

Playing on a Bigger Set



How to scale the games in 75 Ways to Fill a Sunday Afternoon with Dominoes up to a double-nine or double-twelve set.

The short version

Every game in the book plays by **exactly the same rules** on a larger set. The only thing you change is **how many tiles each person holds** — you deal bigger hands, seat more players, or both. A few games have a single detail that grows with the set (spelled out below), but nothing else moves: the scoring, the combinations, and the way you win are all identical.

In other words: you don't need a different rulebook for a bigger set. You need this page — plus, at the very end, the full rules to the one game a double-twelve set unlocks that a double-six can't quite manage: **The Big Clock**.

What a bigger set actually is

A **double- N** set has one tile for every pairing of the numbers 0 to N :

Set	Numbers (suits)	Total tiles	Each number appears on
Double-six	0–6	28	7 tiles
Double-nine	0–9	55	10 tiles
Double-twelve	0–12	91	13 tiles

More numbers, more tiles, and each number turns up more often. That's the whole difference — which is exactly why a bigger set holds *more people and more play*, not different games.

The one thing you always change: hand size

Take whatever hand the double-six rules call for and **pad it out in proportion to the bigger set**. There are more tiles to go around, so everyone can hold more — or more people can play. The only firm rule is common sense: **deal hands full enough to be interesting, but leave a boneyard to draw from**.

As a starting point (adjust freely to taste):

Players	Double-six	Double-nine	Double-twelve
2	7	10	14
3–4	5	8	12
5–6	4–5	7	11
7–8	—	6	10
9–12	—	—	8

Two rules of thumb sit behind that table. **Fast scoring games want smaller hands** — the Fives family plays best lean, so keep those hands short even on a big set, while block, draw, and train games can carry bigger ones. And **more players means fewer tiles each**: when in doubt, deal so that between a quarter and a half of the set ends up in the boneyard. Raise the **game target** to match, too — a race to 100 on double-six is naturally a race to 200 or 250 on double-twelve.

The few things that grow with the set

Only a handful of games have anything beyond hand size that scales — and each does so by the same simple logic, because a bigger set has bigger numbers and more doubles.

Matador. Touching ends must total the **top number plus one**: 7 on double-six, 10 on double-nine, 13 on double-twelve. (The wild “matadors” are always the tiles that make that total, plus the double-blank.)

The count-down / train games. In Mexican Train and Chicken Foot you play **one round per double**, so the series simply runs longer: 7 rounds on double-six (from the 6-6 down to the 0-0), 10 on double-nine, 13 on double-twelve. Start from the highest double and work down.

The cross and star games. This is the one place scaling up means more **shape**, not just more tiles. Sebastopol and Maltese Cross are **four-armed** on any set — but a bigger set has enough tiles in a single suit to build an **eight-armed** star, and that larger version is a game in its own right: it's what **Cyprus** and **Fortress** are. The eight-armed star needs a double-nine set or bigger, so if you want that version, look those two up rather than guessing at it.

What never changes

Scoring is set-independent. Multiples of five score the same, a blocked game still goes to the lightest hand, trains still count low, tricks still take the count. That is why a single scoresheet and a single rulebook cover every set you'll put on the table.

And don't try to “scale up” the **card-style games**. Texas 42, Moon, Bingo, Double Fives, Domino Poker, Domino Cribbage, and the gambling games all use the **double-six suit system** by design. Play them with the double-six tiles no matter which set is out — the extra suits just get in the way.

The one game a bigger set unlocks: The Big Clock

Every other game either lives on double-six or scales up cleanly. **The Big Clock** does neither: it's a one-player game built around a twelve-hour clock face, seating the twelve doubles at their own hours — so its full form genuinely wants the twelve doubles of a double-twelve set. It's the single game a bigger set truly *unlocks* rather than merely enlarges, so here it is in full.

1 player | Lunchtime | learn ●●○

A clock-face patience: coax the twelve doubles home to their hours before a stranded double brings the whole thing down.

Object. Get all twelve doubles onto the tops of their piles, each at its own hour — the [1-1] at one o'clock, the [2-2] at two, on around to the [12-12] at twelve.

Set-up. Remove the double-blank. Shuffle the rest face down. Draw **twelve tiles** and lay them face up in a ring, positioned like the hours of a clock: the first at the top for **12:00**, the next for **1:00**, then **2:00**, and so on clockwise. Place the **double-blank inside the ring**, pointing to 12:00. The tiles left over form the **boneyard**.

Play. Draw one tile at a time from the boneyard and set it on top of any pile whose top tile shares **at least one matching end** (an end of your tile equals an end of the pile's top tile). A drawn tile that fits nowhere is **set aside, out of play**.

Doubles in trouble. When you draw a double that can't be placed — or a double is stranded in the wrong clock position — you may **rearrange the tops**: move any pile's top tile onto any other pile whose top tile has a matching end, as many times as you like, even emptying a position completely. Fill an emptied position at once with a new tile (ideally the

double that belongs there). Whenever a double reaches its correct hour, it stays put as that pile's crown.

Winning and losing. Seat all twelve doubles at their correct hours and you've won. **Draw a double that can't be placed anywhere — even after shuffling the tops around — and the game is lost.**

On a smaller set. With a **double-nine** set the clock is an incomplete arc, running 1 through 9; with a **double-six** set, make a half-circle or simply a straight row. The game is the same — the clock is just shorter.

A supplement to 75 Ways to Fill a Sunday Afternoon with Dominoes