Towers

A two-player board game by Dale Emery

OBJECT

The object of the game is to build and own towers with the most floors. A **tower** is a stack of one or more **floors**.

You **build** a new tower by moving an existing tower on top of another existing tower.

You **own** each tower that has your color floor on top. When you own a tower, you own all of the floors in the tower, regardless of color.

GAME MATERIALS

64 Floors—32 black and 32 white (or any two distinct colors). Floors are flat, stackable pieces of uniform shape and size. Checkers or poker chips work well.

1 Game Board represents the downtown area of a small city, arranged in an 8x8 grid of squares, each representing one city **block**. Each block is large enough to hold a tower comfortably. A chess board or checkers board works well, though the squares need not alternate colors.

PREPARATION

Determine who plays each color. One player—called *Black*—plays the black towers. The other player—called *White*—plays the white towers.

Place the floors on the downtown grid, one floor per block, alternating colors (in a checkerboard pattern). Each block now has a tower that is one floor high.

PLAY

Players alternate turns. Black plays first.

On each turn you build a tower, then demolish any towers that become isolated from the tallest tower (see *Demolition*, below).

Building a tower. To build a tower, move one of your towers onto an existing tower. This builds a new, taller tower. Because a floor of your color is on top, you now own the new tower and all of the floors in it.

Bureaucracy. Building a tower is subject to bureaucratic regulations:

- You may move only your own towers. You may not move the other player's towers.

- You may not move a tower that is surrounded on all four sides by occupied blocks.

- You must move your tower onto an existing tower. You may not move your tower onto a vacant block.

- You may move your tower onto any existing tower, no matter who owns it.

- You must move your tower in a straight line, horizontally or vertically. You may not move diagonally or change direction.

- You must move your tower one block for each floor in the tower. If your tower is one floor high, move it one block onto an immediately adjacent tower. If your tower is four floors high, move it four blocks, skipping over the intervening three blocks. Any intervening blocks may be occupied or vacant as your tower passes over them.

Connection and isolation. Two towers are **connected** to each other if there is a **path** from one tower to the other. A path is a series of horizontal and vertical steps, moving only through occupied blocks. If there is no such path, the towers are **isolated** from each other.

Demolition. Any tower that becomes isolated from the tallest tower is "demolished" and removed from the board. Demolished towers are no longer in play.

If multiple towers vie for tallest, a shorter tower is demolished only if it is isolated from each of the tallest towers.

No legal move. If you can make a legal move, you must. If you have no legal move, your turn ends.

ENDING THE GAME

The game ends when neither player can make a legal move.

The winner is the player who owns the most floors at the end of the game.

VARIATIONS

Try any of these variations, singly or in combination.

Sprawl. Instead of starting with the standard position, players choose where to place their single-floor towers. Starting with White, players alternate turns, each placing a single-floor tower on vacant block. When all blocks are occupied, the building and demolition phase proceeds as in the standard rules, with Black building first.

Infrastructure. Include an even number of pieces of a third color, which represent utilities. Before the building and demolition phase, players alternate turns, replacing their towers with utility towers until all utilities are placed. In this variation, a tower is demolished not when it becomes isolated from the tallest tower, but when it becomes isolated from a tower that includes a utility.

Sprawl with infrastructure. Begin the game by placing utilities, with players alternating turns to place the utilities. Then continue with the *sprawl* phase (see the variation above), followed by the building and demolition phase.

Downtown. Change the shape of the rectangular *downtown* grid, making it longer or shorter, wider or narrower. Add or remove floors to match the number of blocks. If your board has an odd number of blocks, include an odd number of utilities so that players start with an equal number of towers.

Capture. Demolished towers are captured by the player whose move demolished them. At the end of the game, count the floors in the captured towers when determining the winner.

Suburbs. Demolished towers are not removed from the game. Instead, they revert to single-floor towers, each owned by whoever owned it before it was demolished. That is, the top floor remains on the block and the lower floors are removed from the game. The demolished towers form a suburb, isolated from the rest of the towers. When a tower becomes isolated from the tallest tower in its suburb, it is again demolished, flattened to a single-floor tower.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Towers was inspired by Dvonn, a great board game created by Kris Burm. Kris's Gipf Project includes six amazingly fun abstract strategy games, each played on hexagonal game boards. There are even (optional) rules that tie the games together, so that a move in one game may involve playing one or more of the other games.

Kris works with manufacturers to ensure that each Gipf Project game is well-crafted of top-quality materials. The boards and pieces look and feel great.

If you like Towers, try Dvonn. And then try the other Gipf Project games. Kris Burm is a game design genius.

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