The Great Mouse Hunt is a game for three to five players (although see below for a two-player version). One of you plays the cunning kitty, and the rest of you are messy mice.

The cat’s objective in life is to bring squirming mice to its owner’s pillow, even though the owner shows a strange lack of gratitude. To win the game as the cat, you need to deposit a mouse on the pillow three times.

Having decided that life is too short, especially with that cat around, the mice have thrown caution to the wind and always seek out a milky sweet cup of tea, teeth be damned. To win the game as a mouse, you need to be the first mouse to collect the ingredients for two cups of tea: two servings of tea, milk and sugar.

The mice scampers round the kitchen, leaving small reminders of their presence, hoping for an open bottle of milk or a bowl of sugar that’s been left uncovered. See ‘how to play as a mouse’ to find out to claim the ingredients.

The spaces with question marks are for use with the bonus cards. If you’re not using bonus cards, these are played as normal spaces.

**how to play as a cat**

The cat, taking a while to rouse itself from slumber, always goes last. You start peacefully curled up on your owner’s bed. Roll the dice and move that many spaces. If you prefer, you can move less spaces than the number your rolled.

The cat wins by taking three mice to the owner’s pillow.

Catch a mouse by landing on top of it. Your turn will end here, although you don’t need to roll the exact number of spaces to land there. Next, take the mouse with you and put it on your owner’s pillow so she’s got a nice treat to come home to. There’s only room in your jaws to carry one mouse at a time.

Be careful: the mouse can still escape while you’re carrying it, if it rolls a six on its turn. The juicy mouse only counts as a catch when you reach the pillow.

A mouse wins the game by making two cups of tea. To make each cup, you need to collect one milk, one tea and one sugar.

You start the game in your mousehole. The mousehole is a safe space where you can hide from the cat. The mice move just like the cat roll the dice and move that number of spaces or less.

To collect an ingredient, you need to stake your claim on the circle where it can be found. Move to the circle and leave some mouse-droppings there to claim your territory. Your turn will end here, although you don’t need to roll the exact number of spaces to land there.

If you land on an ingredient someone else has claimed, you brush off their ‘territorial marker’ and replace it with one of your own. Until someone else disturbs your droppings, that space stays yours.

The humans come into the kitchen at the end of each round and carelessly leave things open, which is when the mice can grab their ingredients. To be in for a chance, you need to have your droppings on the right space.

Roll the dice after the cat’s go to find out which jars are open. If it’s a 1 or 2 then the tea jar has been left open and a lucky mouse or two can grab a helping of tea. If it’s a 3 or 4 then milk is available; if it’s 5 or 6, then sugar. Whoever has their droppings on one of those circles can collect the ingredient.

Here’s an example. Say you’ve claimed one of the tea circles and another mouse has claimed the other one. At the end of the round, the dice roll is a 1. That’s the roll for tea, so you both get a serving. If one mouse has droppings on both tea circles, it claims two helpings of tea.

Mice can move past each other, but can’t land on the same space. They can also trade ingredients with each other, good diplomatic relations permitting.

If you’re caught by the cat, you can still escape. The cat has already had dinner, so it’s not actually going to eat the mice.

If you’re a captured mouse, you roll a dice on your turn to see if the owner comes along to rescue you and tell the cat off. If it’s a six, you get to escape. You go back to your mousehole, ready to start there again next turn. If you’ve been stuck on the pillow for three turns you automatically escape on your fourth go. (The owner likes to have a nap now and again, and will find you there sooner or later.) While you’re captured, you can’t collect any ingredients, but the position of your mouse-droppings is unaffected.

You can move in any direction on the board you like.

If a mouse escapes before it’s taken to the pillow the cat can’t count it as a successful capture towards winning the game. As soon as it gets to the pillow, the cat has scored, even though that mice will eventually escape later. The cat doesn’t have to catch three different mice, just any three in a row.

What if you’re a mouse and you really need a particular ingredient, or you want to stop someone else getting it? You can choose to stay sitting on an ingredient without moving away. As long as you’re there, other mice can’t land on the same spot, so they can’t claim it.

Keep track of who’s getting close to winning, because you may want to try and ally yourselves against them.

**how to play as a mouse**

The mice scamper round the kitchen, leaving small reminders of their presence, hoping for an open bottle of milk or a bowl of sugar that’s been left uncovered. See ‘how to play as a mouse’ to find out to claim the ingredients.

The spaces with question marks are for use with the bonus cards. If you’re not using bonus cards, these are played as normal spaces.

**clarifications and strategy tips**

You can move in any direction on the board you like.

The cat gets grossed out by mouse poop so it doesn’t touch the droppings.

If a mouse escapes before it’s taken to the pillow the cat can’t count it as a successful capture towards winning the game. As soon as it gets to the pillow, the cat has scored, even though that mice will eventually escape later. The cat doesn’t have to catch three different mice, just any three in a row.

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**variations**

The game works best if you have three or more players, but if there’s only two of you, try this: the cat now rolls two dice each turn instead of one, and the mouse player gets to control two mice who work in a team.

**bonus cards**

If you’re using the bonus cards, and land on one of the spaces marked with a question mark, pick up a bonus card. There are special treats for cats and mice hiding in the cards. You can only take one per turn. You don’t need to claim these like ingredients circles, you just have to land on them.