

# Hnefatafl - Make your own Viking board game

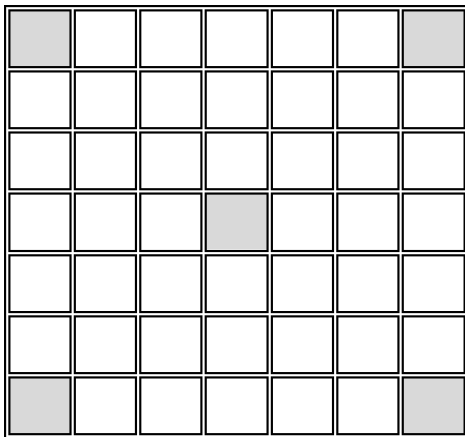
The Ballinderry gaming board is made from yew wood, and laid out in a grid of peg holes with the centre and corner holes marked off with circular arcs. It would have been used for the Viking war game **Hnefatafl** (ne-fe-taf-el).

These instructions will help you make your very own Viking board game and show you how to play!

The Vikings were very good at recycling and reusing materials to make new things and we can do the same at home! Why not use spare or left over cardboard you might have around the house?



*The Ballinderry gaming board, NMI,  
1932:6533*



## What do you need?

- Recycled card, such as cereal box or cardboard box
- Ruler
- Pencil, colouring pencils, or markers
- Scissors
- Decorating materials

## How to make your own board and playing pieces

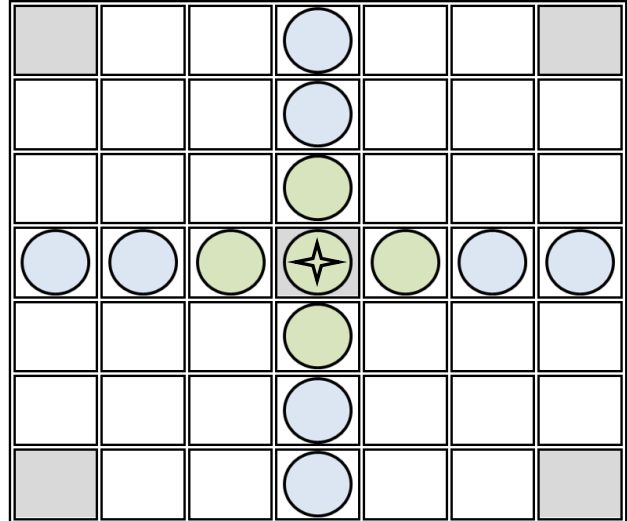
1. With supervision, make your 7x7 grid board using a ruler to measure out a 17.5cm square on cardboard.
2. Along all four edges of your square use your ruler to put a small mark every 2.5cm.
3. Draw lines between each mark to create your 7x7 grid. It should look something like the example above.
4. With your board now lined out, decorate the centre and corner squares to make them stand out.
5. To make your playing pieces, carefully cut out 2cm shapes. These can be any shape you wish, just make sure that they fit in one square on the board!
6. You will need three different types' of pieces; 8 Attackers, 4 Defenders and 1 King piece. When playing Hnefatafl there are two sides. One side has 8 Attackers, and the second side has 4 Defenders and a King.
7. You can decorate each playing piece by colouring it, painting it, using old wrapping paper, foil sweet wrappers or whatever you can recycle from around the house!
8. Remember to make both sides differently and have the King stand out as the most precious piece on the board!

You could even try marking your playing pieces with a Viking symbol such as Thor's Hammer or write your own initials on them in Viking runes. You can learn more about runes using our Viking Runes Activity Sheet available on the Museum's webpages [here](#).

# How to Play

## Starting a game

- Begin by setting up the board with the **King** in the centre square with the four **Defenders** around it. Arrange the eight **Attackers** in lines to make a cross shape as shown in the diagram.
- The **Defenders** will win if they get the **King** to escape the **Attackers** by moving off the battlefield to a corner square.
- The **Attackers** will win if they capture the **King**!



## Movement

- The **Attackers** have the first move.
- All pieces can move up or down and across the board as far as they wish, but they cannot move diagonally.
- You cannot move over or through an opponent's piece.
- Only the **King** can move into a corner square.
- Both sides can move over the central square but cannot stop in it.
- Once the **King** leaves the centre square they cannot return there.

## Capturing Pieces

- To capture an enemy piece you must 'flank' or surround them by having two of your pieces on opposite sides of it.
- The centre and corner squares can also be used as an extra **Attacker** or **Defender** if you pin your enemies' piece between one of your pieces and one of these squares.
- The **King** is captured in the same way as other pieces unless they are next to, or in, the centre square. If they are in the centre square they must be flanked on all four sides. If they are next to the centre square they must be flanked on three sides using the centre square as an extra **Attacker**.

Can you rescue or capture the King?

Let us know how you got on!

Email pictures of your Hnefatafl board and playing pieces to [educationarch@museum.ie](mailto:educationarch@museum.ie) or Tweet @NMIreland