sizes of pyramids to represent different players or different amounts of time passed.

It would be unwise to slash at a square containing your own ninja.

It is useful to remember that when a ninja slashes at a square, he must be in one of the four (or less) squares surrounding that square. Also that on the next turn, that ninja has only two choices: to move into the square they just slashed at, or to stay in the same square and turn. After one turn, of course, there are many more squares they could have moved to.

Ending the Game:

When all of a player's ninjas have been slain, that player is removed from the game. The game ends when only one player has ninjas remaining on the grid and all other players have been removed.

Comments:

- Obviously, this game only works if the players are honest. Each player could easily cheat.
- It might be a good idea, especially for a game involving more than two players, to have a different goal condition, unrelated to slaying ninjas, to avoid long drawn-out games where players move around the grid indefinitely but cannot find each other. This would especially occur if a player never uses the Slash! order.
- Marking is almost essential to winning. If a good system of marking can be developed, it should be included in the rules to make it easier for new players.