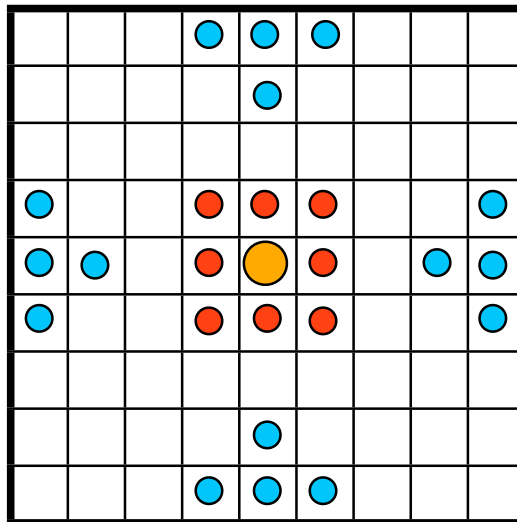
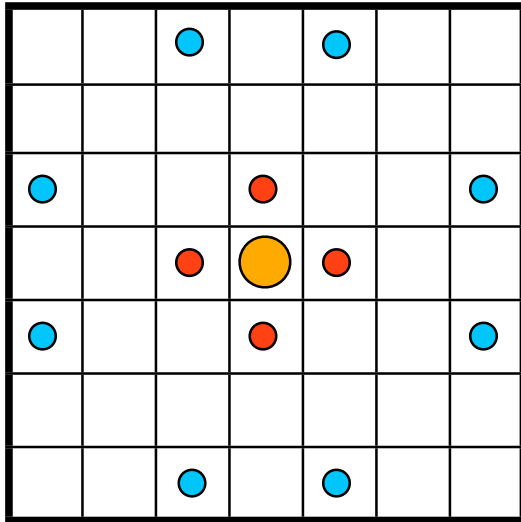
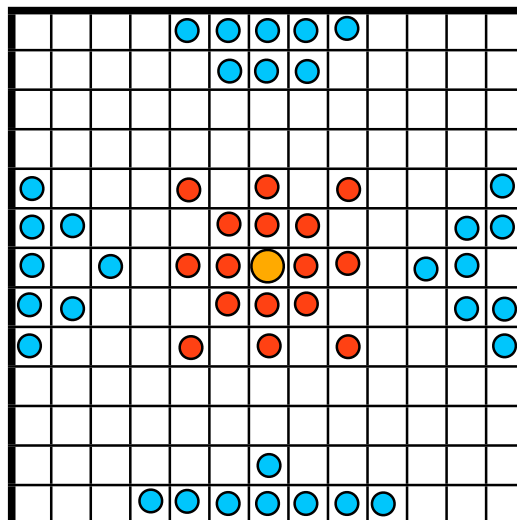
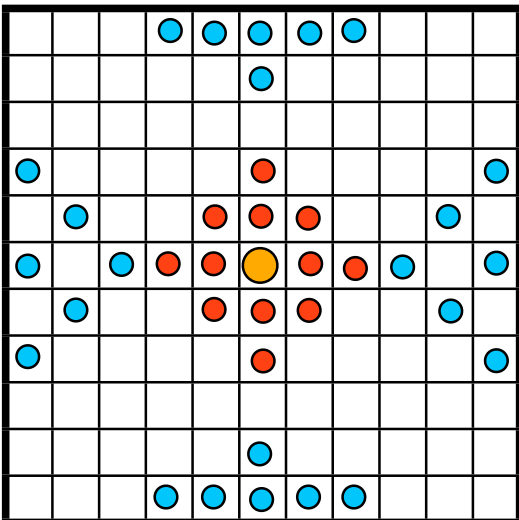


These rules are reasonably straightforward, generic and conventional, in order to get you started playing the game on any scale you like. You might want to start on the smallest board and gradually build up to a greater number of squares and pieces. This is actually quite a tactically elegant and sophisticated game, however it is just a speculative reconstruction based on rules ideas devised by modern game players. It does not fit all that closely with found manuscripts that describe how the game was played, nor with many of the archeological findings of boards and pieces, but tries instead as its primary focus to be a playable game. Like many tafl enthusiasts, I am working on my own set of rules - my personal aim to be to adhere more closely to the manuscripts in particular and bend the rules to fit the archeology rather than the other way around. The rules presented here are minimalistic in order to focus on the core strategies.



Set up pieces as shown.

The game can be played on any square grid with an odd number of squares (or points) - here is a 7x7, 9x9, 11x11 and a 13x13. The biggest recorded board was 19x19 spaces. A team of 1 amber King + some red defenders take on a number of blue attackers that outnumber the red Soldiers by a ratio of 2 to 1.



The third picture shows two different blue [phalanx](#) formations - you can play the game as shown or opt to use just one one of the two formations on all four edges as you see fit. Picture four shows four different [phalanx](#) options. Which you opt for doesn't much matter because although it affects game balance a little, you need to play multiple games of tafl with your opponent and decide the winner over a series. Spend an even number of games in each role - attacker or defender.

MOVEMENT

All pieces move like a chess rook - that is any number of vacant spaces in a straight orthogonal line - no diagonals. However a piece cannot capture by displacing another piece as a chess rook can. Blue moves first then play alternates, as for chess or draughts.

CAPTURE

This is accomplished in one of two ways:

1) Immobilisation:

By depriving a piece of all of its "liberties" (movements), in other words pinning it on all available sides with hostile pieces and / or barriers (edges or corners) in order to prevent it from moving. A piece that is unable to move is removed from the board. An adjacent friendly piece does not count as a lost liberty, however if a pair or a group become surrounded, one of the pieces may be removed each turn - attacker's choice with one proviso - the King is always removed **last** as his men will fight for him to the bitter end.

2) Custodian Capture (a.k.a “flanking” or “sandwiching”)

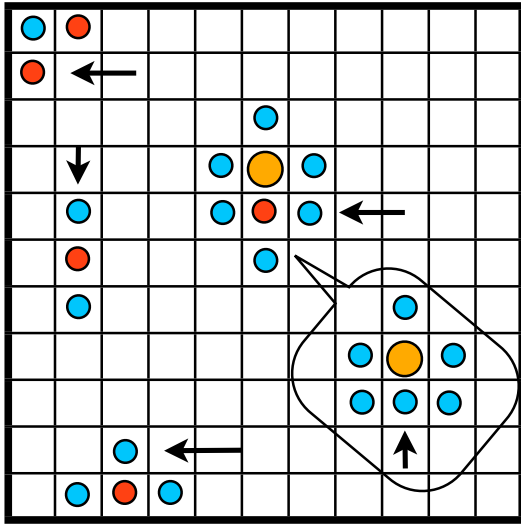
Immobilisation capture is not often required, depending on a soldier’s position on the board. A more frequent form of capture is the custodian capture. Here the enemy is flanked on two opposite sides (not corners) by 2 enemy soldiers specifically (edges don’t count). He is removed from the board.

If after making a capture a piece finds itself in a custodian capture position, it too is removed from the board. It is possible to complete more than one custodian capture at once and thereby remove more than one enemy soldier in the same turn.

A nice **optional rule** is to allow a King the power of diplomatic immunity. If a King finishes his move in between two enemy soldiers, he may claim diplomatic immunity, providing he is coming in peace - that is to say, providing he does not make a capture in the process. In this instance he is not removed from the board - an enemy soldier would have to move away and come back to capture him on a subsequent turn.

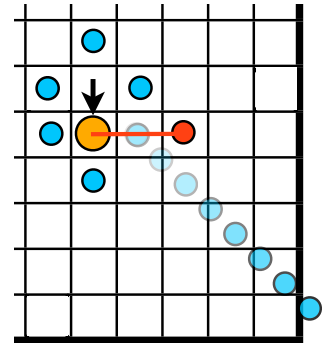
Objective

The red and amber player wins by getting his King to the edge and making a move along its length. The movement does not have to be any specific distance - one space will suffice. The blue player wins if he captures the King.



In this illustration of several captures, red completes an immobilisation capture against the blue soldier that is stood in the top left corner. Beneath, blue completes a custodian capture against the red soldier. Down in the bottom left corner, blue immobilises the red soldier against the edge. In the centre board, the King and one of his soldiers are surrounded on all sides. Blue removes the red soldier. On his next turn, blue should be able to close the gap and capture the King.

In the scenario on the right, the attacker’s plans are scuppered because the King is able to make a meaningful move during his turn. He participates in a custodian capture in conjunction with a well-placed red soldier and potentially breaks a way out for himself in the process.



Ratios

If you look at the various set ups presented on page one, you’ll see that each time the diameter of the board is increased by two squares, the number of defending (red) soldiers is increased by four and the number of attacking soldiers is increased by eight. The ratio of attacking soldiers to defending soldiers remains a constant double.

The attackers (or raiders) are always positioned along the edges in such a way that they mark the way to the edges for all of the defending soldiers. This is because the attacker really needs to try to keep all of the defending pieces enclosed - the game can be too easy for the King’s player once he has managed to get a soldier or two outside of blue’s noose.

The ratio of pieces to squares is roughly one quarter: the number of squares, minus the King’s square, is exactly equal to four times the total number of soldiers (again not including the King) for 7x7 and 17x17 set ups. I think in terms of balance, the game gets progressively easier for the King’s player as the board size increases with a fairly good balance on the 9 x 9 and 11 x 11 boards. Another factor is experience - beginners generally find the game imbalanced in favour of the King’s player to start with but more experienced gamers have found that the game becomes more imbalanced in favour of the raiding player as skill levels improve. Perhaps this is a good reason to gradually build up to bigger boards and more pieces to offset any inequality.