Distilling

Whenever rum is made, it must be distilled first. It is the job of the distiller, then, to provide rum for the ocean. Since distilling is always in demand and is one of the more complicated puzzles, the pay for distilling jobs is generally quite high. Therefore, it pays to be able to provide expert labor for distilleries, and hopefully this guide will help you gain that status.

Distilling Basics

In distilling, there are a bunch of white, brown, black and orange pieces arranged in columns. The idea is to line up as many white pieces in a column as you can, which will add to the quality of the brew you are making. White pieces are best, black pieces are worst, and brown pieces are neutral. Orange "Spice" pieces add a bonus to your score if you can clear them.

A typical session might look something like the image below:

The marked areas of the screen are:

(1) The performance indicator. As you clear columns, this begins to fill up. When it is completely full, you've finished your session. In addition, the color of the brew inside shows how well you're doing. A clear brew is great, while a murky one isn't so great.

(2) The vat where the brews you've cleared are stored. Light rows funnel up into it when cleared (more on this in a bit).

(3) The playing field.

(4) The next column to be cleared. When time is up, this column will either be funneled up into the vat or down into the furnace, depending on the pieces in it.

(5) The furnace and timer. This is where unwanted pieces should go.

The controls are relatively simple. Click the mouse on a piece that can move, then click on an adjacent piece that it can be swapped with to switch the two. Alternatively, you can also click and drag pieces along a path of legal moves (same as Shipwright), though this takes some practice as well as some setup.

Moving Pieces (The Hard Way)

The different colored pieces can be moved only in certain directions based on what pieces are next to it.

A white piece can move down when there is a brown piece below it, and can move up when there is a black piece above it.

A brown piece can move down when there is a black piece below it, and can move up when there is a white piece above it.

A black piece can move down when there is a white piece below it, and can move up when there is a brown piece above it.

Spice pieces don't move at all no matter what pieces are next to them.

As you may have guessed (or known from experience), this can become incredibly confusing very quickly. Fortunately, there is a much easier way to visualize the board that will make moving pieces much simpler. I'll get to that in a little bit. First, however, I should mention what the pieces do and how they affect your score.

Scoring

Each of the four pieces have weights associated with them. White pieces are light, black pieces are heavy, and brown and spice pieces both count as neutral weights. When a column is cleared, the game counts up the number of each piece in that column, then determines the weight of that column by adding up the number of black pieces and subtracting the number of white pieces.

- If the column weight is less than 0 (meaning more white pieces), the column floats up into the vat where it is scored based on the pieces in it.
- If the column weight is greater than 0 (meaning more black pieces), the column falls into the furnace, where the pieces in the column are burned up. Burning columns doesn't affect your score directly except in the case of spices, which penalize you a little for burning them.
- If the column weight is 0 (an equal number of black/white pieces), the column will still float up into the vat and will be scored as usual.

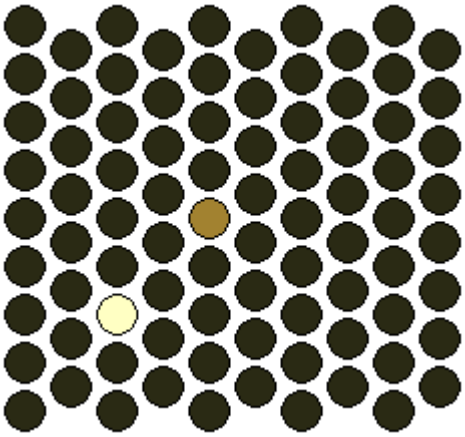
The score of each column sent to the vat is dependent on how many of each piece was present in the column.

- White pieces yield high scores and provide a clear brew. Assembling an entire column of white pieces will earn you a Crystal Clear and an enthusiastic "Yum!" from the disembodied voice that shouts when you do stuff.
- Brown pieces give fewer points than white pieces do. However, they can be useful to fill in the gaps that you may not be able to fill with white pieces. A column with all white and brown pieces may earn a Smooth.
- Avoid black pieces like the plague. Black pieces actually reduce your score when sent up. A column with mostly black pieces will earn a Bleech and a bad score, so be careful.
- Spice pieces add a bonus to your score when sent up. Similar to the Grain Bonus in Carpentry, it's a nice thing to get, but don't mess up potential Crystal Clears trying to get every spice that passes by.

An extra thing to keep in mind is that white pieces should NEVER be sent to the furnace. For every two white pieces that burn, one Burnt White piece will enter the board. These pieces are light in weight like normal white pieces, but reduce your score when sent up like black pieces do.

The "Sea of Black" Representation

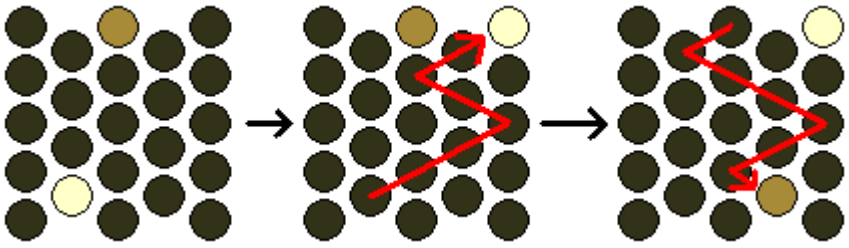
One way to make piece swaps easier is to focus on just a few types of swaps and leave the rest alone, simplifying the moves available to you. Most of the time, black pieces will be the majority piece (since they shouldn't be sent up to the vat). Therefore, it makes sense to view the board as a sea of all black pieces with some brown and white mixed in as shown below.



Since white pieces move up when a black piece is above it, the white piece has nowhere to move but up. Therefore, in a Sea of Black, you can drag white pieces up.

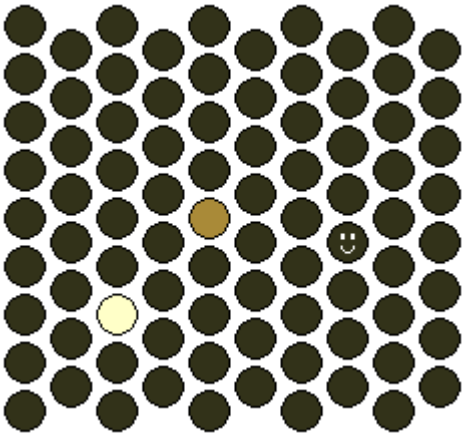
Similarly, brown pieces move down when a black piece is below it, so brown pieces can be dragged down in a Sea of Black.

Some examples are shown below.

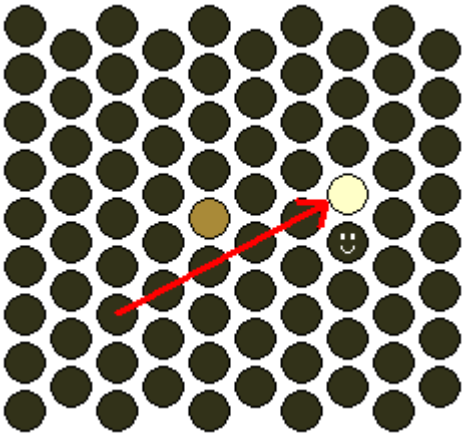


Forming Paths in a Sea of Black

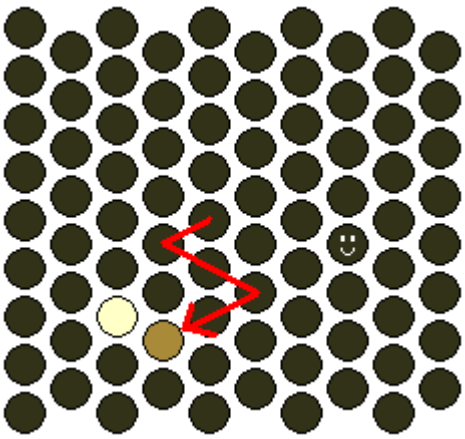
This sort of view is a little bit limited since the pieces can only be moved in one direction. However, you can arrange the pieces such that you form a path to where you want a piece to go. Let's look at an example.



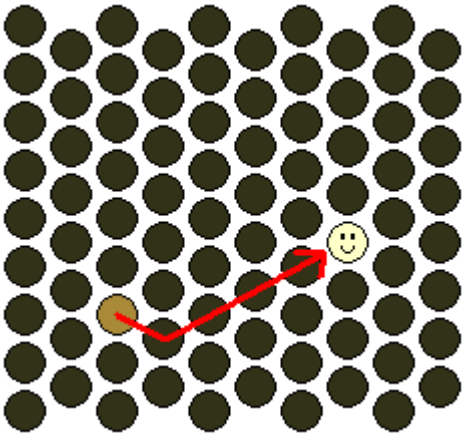
Let's try to move that white piece to the spot marked with a smiley face. Since the board is mostly black pieces, we can use a Sea of Black representation of the board, making our lives a little easier.



Notice how the white piece is a little bit too high to move into the spot directly. We'll have to move the white piece down one spot, but how?

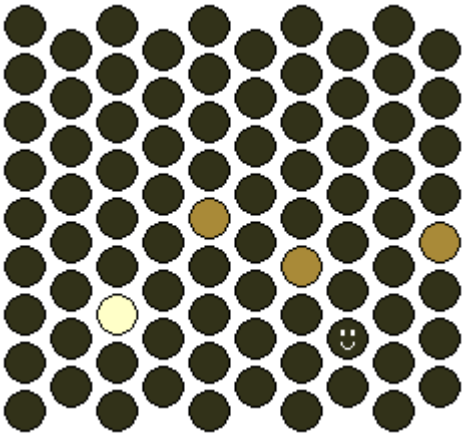


Remembering that white pieces move down when next to brown pieces, let's move the brown piece into place below it. Dragging the brown piece down is okay because brown pieces move down in a sea of black.

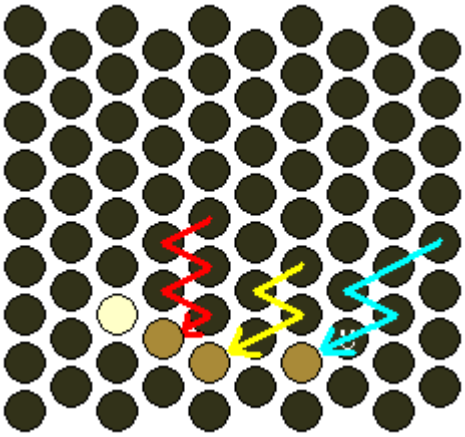


Now that we have a path to that spot, we can drag the white piece to the smiley face. First, move down onto the brown piece, then up through the sea of black.

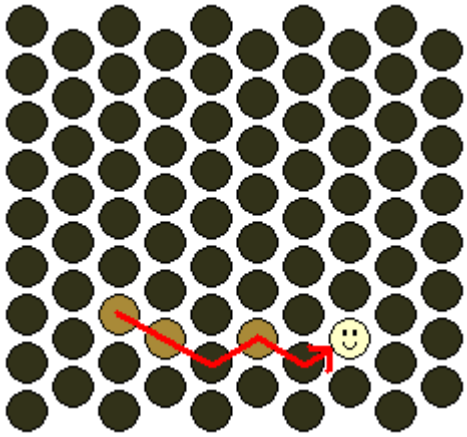
This example was a little easy. Let's try another, more complicated one.



This time, the target for that white piece is *below* the white piece itself. We can still use the Sea of Black representation, but we'll need to form a path to the smiley first.



First, drag the brown pieces down underneath the white piece to form a downward path for the white piece to follow.



With the path formed, it's a simple matter of dragging the white piece along the path.

Forming Crystal Clears

Since Crystal Clears offer the highest score, you should learn how to set them up. The idea is similar to the examples above, but on a larger scale.

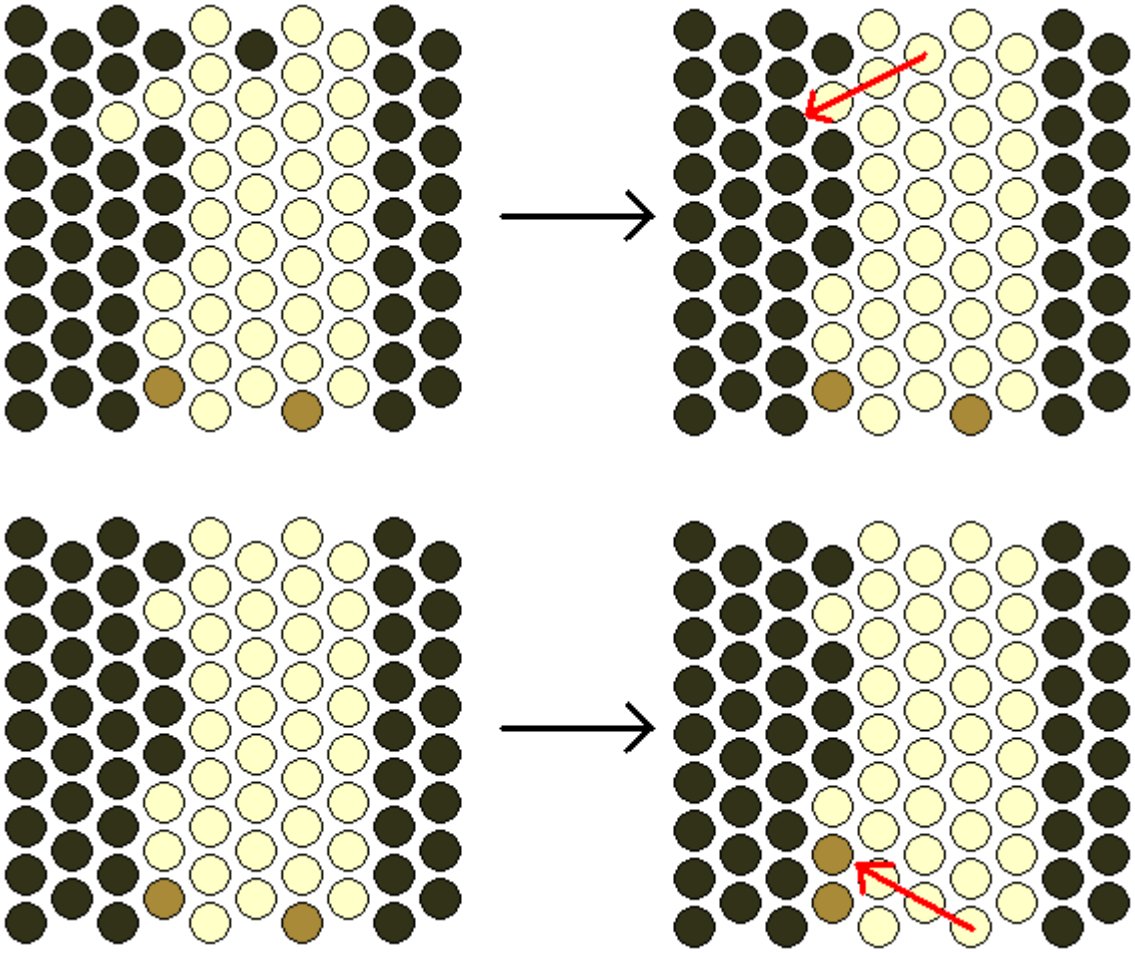
- First, determine the column that you'll use to set up the Crystal Clear. Using a column far to the left is recommended since that will give you much more time to complete the column.
- Second, determine which white pieces you'll use to fill the column. Keep in mind that you shouldn't burn white pieces and that you need to be able to form paths for the white pieces to follow.
- Next, move each white piece into an open spot in the column. Choose easy-to-reach spots that require a minimum of brown pieces to achieve. Use the strategies given in the examples above to move the white pieces around.

If you can manage it, you can also set up multiple Crystal Clears side by side. Each successive Crystal Clear will be worth many more points than the previous, drastically increasing your overall score. You can line up a maximum of 12 Crystal Clears in a row (abbreviated as CC^12), which is when the session will end. Breaking into the Ultimates list will likely require several CC^12, but lesser clears are enough to earn expert labor.

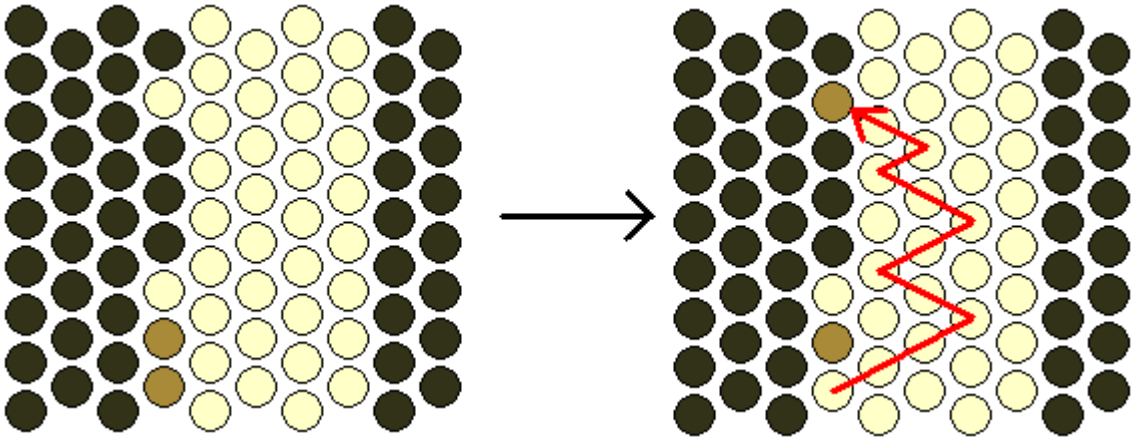
The "Sea of White" Representation

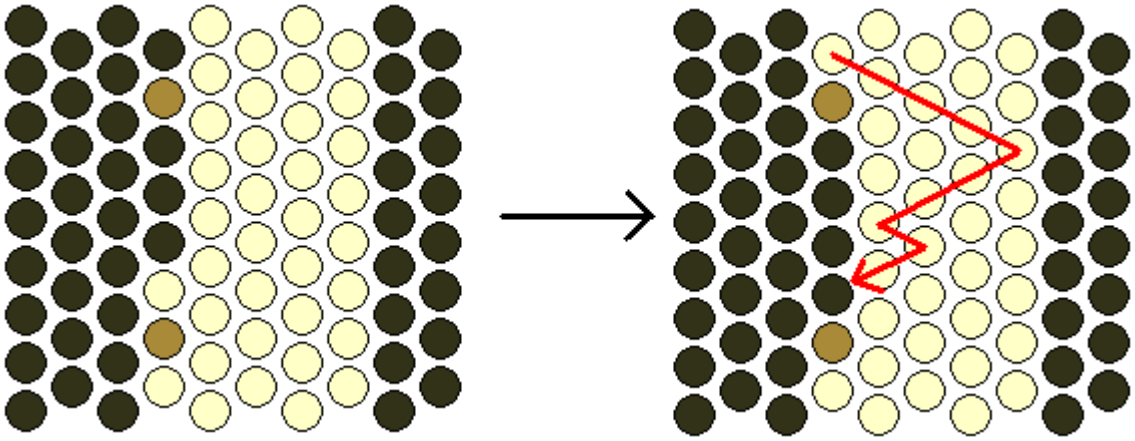
When forming multiple Crystal Clears, it often becomes necessary to move pieces through the massive pile of white pieces you've created. This is true especially when there are pieces of other colors trapped in a CC column. In these cases, a Sea of White representation of the board may be useful.

The idea is very similar to the Sea of Black representation, except that the colors are different. In a sea of white, brown pieces move up and black pieces move down. A number of examples are shown below, ultimately forming a CC^4.



Keep in mind that you can use the Sea of White to move pieces in directions you couldn't normally in the Sea of Black. Use this to move pieces into your paths so that you can form a long CC chain.





There is also a Sea of Brown representation, but it's usually not as useful unless you've been given a lot of brown pieces. I won't cover it in this guide.

Column Weight

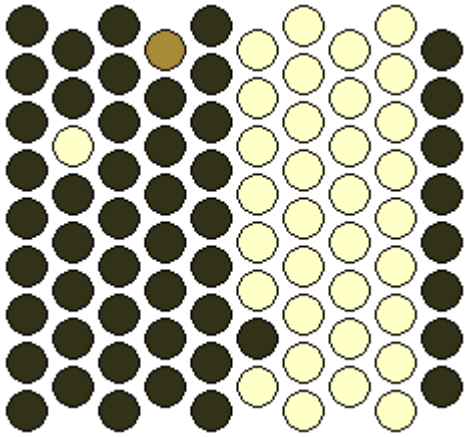
Remember that columns have weights associated with them that determine whether the column will rise or fall. When forming CC chains, it is especially important to keep the following points in mind.

- As long as a column has no white pieces in it and at least one black piece, it will fall. This is because the black piece(s) will make the column heavier than a neutral column provided there are no white pieces to cancel them out.
- Neutral columns will rise. This presents a problem since a column composed entirely of brown/spice pieces can rise into your brew, taking away a possible CC. Make sure that all the columns you're dumping have at least one black piece in them.
- All-white columns will rise, of course. Spices, which count as neutral weight, aren't enough to make the column sink. As long as there are no black pieces in a column, the column will rise.

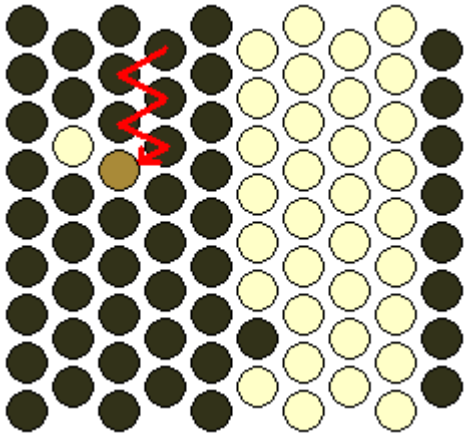
The main goal, then, is to pile all the white pieces into their own columns (preferably with spices) while dumping all the other pieces into the other columns to get rid of them. To make the Sea of Black easier to use, I dump mostly brown pieces (making sure there is at least one black piece in the column so that it sinks) so that the majority of the board is black.

Moving Pieces The "Wrong" Way

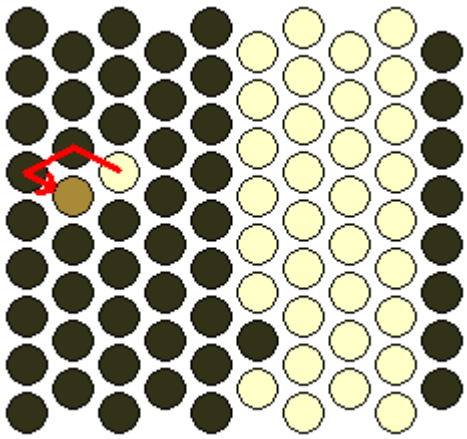
Sometimes, you just don't have enough pieces to form a path directly. In these cases, you'll have to move two different colored pieces together. A visual example might be the best way to explain it.



That white piece on the left side is needed to complete the CC^4 chain. However, it's far too high to move into position directly, and there's only one brown piece to use.

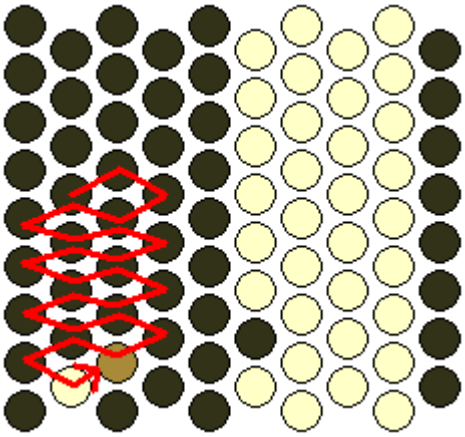


First, move the brown piece into position using the Sea of Black representation.



Next, switch the brown and white pieces. From there, you can then move the brown piece below the white piece again.

Notice how the white piece moved down one spot, and that the pieces are in almost exactly the same position as before. This means that the procedure can be done over and over again to move the white piece down however far you want.



After moving the white piece down far enough, you should be able to form a path with the one brown piece you have to work with, then move the white piece into place.