

Undertow! Rules

Overview

Turn Summary

1. The player may play one Lifeguard/Shark Card.
2. The player rolls the die, then moves one or more of his swimmers further out to sea.

Play proceeds clockwise. All players take their turns in order until the game ends. At the end of a player's turn, if there are no more swimmers in the water, the game ends, and the player with the most swimmers on the beach wins.

Setup

Necessary Materials

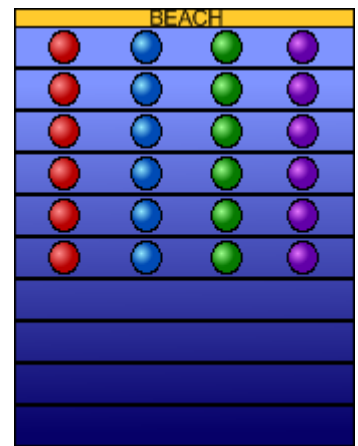
1. *Undertow!* game board
2. 24 game pieces (4 different colors, 6 of each color)
3. 1 six-sided die
4. 8 Lifeguard/Shark Cards

Game Board

The yellow portion of the game board is the beach. The blue portion is the ocean, divided into 10 sections by white wavy lines.

Game Pieces

Each player takes six swimmer tokens. Each player places one of his swimmers on each of the six sections of ocean closest to the beach (see diagram).



Initial setup of the game board in a four-player game.

Cards

In a two-player game, each player takes 3 Lifeguard/Shark cards. In a three- or four-player game, each player takes 2 cards.

Gameplay

Choose the First Player

Each player rolls the die. The player who rolls the highest number takes the first turn. In case of a tie, re-roll.

Turn Structure

Each player's turn has two phases, always played in order:

Phase 1: The player may play one Lifeguard/Shark Card.

If the player has at least one Lifeguard/Shark card, he may play one card, or skip this phase. If he plays a card, he declares whether it is a Lifeguard or a Shark. The card is placed in the discard pile, and the event resolves as follows:

Lifeguard: A lifeguard swims out from the beach to rescue some swimmers. The lifeguard rescues all of the swimmers on the occupied section of ocean closest to shore; move these swimmers to the beach. All of the swimmers on the affected section of ocean are rescued, regardless of what player controls them.

Shark Attack: A shark appears and devours all of the swimmers on a single section of ocean. The player who played the card chooses which section the shark attacks (he may choose any single section of ocean). The eaten swimmers are removed from the game. All of the swimmers on the affected section of ocean are killed, regardless of what player controls them.

Phase 2: The player rolls the die and moves his swimmers.

The player rolls the die to see how many of his swimmers are pulled back by the undertow. The player chooses a number of her swimmers equal to the number he rolled on the die, and moves them one section of ocean away from the beach. If he rolls a number equal to or greater than the number of swimmers he has in the ocean, he moves all of his swimmers. A swimmer can never move more than one section in a single turn.

Drowning: When a swimmer is on the tenth section of ocean and is pulled back by the undertow, that swimmer is pulled out to sea and drowns. Drowned swimmers are removed from the game.

Continue Play

Once the player has moved his swimmers, his turn is finished, and play proceeds clockwise to his left.

Running Out of Swimmers or Cards

If a player has no more swimmers in the water but still has cards, he can still participate in the game by playing cards on his turn. After all, a well-timed shark attack could alter the outcome of the game.

Likewise, if a player uses all of his cards but has swimmers in the water, he continues to roll the die and move his swimmers each turn. With luck, some of the player's swimmers could still be rescued when an opponent calls the lifeguard.

When a player runs out of both swimmers and cards, then he no longer takes a turn. However, he can still win if he has more swimmers on the beach than any other player at the end of the game.

Ending the Game

When all swimmers have either been rescued or killed, the game is over. The winner is the player with the most swimmers on the beach at the end of the game. Note: *Undertow!* sometimes ends in a tie. Because the game is quite short, it is recommended that a group play several games in a row, and determine the winner by the total number of swimmers saved over a series of games. The number of games should be agreed upon before play begins.

Tips

Remember that you only have a limited number of cards, which means you can only initiate a limited number of events. You may want to save a card to call the lifeguard. Don't count on your opponents to rescue too many of your swimmers.

Shark attacks can be devastating. Be careful when moving too many swimmers onto the same section of ocean. You can discourage shark attacks by keeping your swimmers in the same sections as your opponents' swimmers, but be careful! In three- and four-player games, this strategy only works if all players have swimmers on that section.

The fewer swimmers a player has in the ocean, the less choice he or she will have when moving those swimmers. Try to keep as many swimmers in the water as possible, and try to get rid of your opponents' swimmers early.