Rules to *Mexican Train* dominoes

**Number of Players**
2 to 4 players using a double–9 set  
2 to 8 players using a double–12 set

**Additional equipment**
A score sheet and one train marker per player.

**Object of the game**
The winner of the game is the player with the lowest total score for all of the rounds.  
The winner of each round (with a score of zero) is the first player to play all of the dominoes from her hand. The score for each of the other players is the total number of pips on the dominoes left in the player's hand at the end of the round.

**Starting the game**
To start the first round, place the highest double (12–12 or 9–9) in the center of the table. This is the “engine.” Shuffle the remaining dominoes face down, and players draw their starting hands.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of players</th>
<th>double–12 set</th>
<th>double–9 set</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>16</td>
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<td>3</td>
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<td>8</td>
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</table>

The remaining tiles are set aside in “bone piles” to be drawn as needed in the game.

For the first round, choose a player at random to play first. In each subsequent round, the first player rotates one position to the left.

**Variation:** Players start each round by drawing their hands.  
The player with the highest-number double plays it as the engine,  
(if nobody starts with a double, everyone draws until somebody has one),  
and is also the first player to play in the round.

**Playing each round**
Each player has a “personal train” of tiles, and there is one *Mexican Train* shared by all of the players. Each player’s personal train must start with a tile that matches the engine number (on one end), in a position that points toward that player. The *Mexican Train* also must start with a tile that matches the engine number, but in a game with many players, it may be placed away from the engine, anywhere on the table satisfactory to the players.

**Variation:** In games with only a few players, they may agree to allow multiple *Mexican Trains*.

Subsequent plays to the end of a train must match the number at the end of the train, in standard dominoes fashion (see *Playing doubles* below).
On each turn, a player plays a tile from her hand to add to (or start) her own personal train, to the Mexican train, or to another player's marked train (see below). If a player has one or more tiles she can play, she must play one of them. If a player has no play, she draws a tile. If she cannot play the drawn tile (or there are no tiles left to be drawn), then she places her marker on the end of her personal train (or next to the engine, if she has not started her personal train), which allows other players to add to (or start) it.

**Variation:** When a player starts her personal train, her turn continues for as long as she can continue to add tiles from her hand to her train.

A player removes the marker from her personal train the next time she plays on her personal train. Playing on the Mexican Train or another player’s train does not allow her to remove her marker.

**Playing doubles**

If a player plays a double (a tile with the same number on both ends), it is placed sideways and she then must play a second domino onto the double or onto some other eligible train. If she plays a double and has no playable follow-up domino to play, she draws a tile. As in regular play, if she cannot play the drawn tile, then she places her marker on the end of her personal train.

A player can play two doubles onto two different trains in the same turn if she is able to play a third tile from her hand (without drawing) onto one of those double tiles.

If, at the end of a player's turn, she has left a double at the end of any train, all other trains become unplayable until someone plays onto that double. If a subsequent player cannot play a tile on the double tile, she draws a tile. If she cannot play the drawn tile, then she places her marker on the end of her personal train.

Once a tile has been played on an exposed double tile, normal play resumes.

*Exception:* If all of the tiles matching the exposed double have already been played, then the exposed double is ignored, and normal play resumes immediately.

**End of the round**

When any player is left with just one tile in her hand, she must give notice to the other players by tapping her final tile on the table. This allows other players a chance to lower their score by ridding themselves of a higher numbered tile on their next turn.

A round is over when one player has dominoed (played her final tile), or when the game is blocked because no one holds a playable tile and all of the tiles in the bone yard have been drawn.

A player may win the round by playing one or two doubles to empty her hand, without playing the follow-up domino that otherwise would be required.

Each player must count the total number of pips on the tiles left in her hand (0, in the case of the player who has dominoed), which becomes her score for the round.

**Subsequent rounds**

To start the second round, place the second-highest double (11–11 or 8–8) in the center of the table as the new engine (the new starting number for trains in this round). Shuffle the remaining dominoes face down, and draw new hands.

Start each round with an engine number one less than in the previous round, with the 0–0 tile being the engine for the final round. The player with the lowest total score for all the rounds is the winner.