

John Yianni

HIVE[®]

The Boardless Board Game

Tactics and Strategies



Steve Dee

Hive[®] :
The Boardless Board Game

Tactics and Strategies

by
Steve Dee

By the same author:

TICKET TO CARCASSONNE

DON'T LET IT GET YOU DOWN SYNDROME

First published 2015

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To contact the author please visit www.skdinning.co.uk

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Introduction

I know that most of you will skip this section.

The “Introduction” in a book like this is usually where the author goes on at great length about himself, and tries to convince you that he is qualified to give you his advice. I always skip these sections myself, so I do not blame you.

Go on then. Skip ahead. I will never even know.

If you are still with me, I guess you want to hear my story? Well, it is the tale of a young Englishman’s journey of personal growth and triumph over adversity. The scene is the 2014 Hive[®] World Championship, in the glamorous setting of the Stuttgart Hilton Hotel, Germany...

No ... I’m sorry ... I have to stop there. I cannot do this.

I have never really been to the Hive[®] World Championship. I don’t think they even have one. And I don’t know why I chose Stuttgart as the venue for this fictional event. I guess I thought that it sounded plausible because, as you might know if you are into board games, Germany rather leads the world in pursuit of that particular hobby, having invented so

many of the great modern board games like Carcassonne, and Settlers of Catan.

Hive[®] however, is actually a British game. It was invented by an Englishman called John Yianni. He lives in a place called “Potters Bar” which sound like a pub for snooker players but is actually a town just north of London. It is also the home of Martin Freeman, Acker Bilk, and the guitarist from Suede. For me this conjures up a lovely image of the residents of the town sitting around in hobbit-holes, playing Hive[®], with a clarinet version of “Animal Nitrate” playing in the background, which I think sounds like the perfect night in.

I am actually an Englishman too. That bit in my fantasy was true (although if I am honest “young Englishman” is pushing it a bit). I should mention though that I have never met John Yianni. If you are an American reading this, you probably think of England as being a small country, but it is not so small that we all know each other.

I first came across Hive[®] when I saw it recommended on a board game review website called Shut Up and Sit Down (a marvellous site by the way). I was intrigued when one of the writers, Quinns, remarked on how many awards it had won, including Mensa game of the year, and I smiled when he said it was the only board game you could play underwater. It was,

however, his comment that playing it was “creating a tiny arena of minds” that made me decide to buy it.

Since then I have been playing it every chance I can, in lunch breaks at work, online against strangers, and at home. Most of my playing at home has been against myself, moving the pieces around trying to work out the best strategy. My eleven year old daughter thinks this is “sad”. However she also thinks that the definitive version of the John Lennon song Imagine is by Connie Talbot, the seven-year-old who came second in Britain’s Got Talent, so what does she know?

For the past couple of years I have immersed myself in the world of the Hive[®] – a place where Bees, Spiders, Ladybugs, Ants, Pill Bugs, Grasshoppers and Beetles all live together, in a hive. I am not quite sure why, say, ladybugs and ants are living in a hive, or indeed where all the other bees have gone. I am also not quite sure why the spiders do not just eat the ants. I do not know why there is so much interspecies co-operation in the hive, and I am not sure whether the creatures’ desire to be next to the Queen of the opposite colour is a sign of racial tension or racial harmony. I do not care either.

By the way, as an Englishman, I want you to know how uncomfortable I feel saying the word “Ladybug”. On my side of the Atlantic we say “Ladybird”. I do not know why or how we have ended up with

different words for the same creature. How can I find out who decides these things? I don’t know whether to ask an etymologist or an entomologist.

(That, by the way, is my favourite joke in this book. I hope you enjoyed it as much as I did.)

I suspect that the English originally invented the word and the Americans changed it as soon as they got the chance. Perhaps that was part of the reason the Pilgrim Fathers left England in the first place? Perhaps what they really wanted was the freedom to practice religion in their own way, and the freedom to stop using misleading entomological nomenclature (“They’re bugs not birds dammit!”). I guess I will never know.

Sorry, I wandered off the subject a bit there. I was supposed to be trying to convince you that I know what I am talking about. I might not be a world champion Hive[®] player, but I was a schoolboy regional champion chess player (Yes, schoolboy. Shut up. It still counts.) and I am now a statistical analyst by profession; so I do know about strategy games and about analysis. I am also ranked as “Expert Player” when I play Hive[®] online. You can trust me.

As a fan of the game, I am aware that there is a shortage of books aimed at beginners and intermediate players. So I wrote one. This one, in fact. I hope you enjoy it.

Chapter 1: The Rules

What is Hive®?

It sounds like some horrid illness, some terrible disease.

“I’ve got Hive® Pocket!” you shout down the telephone to your GP, sweaty hand gripping the receiver.

~ Paul Dean (Shut Up & Sit Down)

You can skip this chapter too if you already know how to play. Perhaps you do not though. Perhaps, like I did, you bought a German edition of the game and been disappointed to find that the rules do not have an English translation.

Here then, for beginners (or for reference for experienced players), are the rules of the game.

Setup

Each player takes all the pieces of one colour and places them face up in front of them. The pieces are hexagonal tiles representing insects* and in a standard set, each player will have 11 pieces as follows:

- 1 Queen Bee
- 2 Spiders
- 2 Beetles
- 3 Grasshoppers
- 3 Ants

Some versions of the game have optional extra pieces, called “expansion” pieces, as follows:

- 1 Mosquito
- 1 Ladybug
- 1 Pill bug

* - okay, insects, arachnids, and whatever the hell a pill bug is.

Overview

The object of the game is to be the first to surround your opponent's Queen Bee on all six sides. The pieces surrounding the Queen Bee can be a mixture of both your pieces and your opponent's.

Players take turns, and on each turn, a player may do one of two things - place a piece, or move a piece.

The official rules do not specify which player goes first, and we usually toss a coin. For the examples in the rest of this book though, we will assume that "player one" is white.

Placing a Piece

A player can choose a new piece from his supply and place it in play. It must be alongside at least one of that player's existing pieces and it cannot be touching any of the opposing player's pieces.

The only exception to this rule is the first piece played by each player. The very first piece placed is of course, on its own. The other player's first piece is placed adjacent to the first player's first piece.

Each player must place the Queen Bee within his first four turns.

Moving a Piece

Once a player's Queen Bee has been placed (but not before), that player may decide to move an existing piece instead of placing a new one. When moving a piece, the rule about not touching an opponent's piece no longer applies.

Each of the insects (yes, I am sticking with insects; leave me alone) moves differently.

Queen Bee



The Queen Bee has very limited movement; she can only move one space at a time around the perimeter of the hive.

The Queen Bee also follows the "Freedom to Move Rule". This rule will be explained properly later on, but for now let us say that pieces that follow the Freedom to Move rule have to be able to slide into their new spaces without having to move other pieces out of the way.

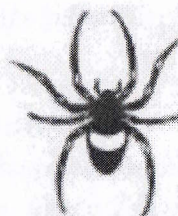
Ant



The Ant may move only around the edge of the layout, like the Queen Bee. Unlike the Queen Bee though, it may move as many spaces as the player wishes.

The Ant also follows the Freedom to Move Rule.

Spider



Like the Queen Bee and the Ant, the Spider can move around the perimeter of the hive. It must however move exactly three spaces - no more, no less. It must move in a direct path and cannot

backtrack on itself.

A movement of one "space" equates to a shift to a different empty hex shaped area that is adjacent to both the current space and to one other piece.

The Spider also follows the Freedom to Move Rule.

Beetle



The Beetle, like the Bee, can move only one space at a time. However, unlike the Bee, a Beetle can also climb on top of any adjacent piece, and then if the player so wishes can move one space at a time over the top of the hive, or drop down into any adjacent

empty space.

A piece with a Beetle on top of it cannot move, and for the purpose of placing new tiles, that space is considered to be the colour of the Beetle's tile. Beetles can climb on top of other Beetles even when that Beetle is atop another piece.

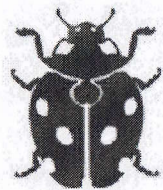
Note that Beetles do follow the Freedom to Move Rule when moving around rather than climbing or dropping. A Beetle may not move directly between two adjacent hexes if doing so would require passing through a gap between two stacks of pieces that are both higher than the origin hex (without the Beetle on it) and the destination hex. In other words, unless they are climbing up or down, they must be able to slide into their destination, even when on top of the hive.

Grasshopper



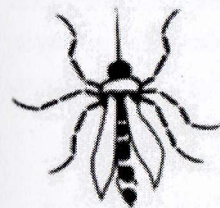
The Grasshopper is, as one might expect, a jumping piece. It moves by jumping over any number of other pieces (but always at least one of them) in a straight line to the first adjacent space it comes to. It always jumps in the direction of one of its edges, never one of its corners.

Ladybug



The Ladybug moves exactly three spaces: two on top of the hive and then one move back down again. It can move into or out of surrounded spaces.

Mosquito



The Mosquito takes on the movement ability of any creature of either colour that it is touching at the start of its move. A stack with a Beetle on top counts as a Beetle for this purpose.

There are a couple of exceptions to the rule:

- If a Mosquito is moved as a Beetle onto the top of the hive, then it continues to move as a Beetle until it climbs back down.
- If a Mosquito is only touching another Mosquito at the start of its move, it may not move at all.

Pill bug



The Pill Bug moves like the Queen Bee – one space at a time following the Freedom to Move Rule – but it also has a special ability that it may use instead of moving. This ability allows the Pill Bug to move an adjacent piece (his own or his opponent's) two spaces: one up onto the Pill Bug itself, then another down into an adjacent empty space.

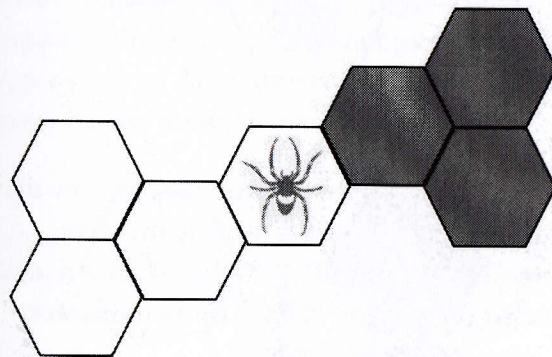
There are some restrictions:

- The Pill Bug may not move the piece most recently moved (directly or by a Pill Bug) by the opponent.
- The Pill Bug may not move any piece in a stack of pieces.
- The Pill Bug may not move a piece if it splits the hive (violating the One Hive Rule).
- The Pill Bug may not move a piece through a too-narrow gap of stacked pieces (violating the Freedom to Move Rule).
- If a Pill Bug is moved by an opponent's Pill Bug, it cannot use its special ability next turn.

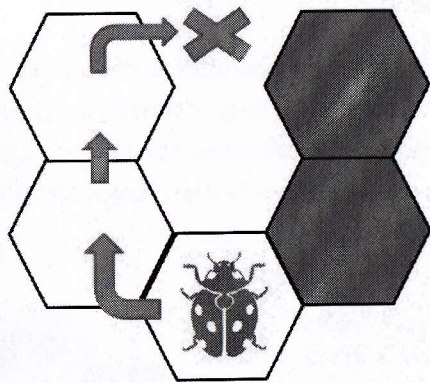
Note also that the mosquito can mimic either the movement or special ability of the Pill Bug, even when the Pill Bug it is touching has been rendered immobile by another Pill Bug.

One Hive Rule

The pieces in play must be linked at all times. A piece may never be moved such that during or after its movement, there are two separate groups of pieces in play. For example, in the diagram below, the spider cannot be moved:



Even if as a result of the piece's move, the layout remains one group, if the hive becomes disconnected while the piece is in transit the move is not allowed. For example, the move below is illegal.



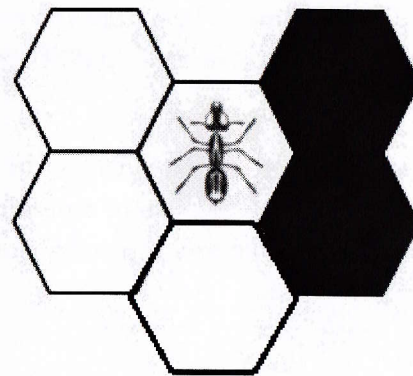
By the way, you have probably noticed by now that in my diagrams I do not always identify the piece, sometimes just the colour. I do this when it does not matter what the piece is. I do it for two reasons:

1. I want to draw attention to one or more particular pieces and do not want any distractions.
2. It makes drawing the diagrams easier.

Freedom to Move Rule

Pieces which move around the perimeter of the hive (i.e. the Spider, the Ant, the Queen Bee, and the Pill Bug) may never move into or out of a space that is partially or completely surrounded if it can no longer physically slide into or out of that position.

The rule is that if a piece cannot be slid into or out of the space without moving another piece out of the way, then it is an illegal move. For example, in the diagram below, the ant cannot move:



Note that this rule only applies to moving pieces, not placing them for the first time.

Unable to Move

If a player cannot make any legal move then they miss their turn, and the other player takes another turn.

End of the Game

The game ends when a Queen Bee is captured by being surrounded on all 6 sides by either player's pieces. The player whose Queen Bee is surrounded loses the game.

It is possible for the game to be a draw if a move results in the simultaneous surrounding of both Queen Bees.

A draw may also be agreed if each player's best move for a turn leads to an endless cycle of repetition of a series of moves. This is known as a stalemate.

Chapter 2: Basic Tactics

“Big fleas have little fleas upon their backs to bite them, and ... no, wait ... those little ones are actually beetles.

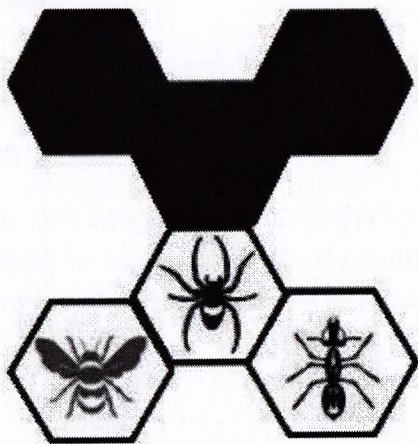
And what are all those fleas doing in my beehive anyway?”

~ Jonathan Swift, 1733

The Opening

The Queen Bee must be placed in one of the first four turns, and until a player's Queen Bee has been placed, that player may not move any pieces. It is generally preferable to place the Queen Bee before being forced to do so on the fourth turn.

A common opening is to play a spider first, then the Queen Bee in the second move, followed by an Ant, in a ^ shape, as shown below.



Alternatively, some players like to place the Queen Bee in the first move. However, if both players do this, the game is more likely to end in a draw as the Queen Bees would share three of their six surrounding hexes.

We will talk more about Openings in a later chapter.

Pinning Opponent's Pieces

The "One Hive Rule" states that the hive must be connected at all times. Therefore if you move one of your pieces so that it is adjacent to one of your opponent's pieces (and no other pieces), then the opponent's piece will not be able to move away without leaving your piece isolated and breaking the One Hive Rule. In this case we would say that the opponent's piece is "pinned".

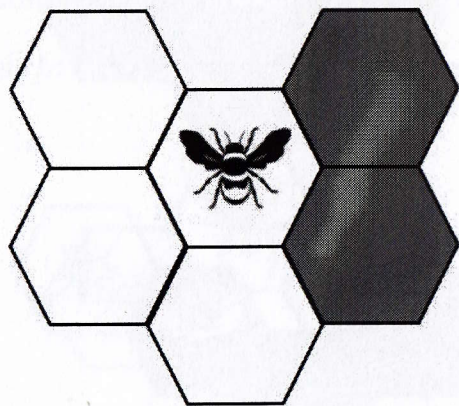
It is usually a good idea to pin your opponent's Queen Bee early in the game, because it is very difficult to surround a piece that can move around.

In the diagram below, White has just moved his Ant to pin Black's Queen Bee.



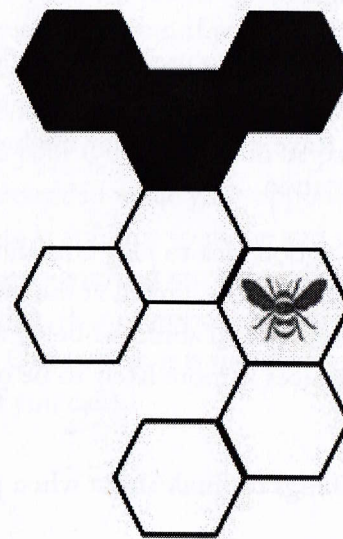
Blocking and Circling

An alternative to pinning is “blocking” an opponent’s piece. This means surrounding it, or partially surrounding it, so that it cannot slide out, and cannot move without breaking the Freedom to Move Rule. Grasshoppers, Beetles and Ladybugs cannot be blocked.



“Circling” is a variation on blocking.

Creating an incomplete circle (not a complete one or some of the opponent’s pieces might be freed up to move away!) next to a Queen makes it more difficult to surround, because opponents’ pieces cannot slide into one of the spaces, as illustrated below:



Placing Your Pieces

Pieces should not just be placed randomly. You should always select the right piece and the right place to put it.

It is usually a good idea to bring Ants into play early in the game. You will want to use them to pin your opponent's pieces; try not to let them get pinned themselves though.

Also, if you are planning to use them, Beetles are often best brought in early as it takes time to move them and if you leave it too late they might never reach their destination.

It is not usually a good idea to play Grasshoppers early, as their movement is limited at the beginning of the game, and their special ability of being able to jump into tight spaces is more likely to be useful later in the game.

Here are some things to think about when placing your pieces:

- When you are placing an Ant, consider whether it might be pinned by a Spider or Grasshopper.
- With Mosquitos and Pill Bugs, consider their special powers before you place them.

- When you are placing a Grasshopper or Spider, put it somewhere where it can usefully go on its next turn.
- Placing a piece adjacent to your own Queen Bee is very risky. You might be thinking to yourself that you will move it later in the game. Perhaps it is a Grasshopper and you might think to yourself that it can hop out later on in a dramatic game-saving move. However, if your opponent pins the Grasshopper it could be stuck there. If this happens, you have wasted a turn, lost a piece and your Queen Bee will be partially surrounded while your opponent's pinning piece is still free to move and could later play a game-winning move (note that as a corollary to that, if your opponent plays a piece next to his Queen Bee, it is usually a good idea to pin it if you can).

Which Pieces to Move

Some pieces are more powerful than others. If you can pin one of your opponent's more powerful pieces with one of your own weaker ones, this gives you a potential advantage because later in the game his free pieces are likely to be weaker than yours.

Ants and Mosquitos are generally considered to be the most powerful attacking pieces, though Beetles can also be very effective if used properly.

The Pill Bug is the most powerful defensive piece.

Grasshoppers have a useful ability to hop in and out of tight spaces, as do Ladybugs (very useful towards the end of the game).

The Spider however, is usually regarded as being the weakest piece because its move is so limited.

Early in the game, when the hive is small, the Spider's limitations do not affect its performance so much. For this reason, many players recommend playing a Spider early on and using it to pin the opponent's Queen Bee, Ant, or Beetle.

When to Attack and When to Defend

It is very common for a game of Hive[®] to become a race to see who can surround the opponent's Queen Bee first.

It is important to know when the race is one you are going to win, or lose. In most games, if you are behind, you will not be able to catch up. In these circumstances you must abandon the attack and defend instead.

At the beginning of the game the player who goes first is ahead, so he should attack to make the most of his advantage.

Being able to identify whether you are ahead or behind later in the game is a crucial skill, and will be discussed further in chapter four.

Chapter 3: Mistakes To Avoid

*There was a young man from St Ive
Who bought (so he thought) the game "Hive®."
He thought it was funny
The box smelled of honey,
Then realised the bees were alive.*

~ Paul Perro

If you and your opponent are both beginners, or even if you are both intermediate players, the best way for you to win is simply to make fewer mistakes than your opponent.

If you have ever played chess, you will know that most games between novices tend to be decided not by who plays the best opening, or the best long term strategy, but by who accidentally places their Queen in the path of an opponent's bishop. It is the same with Hive®. You can have a great strategy in mind, but if you make an elementary blunder, you are likely to lose the game quickly.

You should always strive therefore, to be the player who makes no elementary mistakes. The following is a list of the most common mistakes that you should try to avoid. Some have been mentioned before but I have put them all here together to form a useful reference.

Placing the Ant as an Opening Move

Don't do it. The Ant is a powerful piece and it will be blocked in.

Delaying Placing the Queen Until the Fourth Move

If you do this you will find yourself in an unfavourable position. Your opponent will be able make an effective pin, and dictate where you can and cannot place your Queen Bee.

Not Getting Enough Powerful Pieces in Play

Make sure you get some Ants out early to attack or defend with.

Not Trapping Opponent's Queen Bee

If you start to surround a Queen Bee and it moves away, you will have wasted a lot of time and resources.

Pinning a Weak Piece with a More Powerful One

Do not pin, say, a Spider with an Ant unless you have to. Otherwise you will find yourself out-gunned later in the game.

Self-Pinning

Be careful not to pin your own pieces. If you place a piece that pins one of your more powerful pieces, even if you plan to move it next turn, your opponent could pin the new piece and he will have double-pinned you.

Accidentally Freeing a Pinned Piece

When you position a piece, be careful that you are not completing a connection somewhere that allows a previously pinned piece to move. This is especially important with the Queen Bee.

Forgetting About the Last Move

A piece which is pinning another piece cannot usually be moved for fear of freeing that piece. However, it is often overlooked that the pinning piece can be used to make the game winning final move, as it does not matter about freeing an opponent's piece then.

Placing Friendly Pieces next to Queen Bee

Your opponent could pin them, and you will have helped him to surround your own Queen Bee. Sometimes it is a good idea to place pieces there that can jump or climb out later, but try to avoid placing Spiders or Ants there.

Misplacing a Spider

They move exactly three spaces so work out where you ultimately want it to go, and count back three spaces. Always double-check it.

Wasting a Turn

Moving a piece for no reason or placing a piece that has no value is a waste of a turn. As Hive[®] is often a race, this could cost you the game.

Not Attacking when the Time is Right

If you miss the opportunity to attack you will not win.

Not Defending the Queen

If you know you are behind and your opponent attacks, you must defend.

Allowing a Stalemate

Do not become complacent when you are far ahead, because a decent opponent can often force a stalemate. Even if he has no chance of winning himself, he can get a draw by defending his queen and pinning and blocking your pieces in such a way that you can never complete the victory.

Chapter 4: The Count

“One.

One turn.

Ab Ab Aaab!

Two.

Two Turns.

Three.

Three glorious turns!”

~ The Count (Sesame Street)

He would make a really annoying Hive[®] opponent.

I want you to imagine a game between two people who play as though they are in a hurry to be somewhere else, and just play quickly without really thinking about it. They each play their Queen Bees on the second turn, and then after that each player's strategy is to alternate between placing a piece, and moving that piece into a position next to his opponent's Queen Bee. In this way, it should be possible for a player to win the game ten turns after playing his Queen Bee, as it takes him two turns to fill each of the five empty spaces next to his opponent's Queen Bee. Who will be the winner of this game? Well, it should always be player one, the player who went first.

Throughout the rest of this book I will use the word “count” to mean the number of turns a player has to take before he will surround his opponent's Queen Bee.

At any given point in the game, the player with the lowest count (or if it is a tie, the player who's turn it is) should have the advantage.

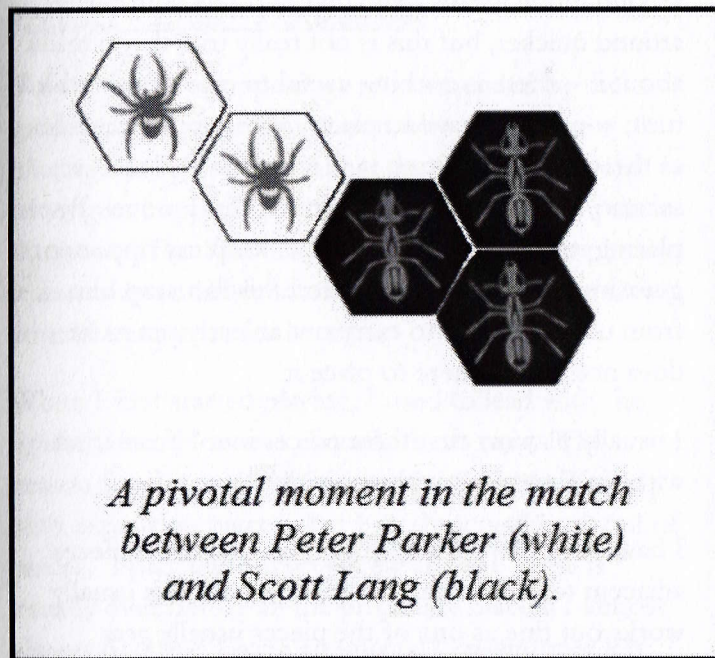
Let us go back to that game we were imagining a few moments ago, but this time allow the two players to apply a little strategy. What should player two do to win? Well, what he needs to do is either slow player one down so that it takes him more than ten turns, or speed himself up so he can win in fewer than ten. In other words he needs to improve (i.e. reduce) his own

count, or worsen (increase) his opponent's. In practice, he will usually find it very hard to reduce his own count, so his strategy should be to increase his opponent's count.

The most common way of increasing an opponent's count is by making him waste a turn, or by playing something that makes one of his earlier turns ineffective.

The important thing to be aware of though, is that if you spend one turn making your opponent waste one turn, then you have not really gained anything. Player two should be careful that in increasing player one's count, he is not increasing his own too.

Chapter 5: The Opening



Playing the Queen Bee in the first move often leads to draws, and playing it in the fourth move is recommended against as it tends to lead to a weak position. For these reasons, most players tend to place the Queen Bee in their second or third move.

It is often stated that placing the Queen Bee in the second move means that you can move your pieces around quicker, but this is not really true if you think about it – there is nothing useful to move in the third turn; you would have to place another piece first. So, as there is no advantage in placing the Queen Bee second, I usually place mine in my third move. By placing it in my third move I can keep my opponent guessing for slightly longer, and this can stop him from using a spider to carry out an early pin as he does not know where to place it.

I usually play my first three pieces in a ^ formation with my first piece at the point.

I have seen players who play their first three pieces adjacent to each other in a triangle, and this usually works out fine as one of the pieces usually gets moved away pretty quickly anyway.

However I would caution you against playing your opening pieces in a straight line, as your opponent will pin them all at once, and you will not be able to move any of them at all.

So, I will assume we are going to place our first three pieces in a ^, with the first piece at the point. But which three pieces should they be?

Let us examine a few possibilities.

1.Spider – 2.Ant – 3.Queen Bee

This is one of the openings recommended by the game's publishers. The reason why they suggest placing the Spider first, it that the first piece placed often gets trapped and does not actually play a part in the game. The Spider is the weakest piece, so playing it first is essentially a sacrifice – it allows you to save your better pieces for later.

When I first started playing, I used to lead with the Spider a lot. However, I rarely do so now. The reason for this is that I find, especially when I play with expansion pieces, that I rarely actually run out of pieces. I play quite aggressively and the game is usually over before all the pieces are placed; I almost always find that I have an unused Grasshopper left over. Therefore, there is no need to “sacrifice” a Spider – why not lead with something potentially useful instead?

Now, I usually lead with a piece that, later in the game, might be able to jump or climb out, potentially saving my own Queen Bee from being surrounded,

and occasionally even surrounding the opponent's Queen Bee as well.

1.Ladybug – 2.Ant – 3.Queen Bee

For the reasons described above, I find this a very powerful opening. Playing a grasshopper first can be effective, but the Ladybug is even more of a threat in the endgame. I have won many games with the Ladybug escaping and attacking my opponent's Queen Bee.

If playing black, a good defensive piece to place fourth is the Mosquito. If you place this at the back of your V formation, it is adjacent to all three of your pieces. This means you can use it as an Ant, or later in the game it can climb out like a Ladybug and attack the opponent's Queen Bee. Also, if your Queen Bee is attacked by a Beetle, the Mosquito will turn into Beetle itself and attack back.

1.Queen Bee – 2.Spider – 3.Spider

This is the other opening recommended by the publishers. The way to play it is to use your Spider to pin your opponent's Queen Bee or other powerful piece on your third turn. This weakens his attack and can limit where he can place his pieces in the future.

It is a very fast attack and Black can use it to seize the initiative from White.

Be careful though - a decent opponent might try to outmanoeuvre your Spiders by placing pieces in its way that make the Spider's three space move less effective. I usually prefer to substitute the second Spider with an Ant for this reason.

What Not To Do

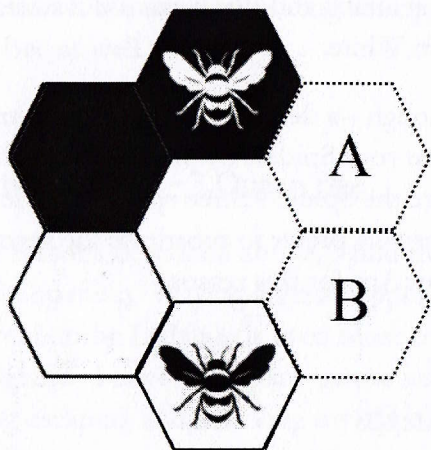
Never play an Ant first. Don't make me tell you again.

Next Few Moves

The two or three moves which follow the placement of the Queen Bee can set the tone for the whole game. You will want to adjust your strategy to respond to whatever it is that your opponent does.

Here then, are a few things to look out for.

If the Queen Bees are placed facing each other on the same side of opening pieces, so that the pieces form a C shape, as shown below:

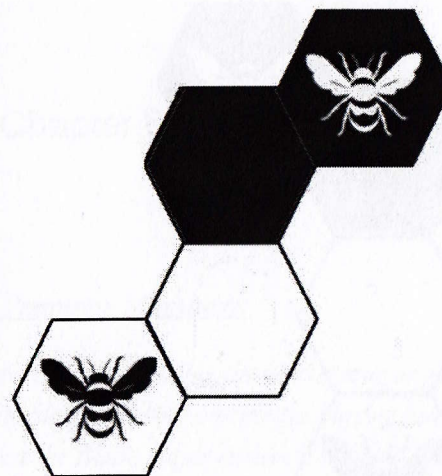


...then both players should be looking carefully at spaces A and B. White should be attempting to fill space A before Black fills space B, and vice versa.

Whoever wins that particular race will have a clear advantage, because when the loser of the race fills up the other space, he completes a ring and most likely frees up the opponent's pieces to move away.

Despite this, games that begin in this way often end in draws because the Queen Bees share a common adjacent space.

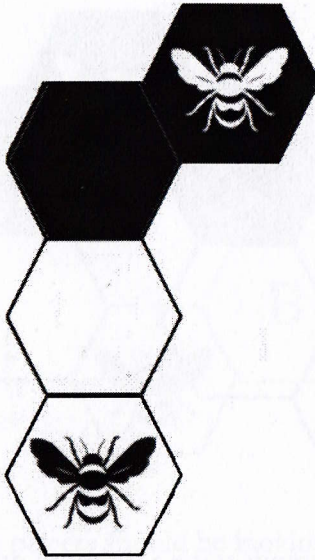
However, if the opening is one where the Queen Bees are placed on opposite sides of the opening pieces, as shown below:



...then the game tends to be a lot more open. It is a good idea to get Ants and Mosquitos out early in this type of game, as they will be very useful for attacking and defending.

It is worth noting that it is Black who decides which of the two patterns above are played, because Black usually plays his Queen Bee after White does.

This brings us to the third most common opening pattern, where White plays his Queen Bee behind the opening piece, and Black plays his off to the side, as shown below:



(By the way, Black should never play his Queen Bee behind his opening piece – he will find himself on the back foot straight away and it is very hard to defend that position)

The reason the opening in the diagram above is common is that White does not want to risk that Black might choose the C shaped opening and try to force a draw.

This opening is quite well balanced, with White having lots of attacking potential (Spiders can often be used effectively) but Black has defensive options too.

Chapter 6: More Advanced Tactics

The Pemberton Manoeuvre:

By strategically upending the nearest mug or glass of liquid, the White player can both obscure the playing field and naturally request the Black player retrieve a cloth. While the Black player is distracted the White player has plenty of time for a tactical swap.

Once the Black player has returned and mopped, the White player will now find they are in a much stronger position.

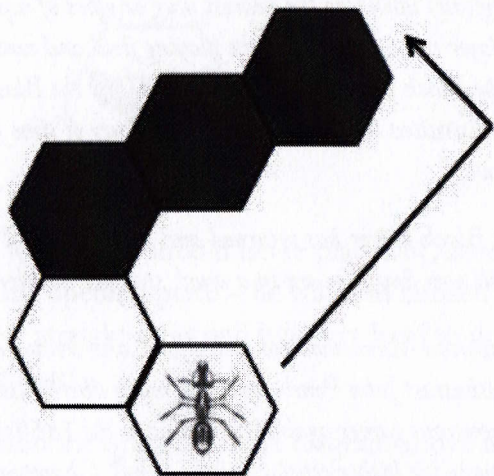
The Pemberton Manoeuvre (so-called for Coke creator and Hive® enthusiast John Pemberton who made liberal use of cola to win numerous games against his slaves in the 1860s) is a staple among the higher echelons of the Hive® Championships.

~ Brendan Caldwell (Shut Up and Sit Down)

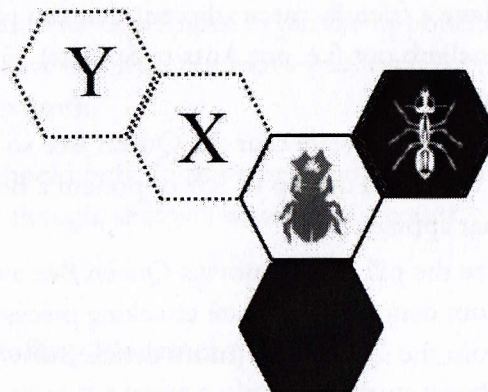
The Double or Triple Pin

If an opponent has two or more powerful pieces together in a line, it is sometimes possible to pin them all with just one of your pieces:

In the diagram below, when white moves his Ant to black will find that all three of his pieces are trapped.



A common variation of this is to move a pin so that it traps two pieces instead of one. In the diagram below white cannot move the Beetle because it is pinned by the black Ant. Instead, he places an Ant of his own in space X, not realising that black can simply move his Ant to space Y, pinning the new Ant and continuing to pin the Beetle.



Playing Defensively

These are the key tactics used to protect the Queen Bee:

- If partially surrounded but not pinned or blocked, move the Queen Bee to a less surrounded position.
- Pinning or double-pinning opponents attacking pieces.
- Placing a block.
- Have a friendly piece adjacent that can jump or climb out (i.e. not Ants or Spiders) if need be later.
- Position a Beetle near the Queen Bee so that it can climb on top of any opponent's Beetle that approaches.
- Use the pill bug to move a Queen Bee away from danger, or relocate attacking pieces away from the Queen Bee (more details below).

The goal of playing defensively might be to force a draw, in which case you will want to neutralise your opponent's attacks so that he cannot complete the surrounding of the Queen Bee. If you are successful, there will come a point when he cannot play any more attacks.

At this point however, you should consider whether you can go on the attack and actually win the game. I have played many games where one player went out

in front early on and looked certain to win, only to run out of attacks and have to sit and watch while the other player counterattacked and won.

Releasing a Pin

If, say, your Ant is pinning an opponent's piece, you will usually find you cannot move your Ant without releasing the opponent's piece, which you do not wish to do. A solution is to move a weaker piece like a Grasshopper or a Spider to pin the opponent's piece too. That way, you can move your own Ant away on the next turn.

You should only do this when you are not involved in a race though, as it will worsen your count.

Controlling Placement

Early on in the game a player's options when deciding where to place pieces are limited. When you move or place one of your pieces, consider whether your move increases or reduces your opponent's number of options. You might be able to force him to place a piece somewhere unfavourable – somewhere it can be pinned or double-pinned perhaps, or somewhere it cannot attack from effectively.

The Mosquito

If used correctly, the Mosquito can be the most powerful piece in the game.

An experienced Hive[®] player will use the Mosquito tactically. He might place it next to a tile who's ability he wants to adopt, or perhaps he will place it next to an Ant, then move it next turn to somewhere it can adopt a tactically useful ability.

The Mosquito can also be used to defend against Beetle attacks. If you place your Mosquito adjacent to your Queen Bee, then if an opponent's Beetle ever comes near, you should be able to put your Mosquito on top of your opponent's Beetle, neutralising it.

Also, the Mosquito and Pill Bug can form a very powerful combination. Placing them together increases the size of the area where you may move pieces around, and this can be very useful defensively, and difficult to counter.

The Ladybug

The Ladybug has the ability to climb into and out of surrounded spaces, but it also has a limited range. Within its range though, it's movement pattern makes it very flexible, and later in the game it can often reach any space within a three piece radius.

It is a very effective opening piece. Although the opening piece often gets trapped, the Ladybug has a better chance than most of eventually getting free, and if it does get out it is more likely to be able to attack the opponent's Queen Bee.

The Pill Bug

It is often placed near to its own Queen Bee so that it can rescue it later in the game, or move attackers away.

If it is to be used to rescue the Queen Bee, it will need to be placed adjacent to it. If a Queen Bee is nearly surrounded, moving it away can change the game dramatically and turn a losing position into a winning one. Note that if the Queen is pinned, the Pill Bug might actually have to help surround its own Queen Bee in order to free it so that it can be moved.

If it is to be used to relocate attacking pieces, its best position is two spaces away from the Queen Bee.

If an opponent is playing defensively and using a Pill Bug, you will have to deal with it in one of the following ways:

- Trap the Queen Bee with a Beetle so that the Pill Bug cannot move it.
- Put a Beetle on top of the Pill Bug to neutralise it.

- Surround the Pill Bug so that it has nowhere to put the pieces it has moved, and cannot use its ability.

Although the Pill Bug is primarily a defensive piece, it can also be used as an effective attacking piece if placed near to the opponent's Queen Bee. It is difficult to pin because it can move the piece that pins it a turn later. Also, it can defeat a block and place a piece in a space that is partially surrounded. If I am playing against a defensive player I often save my Pill Bug for the final attack as it is very difficult to stop.

Chapter 7: Beetlemania

The other day we were playing Hive[®] when a song came on the radio by the Swedish rock band 'The Hives'. We laughed. It was a nice moment.

Later that same day, we were playing a different board game, "Ticket to Ride", and on the radio, the DJ announced that the next song he was going to play would be by 'The Beatles'.

We stopped playing and looked at each other in anticipation. Could it be ...?

Then the song started. It was 'Eleanor Rigby'.

Pity.

There is one particular attack which is very common, and very powerful indeed, and I want to talk about it at length, so I have given it a chapter of its own. I want to tell you how to play it, and I want to tell you how to defend against it if it is played against you.

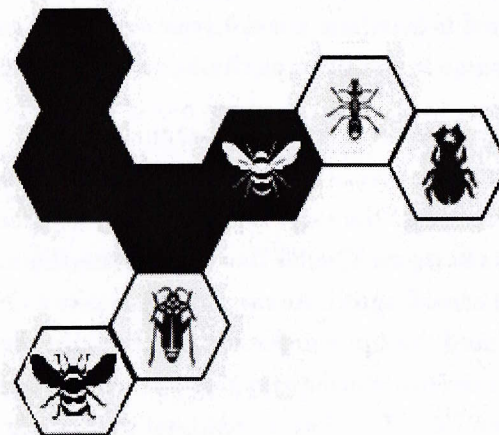
The main objective of the manoeuvre is to get your Beetle on top of your opponent's Queen Bee. If you do that, it is likely you will be able to place several of your pieces adjacent to the Queen Bee, rather than having to place them elsewhere then move them.

There is a lot of discussion about this manoeuvre in various forums on the internet, and a lot of people seem to be convinced that playing this strategy will guarantee a win for the attacking player. This is not the case, though it will certainly give the player an advantage if not defended against properly.

The best way of getting a Beetle on top of the Queen Bee early in the game, is by following the steps below:

1. Open with 3 pieces such as Grasshopper – Ant – Queen Bee.
2. As soon as you can, pin the opponent's Queen Bee with your Ant.
3. Place a Beetle next to your Ant, so that it is one space away from your opponent's Queen Bee.

At this point, the game should look something like this:



For your next few moves:

4. Move your Beetle so that it is adjacent to the Queen Bee.
5. Move your Beetle so that it is on top of the Queen Bee.
6. Place any piece (weak pieces like Spiders are fine) adjacent to the Queen Bee and your Ant.
7. Place another piece adjacent to the Queen Bee on the other side of your Ant.
8. Place another attacking piece, like an Ant.
9. Move it to fill the penultimate space next to the Queen Bee. Choose the space that does not release any of your opponent's pieces.

- Drop the Beetle from on top of the Queen into the space adjacent to your first piece (the Grasshopper). It is important to fill this space last if there is a chance your opponent's first piece is a jumper or climber and could escape.

A lot of people seem to think that this attack is special in some way. They think that it improves their count because of the way the pieces can be placed directly next to the Queen Bee. However, this is not quite the case. Even if the opponent does not defend, after pinning the Queen Bee it still takes a further 8 moves to occupy the 4 remaining spaces adjacent to the Queen Bee. In other words, two moves per space, which is standard.

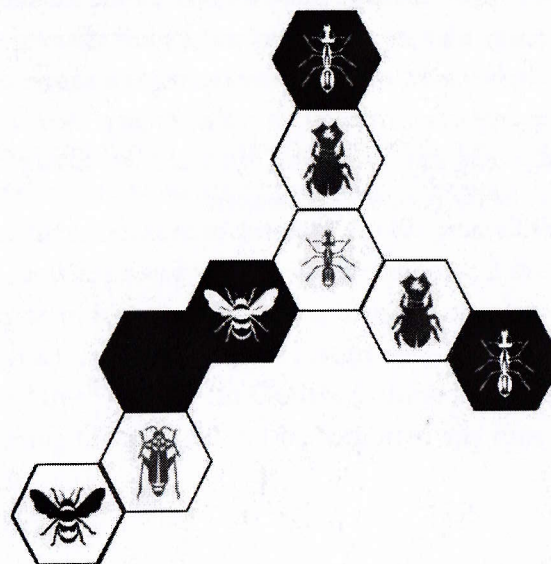
Furthermore, the manoeuvre cannot win the game outright, it relies on one standard attack (moves 8 and 9 above) which can be defended against in the usual way.

However, although it is not faster than other attacks, it appears so because it is more difficult to stop, especially once the Beetle gets up on top of the hive.

If you try this attack against an inexperienced player he might not see it coming until it is too late. However, an experienced opponent will see it coming. If so, there are two defences he is likely to try.

Firstly, he might play a Beetle next to his own Queen Bee. He knows that you know that if you manage to get the Beetle on top of his Queen Bee, he will simply play his Beetle on top of yours, and you will not be able to play steps 6 and 7 above. If he places a Beetle therefore, you should try to pin it. This negates his threat and has the further advantage of helping you surround the Queen Bee.

Secondly, he might pin your Beetle, most likely with an Ant. If this happens, play another Beetle. If he pins that too, it is time to move onto another strategy, but you will be in a good position, with two of your opponent's Ants unable to move.



Chapter 8: Next Steps

Many believe Hive[®] is on the verge of going mainstream. One indicator of this is the (perhaps surprising) fact that the singer Nicki Minaj is a celebrity Hive[®] player. Her 2012 song "Beez in the Trap" is a tribute to the game.

At least, I think it is; she has not returned my emails asking her to confirm this. However, what other possible reason could there be for trapping bees? If I had written the song I would have used the word "pin" rather than "trap" (and I would also have spelt "bees" correctly). Listening to the lyrics it is difficult to see exactly what she is getting at, but she uses the word mothercluckers a lot, which I believe is a common euphemism for Grasshopper, and towards the end of the song, she talks about defecating over a large area, which is a well-known variation on the Pemberton manoeuvre.

If you want to know even more about strategy and game theory, you could check out Randy Ingersoll's book "Play Hive[®] like a Champion". This is an outsize paperback full of theory, and goes into a lot more detail than this book, with dozens of diagrams and commentary from actual games.

However, the most important thing for you to do now that you know the rules and the key strategies is to practice. The more you play the more confident you will become with counting and planning ahead.

Hive[®] is a great lunchtime game if you are at school or work, as you can play it just about anywhere. All you need is an opponent. I carry my copy of *Hive[®] Pocket* with me at all times, and I can confirm that it does actually fit in a pocket. And yes, that means I have ants in my pants.

If you cannot find an opponent though, there are several online versions of the game. I hesitate to name them because technology is changing all the time, and apps and websites come and go. I do not really want to write something that will obsolete in a few years, so I am tempted just to advise you to enter "Play Hive[®] Online" in Google (I think I am safe assuming Google will not be forgotten any time soon).

At the time of writing though, the main places for playing Hive[®] online are boardgamearena.com and boardspace.net. There is also an app.

I should warn you though, the software does have bugs in it.

On that rather feeble joke, I am going to sign off now. I hope you have enjoyed this little book and I hope I have improved your enjoyment of the game.

Happy Hiving.

Steve.

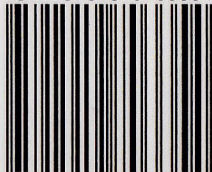


Hive is a board game with a difference - it does not have a board.

If you enjoy strategy games like chess, and do not have any irrational fear of creepy crawlies, Hive could well be the game for you.

In this book, Hive addict Steve Dee will introduce you to the game and give you some tips to help you improve.

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