swish

A game for 2 to 4 players by
Stephen Tavener and **Cameron Browne**

INTRODUCTION

Swish is a boardless strategy game of fighting fish.

Each fish is made up of a number of interlocking segments, called *swishbones*.

At the beginning of the game, players start with small two-segmented fish; as the game progresses, through careful planning, their fish will become longer. At the end of the game, the player who has accumulated the most swishbones will be the winner.

COMPONENTS

- 4 x fish heads (1 in each of 4 colours). These show ownership. If fewer than 4 players are in the game, any remaining fish heads are placed back in the box.

- 32 x standard swishbones (8 in each of 4 colours).

*A standard swishbone (left) and a fish head (right)*

SET-UP

The player that ate fish more recently starts.

The first player arranges the swishbones semi-randomly to make the pond; each swishbone represents a small, tasty, food fish. For the first game, we recommend placing the swishbones at least one swishbone width apart, with the colours well mixed.

Starting with the last player and working backwards, each player now places their fish at the edge of the pond:

1) Take a fish head.

2) Take any one standard swishbone *of a non-matching colour* from the pool, and add it to behind the head.

3) Position the fish at the edge of the pool. The last player has free choice; however, the players' fish should be evenly spaced around the edge of the pool at the start of the game.
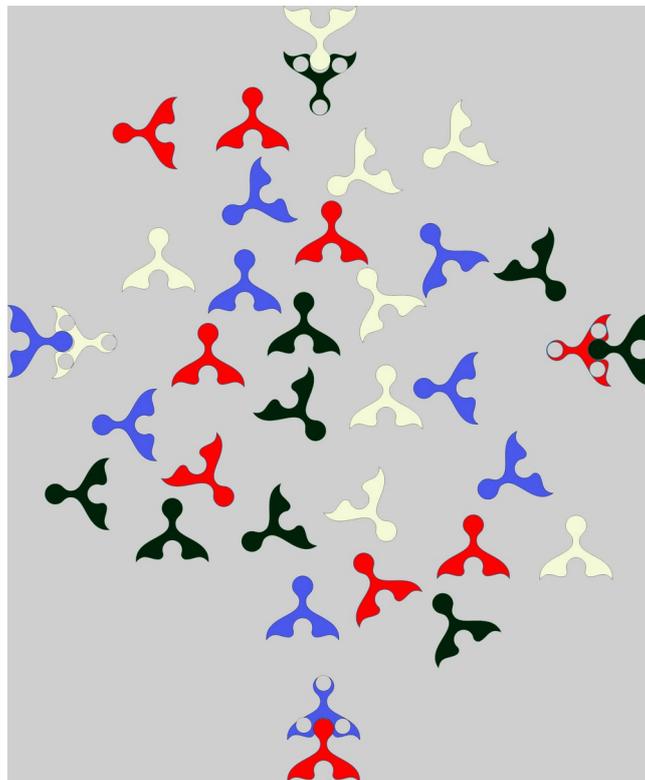

Example of set-up

GAME PLAY

Each turn, the active player moves their fish. A move consists of a number of swishes; each swish moves one swishbone from the tail of the fish to the front of the fish. A sequence of swishes ends as soon as one of the following conditions is met:

> – The player moves the fish head back to the front of the fish, i.e. a fish with 5 swishbones can move at most 5 times.

> – The front swishbone touches another swishbone (see eating)

Note: the player may stop before the head reaches the front of the fish, but must swish at least once if possible.

EATING FOOD FISH

If a fish ends its move on a food fish[1] (a swishbone that is not part of another fish), it attempts to eat that swishbone. Eaten swishbones are added to the end of the fish if possible, or cause **indigestion** if not. See the **fish building and indigestion** below.
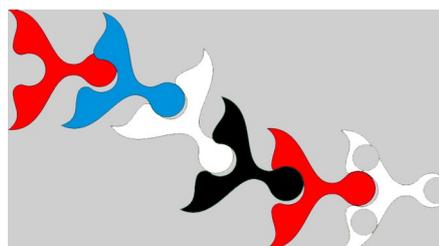
Example: A red swishbone is added to the back of the fish

---

1   Overlapping it, even just a bit.

ENCOUNTERING OPPONENTS

A fish may not ends its move on a swishbone belonging to an opponent's fish. It is possible that a fish may have no legal moves as a result; in this case, the player must pass.

FISH BUILDING AND INDIGESTION

There are a couple of important constraints on how fish can be put together.

Firstly, and most importantly, **a fish can never contain two adjacent swishbones of the same colour**. Since eaten swishbones are added to the tail of the fish, this means that a fish cannot eat a piece if it matches either the tail of the fish (immediate violation) or the head of the fish (violation after the next move).

If at any time, a player's fish would violate these restrictions, they suffer from **indigestion**. The offending swishbone is placed in front of the player, and counts as a penalty point at the end of the game.

Plan your moves carefully. It is very easy to accumulate penalty points if you don't plan ahead!

GAME END AND WINNER

The game ends when all food fishes have been eaten; or when a round of play occurs without any swishbones being eaten.

Players score points equal to the number of swishbones in their fish minus any penalties they may have accumulated as a result of indigestion.