

SEA BATTLE TAFL

INTRODUCTION & HISTORY

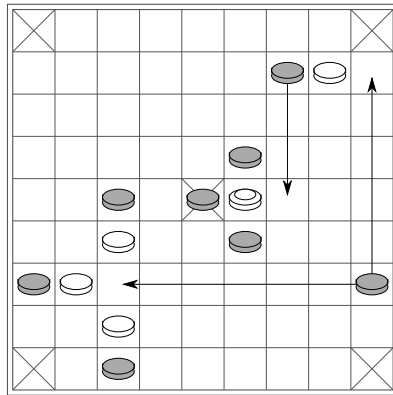


Figure 3: The white pieces may be captured by any of the moves shown. Note that the three white pieces at the bottom left can be captured at once.

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 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, hne-

fatafl 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.

Sea Battle Tafl is an elegant modern variant of the game. It re-enacts a battle between a cargo ship and its defending longships, and a larger fleet of piratical longships which are trying to seize its cargo. The cargo ship is difficult to capture, but cannot itself help to capture other ships. It is reasonably well balanced and therefore suitable to tournament play.

HOW TO PLAY

1. The game is played with a cargo ship and a convoy of eight defending warships, against sixteen pirate warships. They start the game laid out as shown in Figure 1.
2. The defending player takes the first turn.
3. In each turn, a player may move a piece as far as desired along a row or column, as shown in Figure 2.
4. Pieces may not jump over each other, nor can one piece land on a square already taken by another.
5. The cargo ship is captured by surrounding it by pirate warships on all four sides along a row and column.
6. Any other piece is captured by surrounding it on two opposite sides along a row or column by two enemies.
7. It is possible to capture two or three enemy pieces at once, if all become surrounded against separate enemies in the same move. These methods of capture are illustrated in Figure 3.
8. A pirate ship is *not* captured when sandwiched between the cargo ship and a defender; the cargo ship may not be used to capture pirates.
9. The defenders win the game when the cargo ship reaches any square on the edge of the board.
10. The pirates win the game when they capture the cargo ship.

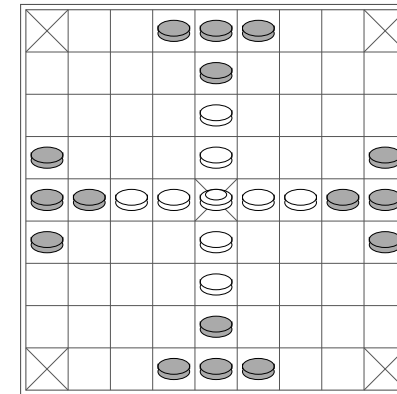


Figure 1: The initial layout for sea battle tafl.

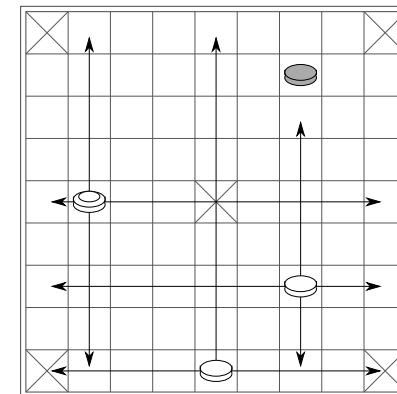


Figure 2: Examples of movement for the king and defenders.