

# Rule book for Vikings Chess

## 1 Context

"Hnefatafl" also known as «Vikings chess», cf. 1 , is an asymmetrical game representing an ambush of a Viking King. The people playing the attackers want to capture the King. The people playing the defender want the King to escape to one of the border castles (4 corner of the board). I made an open source laser cut version of the game during a residency in Fab Lab Skanderborg in 2023. You can use the files I shared in this instructables to make your own game for a personal use (CC BY-NC-SA license)!



Figure 1: Hnefatafl, a.k.a Viking chess

## 2 Game set up

Place the King in the center of the board and surround him with the 12 defenders. Place the 24 attackers by group of 6 on the reserved spots on the board, as shown in figures 2 and 3.



Figure 2: Set up for the game

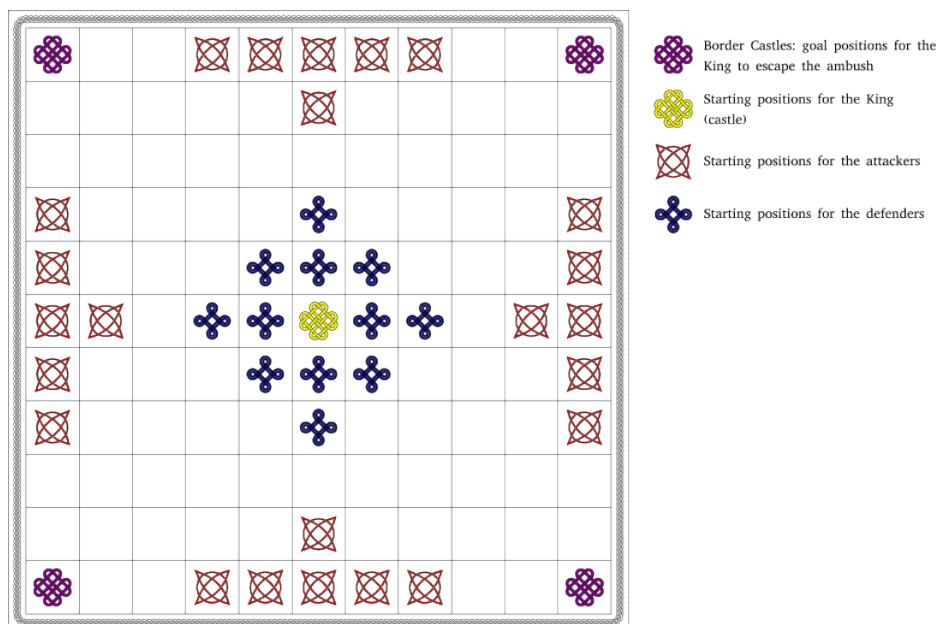


Figure 3: Schematics of the board game

### 3 Pawns and King moves

- The person playing the attackers always start the game. That person controls the moves of the 24 attackers.
- The person playing the defenders controls the King and the 12 defenders.
- The 4 corners of the board and the central tile (starting position of the King) are called castles of figure 3.
  - Only the King can enter the castles.
  - The attackers and the defenders can't land on a castle tile.
  - They can cross the central castle when it is empty (i.e. the King is not here).
- All pawns: the attackers, the defenders and the King move the same as the tower in the classic chess. They can move as far as wanted in straight vertical or horizontal lines. They can't jump over other pawn or move diagonally. cf. figure 4.
- It is not possible to:
  - jump over an other pawn,
  - make a pawn leave the board,

– have two pawn on the same tile.

- Variation 1: A pawn can move and stop between to adverse pawns.
- Variation 2: A pawn can move between to adverse pawns but can't stop in the tile otherwise it is captured and that is not allowed (you can't kill your own pawn) as shown in figure 5.

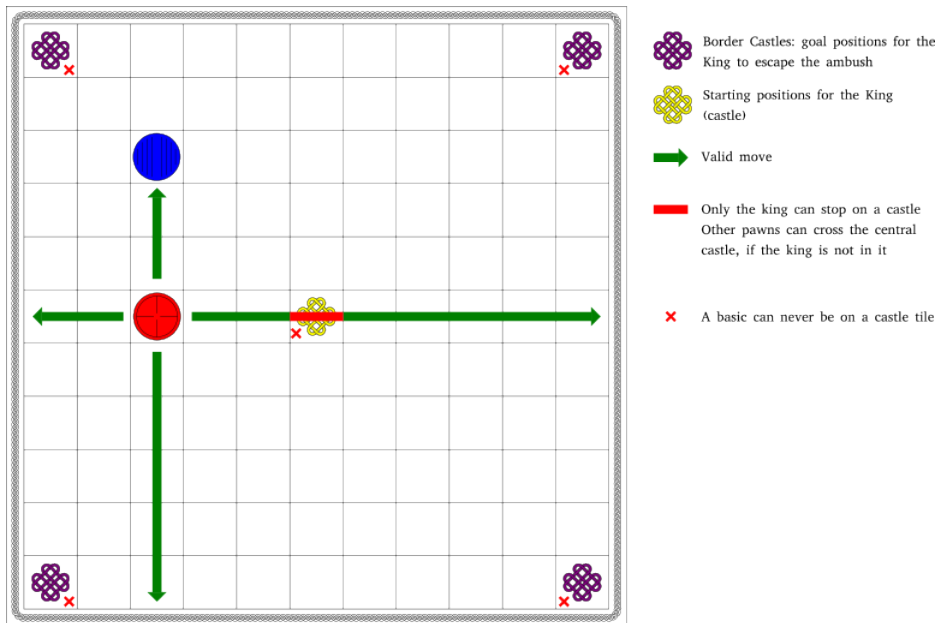


Figure 4: Example of pawn moves

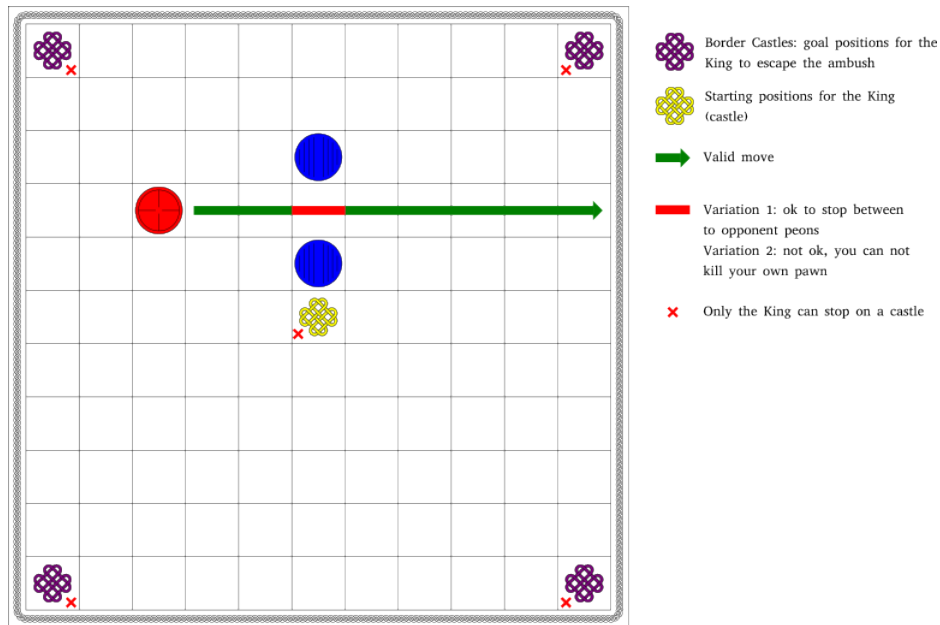


Figure 5: Moving a pawn between to adverse pawns (2 variations)

## 4 Capturing a pawn

### 4.1 Capturing attackers or defenders

- When an attacker or a defender is sandwiched between two opposing pawns it is captured and taken off the board, as shown in 6. In variation 1 the movement causes the capture of the pawn sandwiched. So you can stop a pawn in a sandwich position and it is not taken (the opposing pawns need to create the sandwich after their move). In variation 2 you can't stop your pawn in a sandwich.
- Sandwich: the adverse pawns must be on the tiles:
  - directly right and left of the captured pawn,
  - directly above and below of the captured pawn,
- Notes:
  - You can't sandwich diagonally.
  - You can't sandwich if there is an empty tile, you need to be on adjacent tiles of the pawn.
- The castles act as a neutral player, you can use them to capture an opponent pawn if you sandwich it between your pawn and a castle. In variation

2 that mean that an attacker can guard a castle: by blocking the move of a defender between the castle and the attacker (in this variation, the move is not making the capture, the sandwich is).

- The King can be used with a defender to sandwich and capture an attacker.

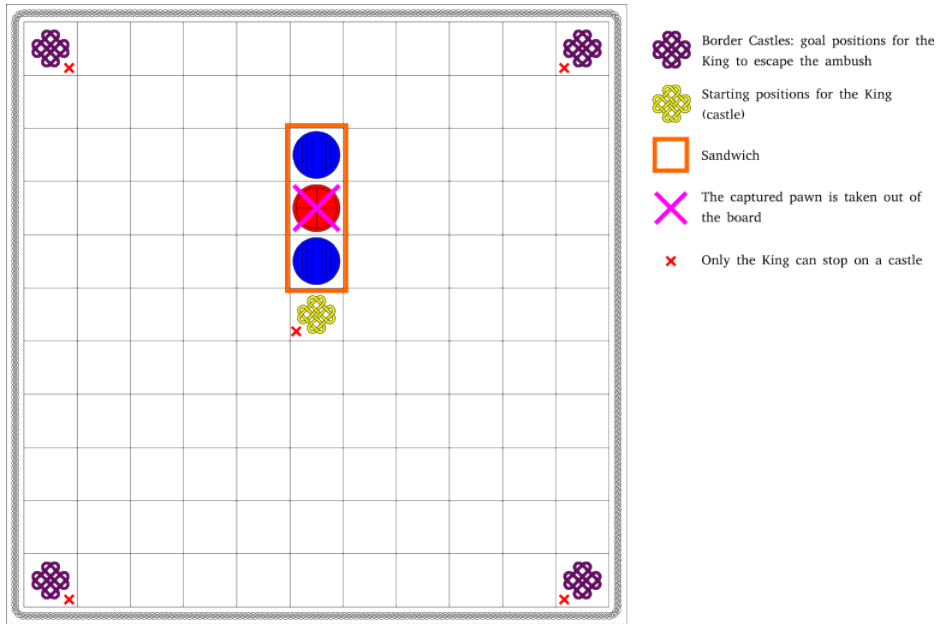


Figure 6: Example of a sandwich with a captured pawn

## 4.2 Capturing several pawns at the same time

In the Copenhagen variation “shielded wall” you can capture several pawns at the same time if you can make a line snaring the pawns to the border of the board as shown in figure 7.

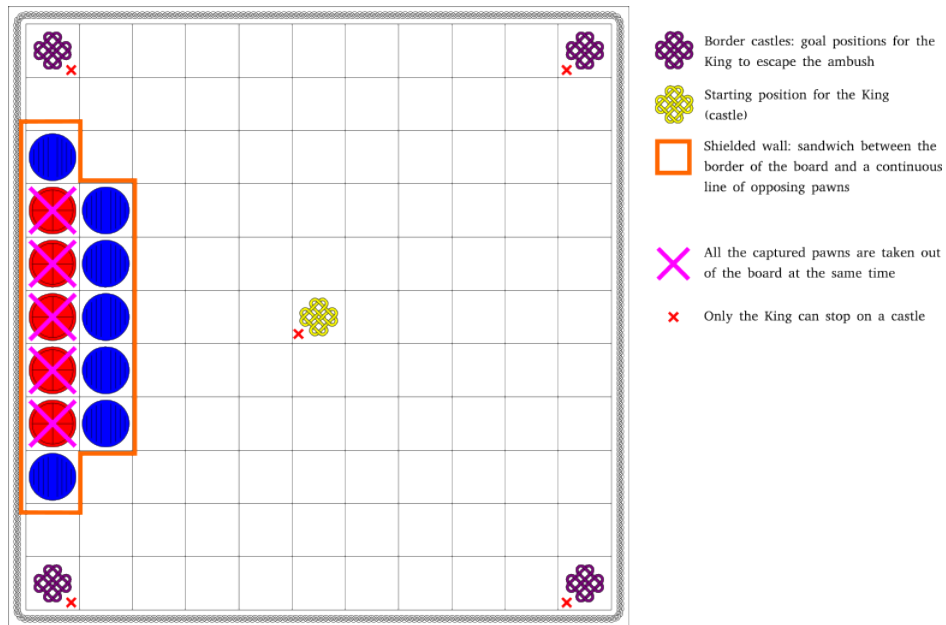


Figure 7: Capturing pawns with a shielded wall

### 4.3 Capturing the King

The King can be captured with

- 4 attackers: directly above, below, right and left, cf. la figure 8,
- 3 attackers if it is trapped on the boarder of the board and there are no remaining defender on the board (they all have been captured) as shown in figure 9.

Note:

- You can't capture the King diagonally.

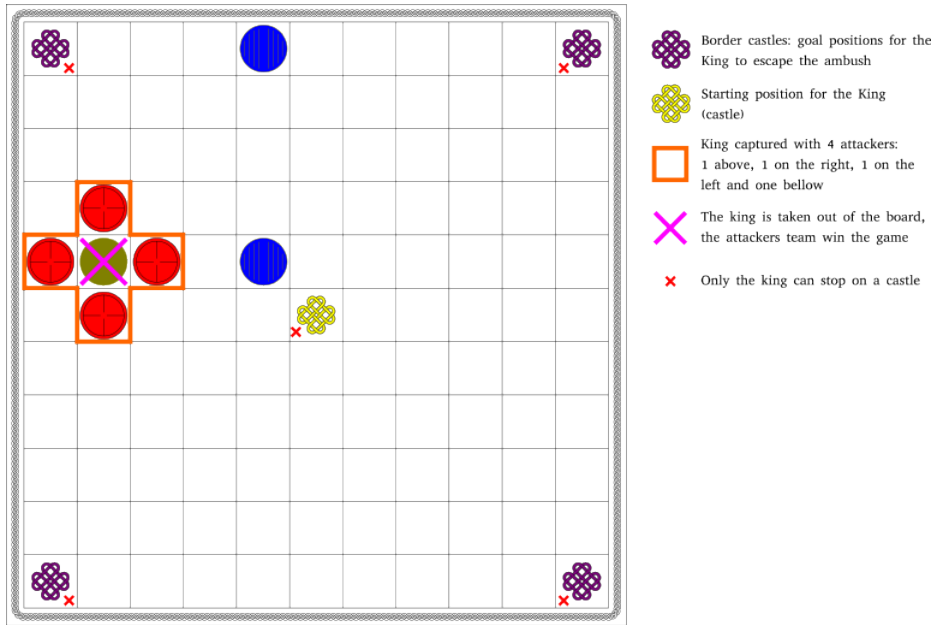


Figure 8: King captured by 4 attackers

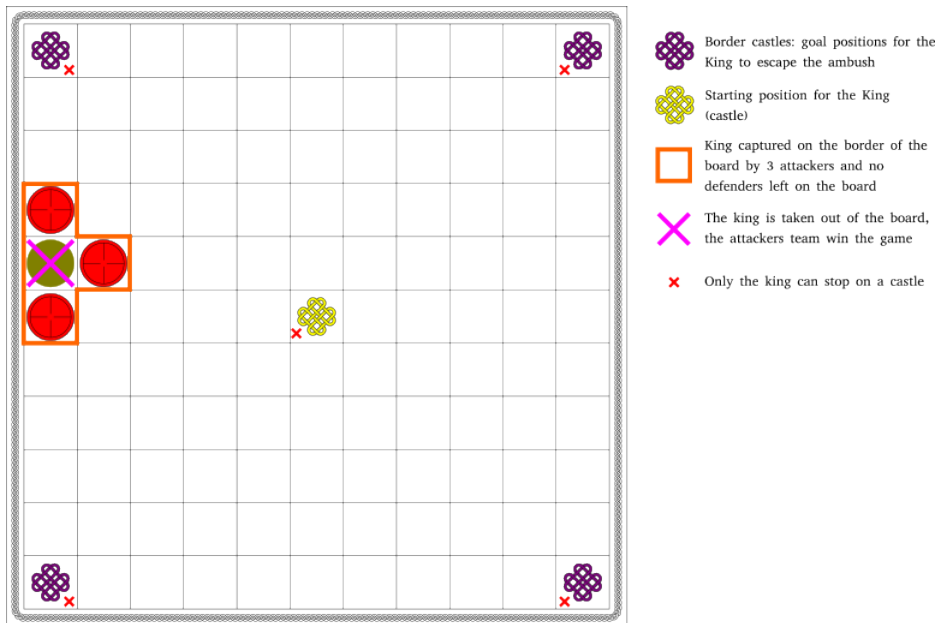


Figure 9: King captured by 3 attackers with no remaining defenders on the board



## 5 End of the game:

### 5.1 Attacker victory

- When the King is captured, as shown in figures 8 and 9,
- When all defenders and the King are snared in a continuous line of attackers (no possibility for them to escape).

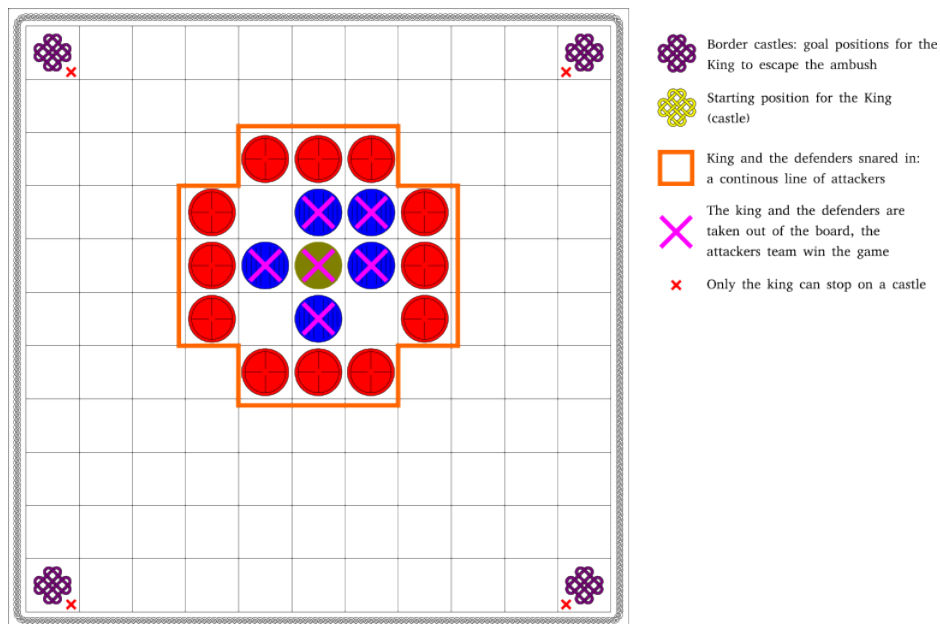


Figure 10: Snaring with a continuous line of attackers

### 5.2 Defenders victory

When the King land on one of the 4 border castles as shown in figure 3.

### 5.3 Draw

If a person do 3 times the same move there is a draw.

## 6 Notes

- The rules are based on interpretations of archaeological remains. There are several variations of the game (rules, size of the board, number of attackers and defenders).

- The Viking art on the box (1) are made by the artist Jonas Lau Makussen.