Overview: Hop Step is a 2-3 player game played on a Chinese Checkers board that combines elements of games such as Nim and Amazons.

Board and Pieces: The board is the same as a Chinese Checkers board, with 121 locations arranged in a 6-sided star. The starting locations are the six corners of the board, numbered 1…6 in the figure below. Each player has 3 pieces in the two-player game and 2 pieces in the three-player game. Each piece is marked with a “2” on one side and a “1” on the other side.

Setup: In the two-player game the first player’s pieces begin at locations 1, 3, and 5 in the above picture, while the second player’s pieces begin at locations 2, 4, and 6. In the three-player game each player has two pieces which begin opposite each other on the board (at locations {1 and 4}, {2 and 5}, and {3 and 6}). Pieces begin with the “2” side facing up. The first player to move is chosen randomly or by mutual agreement of the other players.

Play: On a player’s turn, they choose one of their pieces to move. The chosen piece can move as many steps in a straight line as the number showing on top of the piece, and must land on a blank square. The piece is then flipped before being placed back down on the board. (If a “2” was face up on a piece, after moving the “1” side of the piece will then be showing.) This means that each piece alternates between moving one or two steps at a time. When moving two steps, a piece is allowed to jump over another piece on the board. When vacating a location, that location is marked with a black piece to indicate that the location is blocked. Pieces cannot move onto blocked locations on the board.

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An example of the first three moves in a two-player game. The red player begins by moving diagonally upward from the bottom position, and the blue player moves across from the left side. After the first turn, the red player’s piece was flipped so that on the next step it would only move one step at a time. The red players second move only moves a single step diagonally up and to the left, after which it flips back, allowing that piece to move two steps on its next move.
Objective: The object of the game is to be the last player to make a move. A board showing an example end-game state is shown below.

The blue player has three legal moves for the bottom-most piece and four legal moves for the top-most piece, while the red player does not have any legal moves, so the blue player wins.

Hints: Be sure to move your pieces out of the corners. They have less mobility there, and can easily be trapped. Try to limit your opponent in small areas, or build larger areas that your opponent cannot reach.