

Gamers of the Round Table

Solution

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Go first and put a coin exactly at the center. Then copy every opposing move on the opposite side of the center.

After your opponent places a coin, imagine rotating its position halfway around the table. Put your next coin at that rotated position.

After each of your turns, the arrangement is symmetric under a half-turn. If your opponent's new coin avoids all existing coins, its rotated copy avoids the rotated existing coins—which are exactly the same existing arrangement.

Could your reply overlap the coin your opponent just placed? No. Both coin centers must be at least one coin diameter from the table's center, because of your central coin. Their positions are opposite, so the two new centers are at least two coin diameters apart. They cannot overlap.

The rotated coin also stays on the table, since the table is round. Thus whenever your opponent has a legal move, you have a legal reply.

Only finitely many identical, positive-sized coins can fit on a finite table without overlapping. Eventually someone has no move. It cannot be you, because you always have a reply. Your opponent runs out first, and you made the last placement.

This uses identical coins and assumes at least one coin fits on the table. It does not require filling every little gap.

History and sources: [companion history PDF](#).