

# Lines of Questioning

*Discussion and ongoing development at [lawofgamedesign.com](http://lawofgamedesign.com)*

*Hi! I'm Tom, a Pennsylvania attorney and the designer of Lines of Questioning. This game reflects some of my own professional knowledge and experience in the courtroom. I thought it might be interesting to hear about the legal rules—and sometimes legal realities—behind the game. Throughout the rules you'll find sidebars like this one, explaining where rules come from.*

*Although I want Lines of Questioning to be both fun and realistic in its abstract way, it grossly simplifies legal rules to keep the game moving. It's also based on my own experience and knowledge, which don't extend across every issue or jurisdiction.*

***Don't take anything in these rules, or in the game, as legal advice!** If you have a legal problem and need to know how the law applies to you, contact an attorney. The "Disclaimer" page at [lawofgamedesign.com](http://lawofgamedesign.com) has all the details, including how to find a lawyer.*

## I. Overview & Goal

Lines of Questioning is a game of courtroom drama. One player takes the role of the lawyer, trying to get key facts from a hostile witness. The other player is the witness, trying not to reveal unpleasant truths.

*Judges have their own schedules, and won't let a lawyer go on forever.*

The lawyer wins by getting all the facts she needs—represented by building a stack of questions and answers five tiles high at each of the four corners of the board—before her stack of tiles runs out. The witness wins if the lawyer does not.

## II. How to Play

Choose one player to be the lawyer; the other player is the witness. Each player shuffles her stack of tiles, puts the shuffled stack face-down, and draws four tiles to be her starting hand.

Shuffle the number tiles (1 through 4), and place one face-up on each corner of the board.

Players then take turns, starting with the lawyer.

*Questioning starts with, of course, a question from the lawyer, so the lawyer always goes first.*

During each turn, the player:

1. Plays a single tile in one of the spaces on the board.
2. Draws the next tile from her stack.

Both of these actions are mandatory; players **must** play a tile, even if they do not want to, and **must** draw a replacement.

*Lawyers don't have the option of waiting to see if the witness will just spontaneously say something useful, and witnesses don't get to "pass" outside of unusual circumstances like invoking their Fifth Amendment right against self-incrimination. In general, the lawyer must keep asking questions, and the witness must answer them.*

Both players must follow these rules regarding their tile placement:

1. The tile must extend that player's line. In other words, it must be adjacent to the tile that player put down on her last turn, and the line on the new tile must connect to the line on the previous tile. **Exception:** for each player's first play, the player may play a tile in any space along the edge of the board, except the corner spaces, with the line starting on the board's edge.
2. The line must keep flowing in the same direction. Each tile has an arrow; the arrow can never point back toward the last turn's tile.

In addition, each player has rules that are applicable only to her. For the lawyer:

*Lawyers' questions aren't evidence; only the answers are. A lawyer can't build on her own questions. She has to build on the witness' answers.*

1. The lawyer cannot place one of her tiles on top of another of her own tiles.

*Lines of questioning can prove unproductive for many reasons. Perhaps the witness is being cagey and the questions aren't revealing anything; perhaps something that looked suspicious has turned out to be completely innocent; perhaps it's gone on so long and become so convoluted that the jury has lost interest. Whatever the reason, there comes a time when the lawyer needs to stop and try a different approach.*

2. If the lawyer cannot legally place a tile—e.g., because the tile would have to overlap with another one of the lawyer's tiles or would be off the board—that line of questioning is over. Remove all of the lawyer's tiles that are the top tile in their respective spaces. The lawyer is permitted to start a new line of questioning, using the same rules as for her first play.

3. When there is a stack of tiles five-high on corner space #1, the lawyer claims the "1" tile. The lawyer claims tiles #2-4 in the same way. When the lawyer claims tile #4, she wins. **The tiles must be claimed in order.** If the lawyer has five tiles on a corner space she cannot claim yet, she cannot claim that tile until all of the lower-numbered tiles have been claimed. At that point, the lawyer can claim the tile when another witness' tile is added to the space.


The witness has the following rules relating to her tile placement:

1. Whenever the witness places a tile, check to see if it is on top of or adjacent to the last tile the lawyer placed. If it is not, the lawyer gets to draw the top tile from the witness' stack. The lawyer can play this tile on her turn, with the following special rules:
  - a. Since this is not one of the lawyer's tiles, the lawyer can play it on top of another tile she played.
  - b. The lawyer does not draw a tile after playing one of the witness' tiles.


*Lawyers take notice when a witness goes off-topic. It can be a red flag for the lawyer, signaling that there's something the witness wants to hide. Alternatively, it may be that the witness was confused by the question. The witness might be giving away free information without realizing that she's digging herself into a hole—or she might just be wasting everyone's time.*

*When the witness' line moves away from the attorney's, it represents the witness giving an unresponsive, off-topic answer. Whether that happened because the witness is trying to hide something, or simply because the witness is confused, the lawyer will get to ask some pointed questions to bring things back on track. The tile the lawyer gets represents the answer to one of those questions. In that moment the lawyer has an unusual amount of control over what the witness can say. She should use it wisely!*

2. If the witness cannot legally play a tile, she must take the top tile from her stack and place it on the corner space with the lowest-numbered number tile still on the board. She can orient the tile however she wants, and starts a new line from the just-placed tile.



*It is perfectly normal for a witness to expand on a previous fact.*



Note that the witness can play over other tiles.