

Figure 3: The white pieces may be captured by any of the moves shown. Note that the three white pieces at the bottom right can be captured at once.

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<http://tafl.cynningstan.org.uk/>



## EALDFAEDER TAEFL

### INTRODUCTION & HISTORY

Hnefatafl is a game invented by the Norse, often referred to as the Vikings. A king at the centre of the board, with his band of faithful defenders, faces a horde of attackers twice their number, who are lined up at the edges of the board, ready to attack from all sides. The king must escape from the board, while the attackers must capture him.

It was first played in the first millennium; boards and pieces from that era have been found in all parts of Scandinavia. As the Norse raiders, adventurers and settlers spread further afield, the game was introduced to other cultures: the Sami in the north, and the English, Scots, Welsh and Irish in the west. Norse traders took the game east with them to Russia and Ukraine.

From the east, however, hnefatafl would have come face to face with another game, one that would eclipse it and drive it from fashionable tables in all the lands it had invaded. By the twelfth century, chess had replaced hnefatafl in Scandinavia itself. Only in remote lands did the game survive, in Wales till the sixteenth century, and in Lapland till the eighteenth century.

Ealdfaeder taefl has been formulated by the Ealdfaeder re-enactment group (<http://www.ealdfaeder.org/>). Ealdfaeder specialise in 7th-century Anglo Saxon activities, and have sponsored the English National Hnefatafl Championships alongside the National Trust.

## HOW TO PLAY

1. The game is played on a board of nine squares by nine, set up with 25 pieces as shown in figure 1.
2. Two players take part, one being the defenders with their king at the centre of the board, the other being the attackers who start at the edges.
3. The objective for the king is to reach one of the four marked corner squares. The objective for the attackers is to capture the king.
4. The attackers take the first move.
5. All pieces move along a row or column, as far as is convenient, as shown in figure 2. A piece when moved may not land on another, nor may it jump over other pieces.
6. The marked squares in the centre and corners are exclusive to the king; no other piece may land on them. Pieces may cross over the central square when it is not occupied by the king.
7. A piece other than the king is captured by surrounding it on two opposite sides along a rank or file; the captured piece is immediately removed from the board.
8. A piece may move deliberately between two enemies without harm; a capture must be a deliberate act by the moving side.
9. The king is captured by surrounding him with attackers on all four sides. If he is at the edge of the board or beside the central square, he may be captured by surrounding him on the remaining three sides. Examples of capture are shown in figure 3.

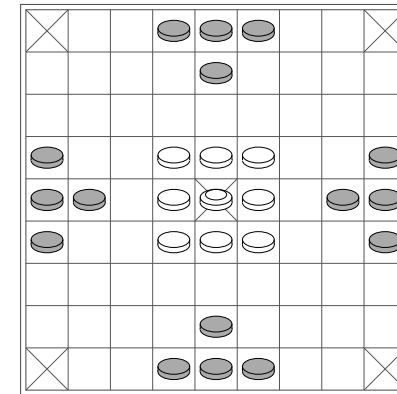


Figure 1: The initial layout for Ealdfaeder taeft.

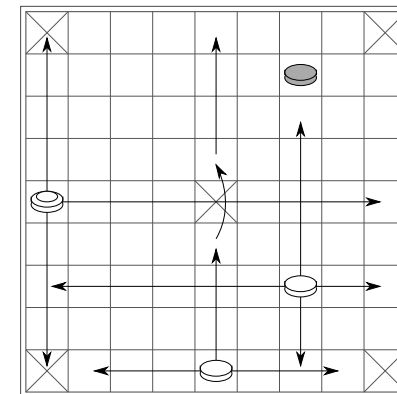


Figure 2: Examples of movement for the king and defenders.