

Lines of Questioning

Standard Game

Discussion and ongoing development at lawofgamedesign.com

I. Overview & Goal

Lines of Questioning is a solo game of courtroom drama. You are a lawyer cross-examining a witness who has something to hide. To get the information you need, you will have to lead the witness through a series of little questions that build up to a big reveal—or trap the witness with his or her own words.

Over the course of the game you will build physical lines, one for the lawyer's questions and another for the witness' answers. The witness is on record, and so the witness' lines remain on the board. They will limit later plays as the witness tries to avoid going back on what he said previously. By contrast, the lawyer has opportunities to get rid of her lines and start fresh, coming at the witness from a new angle. Managing the lines, learning how to direct them and when to stop them, is the key to victory.

You win by getting the witness to admit all of the key facts, represented by building stacks of tiles in the four corners of the board. Work quickly, because the judge's patience is not infinite

II. How to Play

a. Setting up the game

Shuffle the lawyer's stack of question tiles (with a lighter background) and the witness' stack of answer tiles (with a darker background), and put the shuffled stacks face-down in separate piles. Draw two separate hands of three tiles each, one hand of questions and another hand of answers; place these hands in the spaces on either side of the board. You are allowed to look at both, but do not mix them. You will always have two separate hands.

b. What happens during a turn

The game is played in turns. Each turn has four steps:

1. Play a question tile as part of the lawyer's line.
2. Draw the next question tile from the stack and add it to the lawyer's hand of question tiles.
3. Play an answer tile as part of the witness' line.
4. Draw the next answer tile from the stack and add it to the witness' hand of answer tiles.

All of these steps are mandatory; you must play a tile in steps 1 and 3, even if you would prefer not to, and must draw replacements in steps 2 and 4 if possible.

c. How to get started

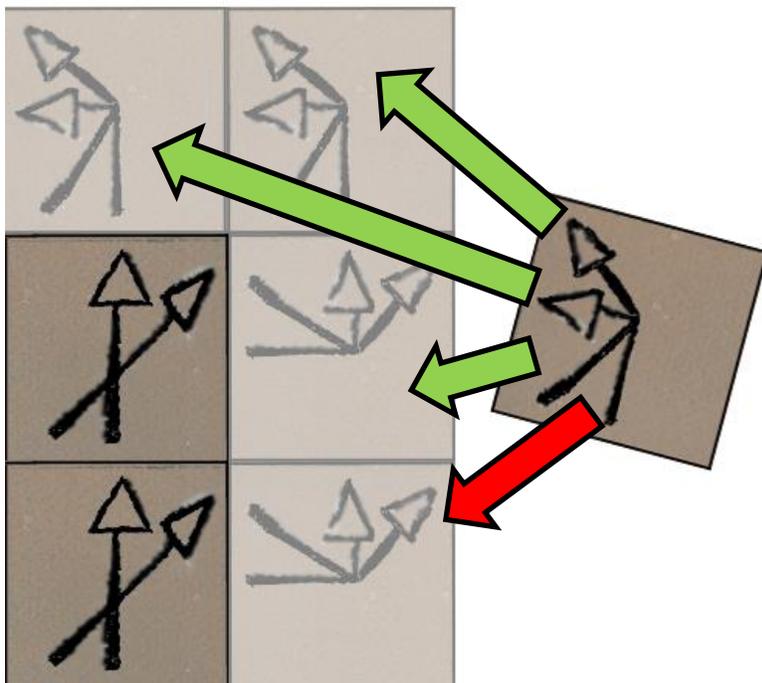
Begin the game by taking the first turn, starting with step 1. Place a question tile in any space along the edge of the board (except the corners), with at least one of its entrances—the end of a line without an arrow—connecting to the edge of the board. That tile begins the lawyer’s line. Draw another question tile in step 2. Then place an answer tile in step 3 to begin the witness’ line, following the same rules you used to start the lawyer’s line. When you complete step 4 the first turn is over; begin the second turn by going back to step 1, and keep going through the steps until you win or the game ends.

d. Tile placement rules

Whenever you play a tile, follow these rules:

1. Tiles must be played squarely within spaces. They cannot be placed so that they extend into multiple spaces.
2. Each tile has one or more entrances, and one or more exits. Exits are marked with arrows. An entrance of the tile played must be adjacent to, and line up with, an exit from the last tile in the same line. (So, if you are playing a tile for the lawyer in Step 1, one of its entrances must connect to one of the exits from the last tile in the lawyer’s line.)

Example:

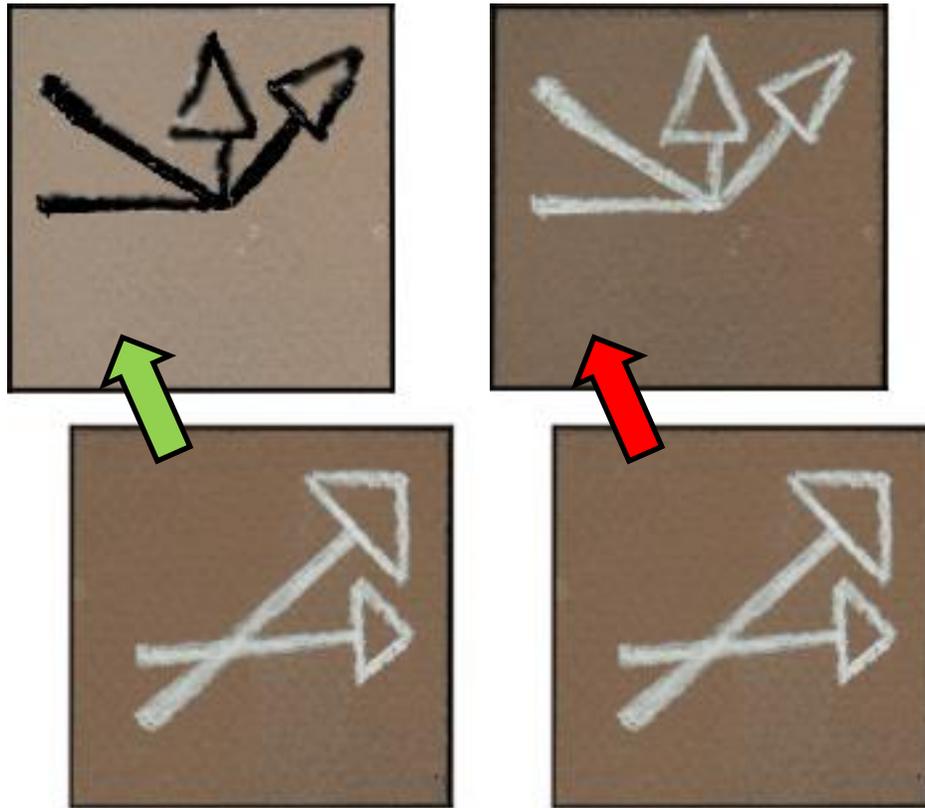


The new tile can be placed in any of the positions indicated by a **green** arrow, because in each case one of the new tile’s entrances connects to one of the last tile in the line’s exits.

The new tile cannot be placed in the position indicated by the **red** arrow, because the new tile must connect to the last tile in the line.

3. A tile may stack on top of another tile of the opposite type. Thus, an answer tile can be played on top of a question tile, and can even be played on top of a question tile which has another answer tile below it. It cannot, however, be played directly on top of another answer tile.

Example:



It is legal to play the witness' answer tile on top of the lawyer's question tile (the **green** arrow).
The answer tile cannot be played on top of another answer tile (the **red** arrow.)

4. If you can extend the current line, you must do so. (If you cannot, see below for how to start new lines.)
5. Lines of Questioning puts you in the lawyer's shoes, and so you have more control over how the lawyer's line grows than you do over the witness'.
 - a. When playing for the lawyer in step 1, you may play any question tile you wish. You can even choose a tile whose exits will necessarily end the

lawyer's line (e.g., because the only exit points into the corner of the board).

- b. When playing for the witness in step 3, you must—if possible—play an answer tile with at least one exit that points toward a space that is empty or that has a question tile on top. If none of the answer tiles in the witness' hand can achieve either of those things, you can play any answer tile you wish.

Rule #5 might seem confusing. Think about it like this: the lawyer can choose to end a line of questioning for tactical reasons, but the witness wants to be consistent and maintain an unbroken chain of answers. As a result, the witness will never give an answer—that is, play a tile—that ends his line if he can possibly avoid it.

e. Winning and losing

You win by revealing four key facts. To reveal a key fact, you must build a stack of tiles in a corner space at least four-high, in this pattern from top to bottom:

Answer tile
Question tile
Answer tile
Question tile

It is not harmful to have more tiles in the corner, but tiles outside that pattern do not count toward revealing the key fact. (So, for example, if the bottom tile of the stack in a corner is an answer tile, that tile does not help reveal that corner's key fact.)

Remember that the normal rules for playing a tile apply in the corners just the same as in any other space.

There are three ways to lose:

1. The witness' hand of answer tiles runs out.
2. The lawyer's hand of question tiles runs out.
3. It is step 1 or step 3 of the turn, and there is no legal place to play a tile. (Note that this is different from the lawyer's or witness' line ending; this requires not only that the line end, but that there be no legal place to restart it. See below for how to restart lines.)

f. Starting new lines

If you cannot continue the lawyer's line during step 1, discard all question tiles that are top-most in their respective spaces from the board, including question tiles that are the only tile in their respective spaces. Put the discarded tiles aside; they are out of the game, and will no longer be used. Then begin a new line of questioning by placing a question tile in any space along the edge of the board (except the corner spaces). At least one of this new tile's entrances must connect to the edge of the board.

If you cannot continue the witness' line in step 3, begin a new one by placing an answer tile in the first corner where it can legally be played (i.e., the first corner that is empty or has a question tile on top), starting from the lower-left and proceeding clockwise.

Remember that these rules only apply if you *cannot* legally place a tile. If you *can* legally place a tile that extends the current line, you must do so rather than start a new line. For example, if a tile has two exits—one which makes legal placement impossible and one which allows a legal placement—you must choose to extend along the path that allows a legal placement.

g. Option: last tile markers

Some players find it helpful to use a token to mark the last tile in each line, moving the tokens as the lines extend and restart. These tokens do not affect the rules in any way; they simply make remembering where to play from easier. If you find yourself losing track of the ends of the lines, give this solution a try.

III. Frequently Asked Questions

Q. The stack of question tiles has run out, so it is impossible to draw a tile in step 2. Is the game over?

A. No. However, the lawyer's hand is no longer being replenished, and the lawyer's hand running out will end the game in a loss.

Q. The last tile in one of the lines has been covered by a tile of the opposite type. Is it still the last tile in line, or does the last visible tile of its type become the last one in line?

A. Being covered does not affect whether a tile is the last one in its line. Continue the line from the covered tile.

IV. Tactical Tips

Some players like to discover a game entirely on their own; others like to have some strategic guidance. If you fall into the latter category, read on!

Remember that while you must always keep the lines going, they do not need to go straight. The tiles with diagonal entrances and exits can be used to bend the line in unusual

directions. Some of the example diagrams in these rules involve this, and can be used for inspiration.

Look for roundabout ways to get where you want to go. If you cannot go straight forward, it might still be possible to curve away and then loop back.

There are 31 question tiles and 31 answer tiles. That is enough to win with some—but not many—extras. Have a plan for each tile you place, and plan ahead as far as you can. Playing tiles just to temporize, hoping to draw something better, is risky; do that too many times, and by the time you get the tiles you need you will have too few left to win.

Although the board is only 4 spaces by 4 spaces, getting across it will use up some of your tiles. Think carefully about how, and how many times, you will cross the board.

Good luck!