

The Doubling Cube

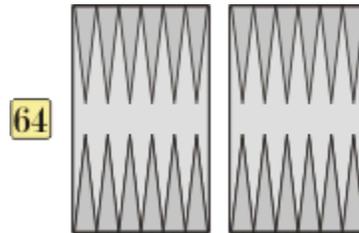
Q: What is a doubling cube?

A doubling cube is a cubical block, a little larger than a regular die, with the numbers 2, 4, 8, 16, 32, and 64 printed on its faces. It is sometimes simply called the [cube](#). The purpose is to allow players to bet on the game as they are playing.



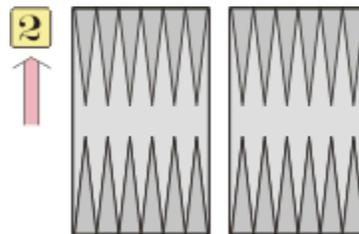
Q: How do you use a doubling cube?

At the beginning of the game, the doubling cube is placed halfway between the players, either on the bar or at the side of the board, with the number 64 face up. The 64 means that the stakes have not been doubled yet. (Most doubling cubes do not have a 1, so the number 64 is understood to represent 1.)



The position of the cube, halfway between the players, indicates that both players have access to it. That is, either player can make the first double.

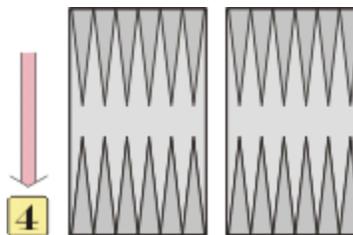
At any point during the game, a player who thinks he has a sufficient advantage may [double](#) the stakes. He can do this only at the beginning of his turn, before he has rolled the dice.



When a double is offered, the opponent may [refuse the double](#), in which case he resigns the game and forfeits the current stakes. The *current stakes* is the value of the cube before the double is offered, in this case one point.

If the opponent doesn't want to resign, he may [accept the double](#), and agree to continue play at double the previous stakes. He places the cube on his side of the board with the number 2 face up. The number 2 represents the fact that the stakes are now doubled. The position of the cube means that player now *owns* the doubling cube and only *he* may make the next double.

If the game later turns around and the player who owns the cube feels he now has an advantage, he may *redouble* the stakes to 4. His opponent may refuse and give up the current stakes (now two units) or he may accept and continue play at quadruple the initial stakes.



There is no limit to the number of doubles and redoubles in a single game, except that no player may double twice in a row.

At the end of the game, the loser pays the winner the value of the doubling cube in whatever units they have agreed to play for. For example, if playing for one dollar a point and the doubling cube shows 4, then the loser pays the winner four dollars. In the case of a [gammon](#) or [backgammon](#), this amount is doubled or tripled.

Q: Can I double if I am on the bar and closed out?

Yes, you can double at the start of any turn. You have to be alert, though; your opponent, seeing that you can't move, may roll his dice without waiting to see what you do. Just ask him to "wait, please" as he picks up his dice while you decide whether or not to double.

Q: What is an automatic double?

Some people play that if the two players roll the same number on the first roll of the game, then the doubling cube is automatically turned to 2. The cube stays in the middle but now the first voluntary double of the game will be offered at 4.

If the players roll the same number again, then the cube is turned up another notch, though players often agree to limit the number of automatic doubles to one per game.

Q: What is the Jacoby rule?

The Jacoby rule says that a gammon or backgammon does not count extra unless the cube has been turned, that is, unless a double has been offered and accepted in the present game. The purpose of the rule is to avoid long games in which one player tries for a gammon

rather than double the opponent out for one point.

Technically, the Jacoby rule is optional, but its use in [money play](#) is very common. The Jacoby rule is never used in [match play](#).

The Jacoby rule is named for Oswald Jacoby, coauthor of [The Backgammon Book](#), who proposed and promoted the rule. See post by [Daniel Murphy](#).

Q: What are beavers?

If one player doubles, and the opponent accepts the double and decides his position is good enough, he may immediately *redouble* while retaining possession of the cube. This immediate redouble without giving up the cube is called a beaver.

For example, suppose the cube is in the center and there have been no doubles yet this game. Player A decides to double the stakes. B accepts the double (the cube now shows 2), then B says "beaver" and turns the cube up one more notch to 4. At this point, if A has second thoughts, he can decline the beaver and give up two points; otherwise the game continues with the cube at 4. B still owns the cube, so he can redouble again on a future turn. All of this happens during A's turn; A now rolls the dice and the game continues.

Playing beavers is optional, so you should agree with your opponent beforehand whether or not you are playing this rule.