

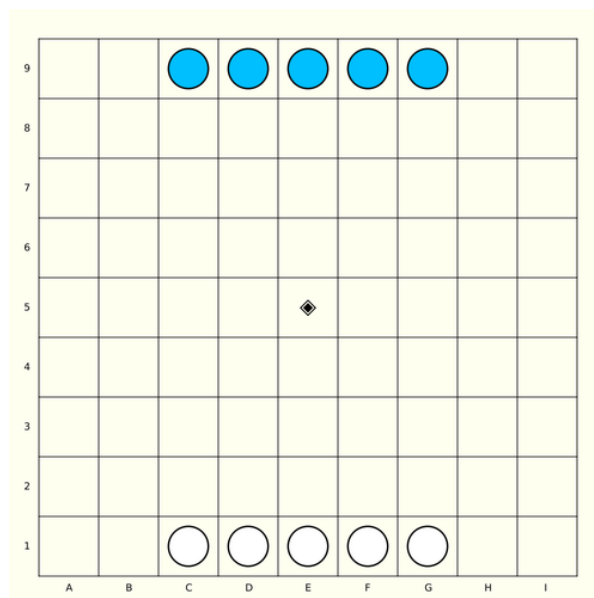
Sentinel

2026, João Pedro Neto, <https://boardgamegeek.com/boardgame/463291/sentinel>

Vigil Games are a class of strategy games in which players must maintain an uninterrupted line of sight between their pieces and a designated reference point or region of the board. The first vigil game on record is 1892's Kastellet.

Sentinel is a vigil game where players always need to have at least one line-of-sight to the board's center. To my knowledge, Sentinel is the second abstract game of this genre (after more than 130 years!), mixing typical movement and capture ludemes with permanent line-of-sight control of the central square.

A **piece** is a single stone or a stack (stacks are two or more stones of the same color).



initial setup (the center is labelled \diamond)

- On his turn, a player can either:
 - a) move a single friendly stone one square forward (orthogonally or diagonally) toward the opposite side of the board
 - a stone can remove itself by moving off the board
 - b) sow an entire friendly stack, one stone per square, in one direction (orthogonal or diagonal, forwards or backwards)
 - each sowing, before starting, adds an extra stone to the stack
 - the stones are sowed in just the one chosen direction, without turns during the sowing
 - the stack's initial square will be empty after the sowing
 - it is invalid to sow outside the board or to make a stack that cannot be sowed (because it is too tall)
- A stone moving onto a friendly piece is stacked on top of that piece.

- A stone moving onto an enemy piece captures it by replacement (no matter its size).
- It is invalid to move or sow over the center

Goal

- A player wins if, at the beginning of his turn, he has five or more friendly pieces with a line-of-sight to the center
- A player loses if he has no stones left or, at the end of his turn, no friendly piece has a line-of-sight to the center

Balancing Rules

- The first player cannot make a stack in his second move.

Notes

- Stack sowing is how players replenish their armies, after battle attrition, and how they backtrack their pieces. The time it takes to rebuild and the resources needed to control the center is a balance that each player must consider.
- Sentinel's initial idea came in August 2025 but the ruleset was play-tested and revised up to January 2026.
- Initially I coined this obscure genre as *protection games*. Later, Craig Duncan suggested *vigil games*, which sounds much better.
- The sowing mechanism has similarities with 1976's [Tower of Power](#) and 2020's [Furl](#) (but without the merging/unfurling)
- Thanks to Gonçalo Correia for implementing the game in AiAi, and Stephen Tavener for his support.