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Home [A-Z](#)

[Home Page](#) > [Classified Index](#) > [Race Games](#) > Fast Track

Fast Track

This page is based on information from Dave Stevens.

- [Introduction](#)
- [Players, Cards and Board](#)
- [Object of the Game](#)
- [Deal](#)
- [Play](#)
- [Other web sites and sources of equipment](#)

Introduction

This is one of a number of North American [race games](#) in which cards are used to control movement of pieces around the board.

Players, Cards and Board

Fast track can be played by from 2 to 6 players, using a special board. Each player has a set of four marbles (some sets have pegs instead) in a different color and a standard 52-card deck with two jokers. The board can be square or hexagonal, to accommodate four or six colors.

Since the game is more exciting the more colors are in play, 3 players can play 2 colors each and 2 players can play 2 or 3 colors each. Four or six players can play in teams of two, or six players can play in teams of three.

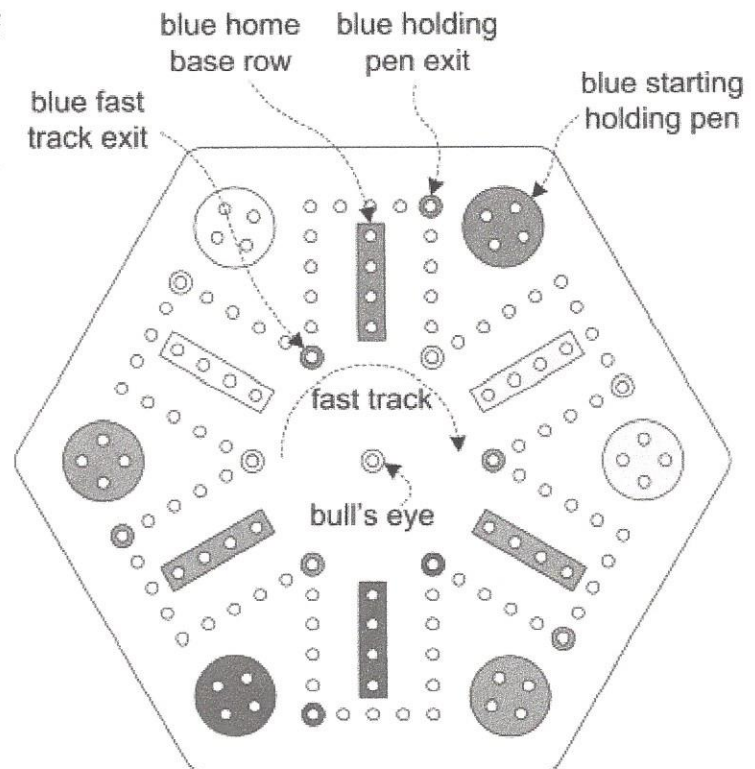
The illustration, from Dave Stevens' [Fast Track site](#), shows the various areas of the board:

- **Starting Holding Pen** - this is the starting position of all 4 of your marbles.
- **Holding Pen Exit** - colored position on the outer edge of the board where marbles enter the main track
- **Main Track** - the chain of holes that form the route that marbles take around the board, consisting of 56 spaces on a square board, and 84 on a hexagonal board.

- **Home Base Row** - a colored row of four spaces, which is the ending location for all your marbles.
- **Bull's Eye** - this is the center space.
- **Fast Track** - this consists of the 6 colored spaces at the inner corners of the Main Track, closest to the Bull's Eye.

Object of the Game

To be the first player or team to move all his, her or their marbles or pegs from the starting Holding Pen into the Home Base Row of the appropriate color.



The Setup and Deal

Each player should choose a color and place 4 marbles matching that color in their starting "holding pen". Each player should shuffle their own deck and cut it to show a card from the middle. Whoever shows the highest card plays first (Joker high, then Ace, King, Queen, etc. - in case of a tie, players with equal cards cut again). Each player places their deck face down and draws the top 5 cards to form their initial hand.

The Play

Players take turns clockwise around the table. You must begin your turn by playing a card from your hand face up (a card once shown cannot be taken back and exchanged for a different card). You must move a marble or marbles according to the value of the card (see [Effect of Playing a Card](#) below). If the card was a "play again" card (an Ace, Joker, King, Queen, Jack or Six), you must play another card and move again according to its value. You may play several "play again" cards in succession if you wish to. If all five of your cards are "play again" cards you draw a new hand of five cards when you have played them all, and continue playing. When you play a card that is not a "play again" card (a 2, 3, 4, 5, 7, 8, 9 or 10) and make the corresponding move, you must then end your turn by drawing sufficient cards from your deck so that you have a hand of five cards again.

If the game goes on so long that your face down deck runs out, you shuffle the pile of cards you have played and place it face down to form a new face down deck to draw from.

Rules of Movement

The basic route for a marble is from its Start Holding Pen to its Holding Pen Exit, then clockwise around the Main Track until it reaches the space next to its Home Base Row, then turning right into the Home Base Row. Moving a marble out of the Holding Pen to its Holding Pen Exit requires a Joker, Ace or Six to be played. Once on the Main Track, in most cases, playing a card enables you to move one of your marbles forward a number of spaces corresponding to its face value, but there are several exceptions, listed below. As an alternative to the basic route there are some possible short cuts:

1. The Fast Track is available as a short cut. A marble that ends a move on the Fast Track **may** then move from space to space clockwise around the Fast Track until it reaches the Fast Track space of its own color, at which point it continues along the Main Track towards its Home Base Row. This is not compulsory - the marble may alternatively continue along the Main Track.
2. If a marble that is on the Main Track (but not a Fast Track space) moves so as to overshoot a Fast Track space by exactly one space, it **may** be moved onto the Bull's Eye instead of continuing along the Main Track. From there it can only move to the Fast Track space of its own color, and only by means of a King, Queen or Jack. It then continues along the Main Track towards its Home Base Row.
3. A marble moving backwards may pass its the Holding Pen Exit and the entrance to its Home Base Row, and later move forwards into its Home Base Row without having made a circuit of the board.

You must **never** land on top of a marble of the same colour or hop over a space occupied by a marble of the same colour. This applies both to forward moves and to backwards moves using a 4.

If you land on a space occupied by an opponent your opponent's marble is sent back to its Starting Holding Pen.

Marbles in their own Home Base Row are safe from being sent back to their Starting Holding Pen. This is because no marble can enter an opponent's Home Base Row, and a marble in its Home Base Row cannot be moved backwards, nor can they be swapped using a Jack.

You must always move the full value of the card you play. In particular, when entering or moving within your Home Base Row you must use a card corresponding to the exact number of spaces you wish to move, otherwise the move cannot be made. When splitting a seven, both marbles must be moved forwards and the forward moves must total exactly seven.

If no marbles can be moved forward you must move one marble on the Main Track **backwards** the number of spaces required by the card. If no marbles are in play (all are either in the Starting Holding Pen or in the Home Base Row with insufficient room to move forwards or on the Bull's Eye) then the played card has no effect, but if it is a "play again" card you must still play another card. This way you can sometimes get rid of several unplayable cards in succession, and draw more useful cards in their place.

The Home Base Row may only be entered using a forward movement card. A marble moving forwards is not allowed to pass the entrance to the Home Base Row and continue along the Main Track. If the card you play is too large for your marble to enter its Home Base Row and you have no other marble that can be moved using that card, then the marble must move backwards the equivalent distance.

The Fast Track and Bull's Eye positions can only be entered if their move ends exactly in that position. Note that it is possible to move backwards onto the Fast Track or Bull's Eye using a 4. However, you cannot use a move of 1 to move from the Fast Track to the Bull's Eye.

A marble that has just arrived on a Fast Track space has the option of moving around the Fast Track or continuing along the main track. However, once the marble has made a move on the Fast Track, it must stay on the Fast Track until it exits either forwards from the Fast Track space of its own color, or exceptionally backwards from the Fast Track space nearest to its Starting Holding Pen. On the Fast Track you cannot move past your Home Base Row in either direction.

If you have a marble in the Fast Track, you are not allowed to move any of your other marbles. First the marble in the Fast Track must be moved out onto the Main Track. There are a couple of rare situations that may arise:

- If two marbles of the same color are in the Fast Track (because one of them has been placed there by a Jack swap, or because both marbles arrived on the Fast Track in the same turn by splitting a 7), the marble nearest to the fast track exit must move first.
- If you play a card such that your Fast Track marble cannot be moved without landing on or hopping over another marble of the same color, your Fast Track marble is sent back to its Starting Holding Pen.

Partnership or Team Play

When playing with partners, players are allowed to use their cards to move either their own or their partners' marbles.

All marbles of a given team's colors must reach their respective home base rows in order to win.

If you land on a partner's marble you send it back to its starting holding pen. You are allowed to hop over your partner's marble.

A split move (7) may be used to move any two of your team's marbles, the same color or different colors.

If your team has any marbles on the Fast Track, regardless of color, you must use the card you play move your team's Fast Track marble. Other marbles belonging to your team can only be moved when your team has no marbles on the Fast Track.

Effect of Playing a Card

In the table below "move" means move one of your own marbles forwards (clockwise around the track), except where otherwise specified.

Card	Effect	Comments
Joker	Move 1 or exit hold pen; play again	
Ace	Move 1 or exit hold pen; play again	
Two	Move 2	
Three	Move 3	
Four	Move 4 spaces backwards	If you have any marbles on the Main Track, you must move one of them backwards four spaces. Marbles can be moved backwards from or past their holding pen exit and onto or past the entrance to their Home Base Row. However, backwards moves within, into or out of the Home Base Row are not allowed.
Five	Move 5	
Six	Move 6 or exit hold pen; play again	When exiting a hold pen with a 6, you just move to the exit space (not 5 further spaces) and then play another card.
Seven	Move 7: can be split	You may move one of your marbles forward 7 spaces, or two of your marbles a total of 7 - for example one marble forward 5 and another forward 2. If unable to make one or two forward moves for a total of 7 spaces, the 7 cannot be split and a marble on the main track must be moved back 7 spaces.
Eight	Move 8	

Nine	Move 9	
Ten	Move 10	
Jack	Move 1 or exit Bull's Eye or swap two marbles; play again	When using a Jack to swap marbles, the marbles may be any color, but must be on the Main Track or Bull's Eye, not in a Holding Pen or Base Row.
Queen	Move 1 or exit Bull's Eye; play again	
King	Move 1 or exit Bull's Eye; play again	

Other web sites and sources of equipment

Dave Stevens' [Fast Track site](#) has rules for the game and instructions for making your own board.

Ready-made Fast Track boards are available from [Don Strenz Woodworking](#) in Rochester, NY.

[Home Page](#) > [Classified Index](#) > [Race Games](#) > Fast Track

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