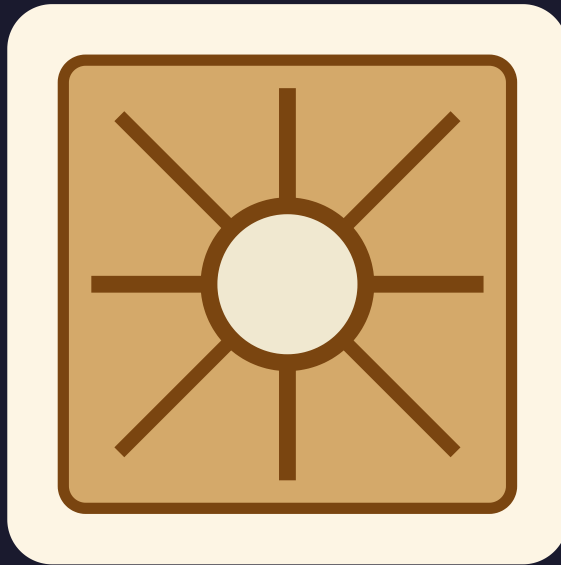




FANORONA

OFFICIAL RULEBOOK

The national game of Madagascar: capture by approach and withdrawal

2 PLAYERS	20–40 min MINUTES	8+ AGE
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HISTORY

Fanorona is the national game of Madagascar, believed to have descended from Alquerque, a medieval strategy game that spread through Africa and Asia along historic trade routes. Three standard board sizes exist: Fanoron-Telo (3×3), Fanoron-Dimy (5×5), and Fanoron-Tsivy (9×5). The 9×5 version is the standard form; these rules describe it exclusively.

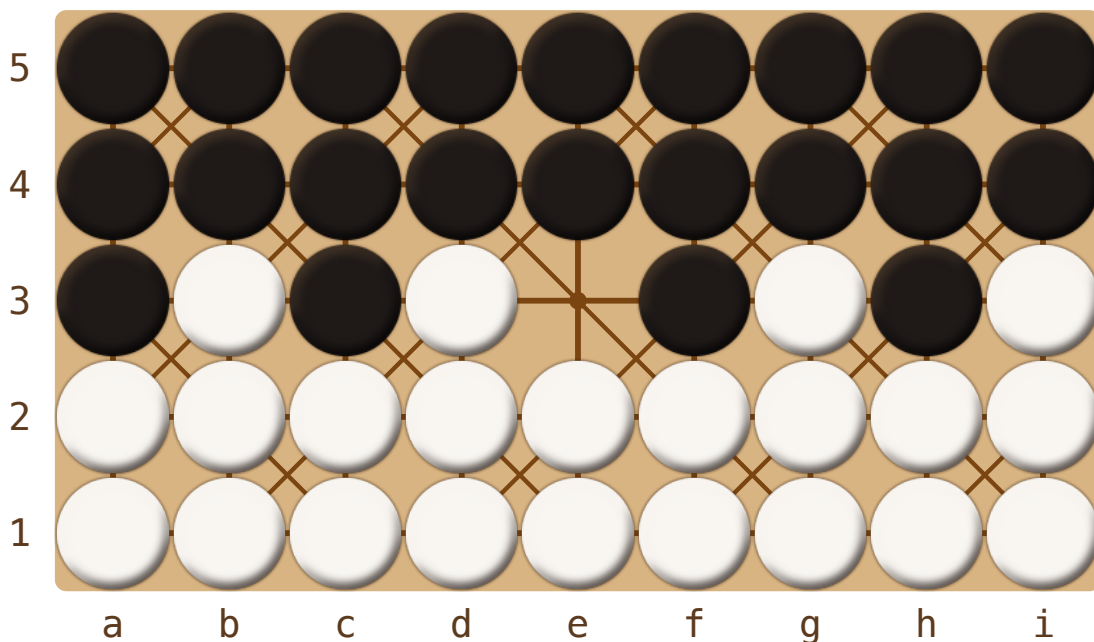
The game is distinguished by a capture mechanic found in few other traditional games. Pieces do not jump over opponents. Instead, they capture by moving toward an enemy line (approach capture) or by moving away from one (withdrawal capture), taking all pieces in the unbroken line. The rules are public domain.

THE BOARD

The Fanorona board is a 9×5 grid of 45 intersection points, connected by horizontal, vertical, and diagonal lines. Intersections are of two types:

- ♦ **Strong:** diagonal lines pass through the intersection, allowing movement in up to eight directions.
- ♦ **Weak:** only horizontal and vertical lines pass through the intersection, allowing movement in up to four orthogonal directions.

Strong and weak intersections alternate in a checkerboard pattern across the board.



Fanorona — starting position. White fills rows 1 and 2, plus the four left-of-centre squares in the middle row. Black fills rows 4 and 5, plus the four right-of-centre squares in the middle row. The centre intersection is empty.

<https://engine.moddable.games/play/?game=fanorona&variant=standard>

EQUIPMENT

ITEM	QTY	NOTES
Board	1	9×5 grid; 45 intersections
White pieces	22	
Black pieces	22	

No dice or randomisers are used.

SETUP

All 45 intersections are occupied except the centre point. White fills the two rows at one end of the board and the four left-of-centre intersections in the middle row. Black fills the two rows at the other end and the four right-of-centre intersections in the middle row. The centre intersection is the only empty point.

White moves first.

MOVEMENT

On each turn a player makes exactly one move: either a paika (non-capturing) move, or a capturing move. Capturing is mandatory: if any capture is available anywhere on the board, the player must make one.

Paika move: Move one piece along any drawn line to an adjacent, unoccupied intersection. A paika move is only legal when no capturing move is available.

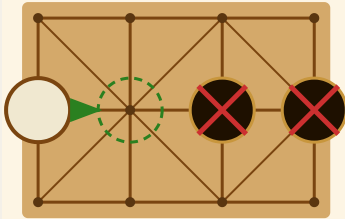
CAPTURING

Two types of capture exist: approach and withdrawal. Both types capture not just the first piece contacted, but every successive enemy piece in an unbroken line behind it.

Approach capture: Move a piece to an adjacent intersection such that an enemy piece occupies the next intersection in the same direction of movement. That enemy piece and all successive enemy pieces in an unbroken line beyond it are captured simultaneously.

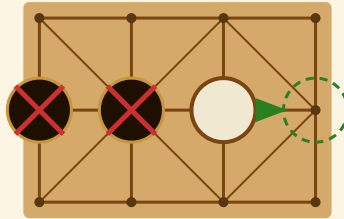
Withdrawal capture: Move a piece away from an adjacent enemy piece, so that the enemy piece lies on the intersection just vacated in the direction of travel. That enemy piece and all successive enemy pieces in an unbroken line behind it are captured simultaneously.

Approach Capture



Approach: W moves right toward B.
B pieces ahead are captured.

Withdrawal Capture



Withdrawal: W moves right, away from B.
B pieces behind are captured.

Approach capture (left): W moves right, placing B pieces directly ahead in the line of movement; all are captured. Withdrawal capture (right): W moves right away from adjacent B pieces; all B pieces in the line behind are captured.

If both an approach capture and a withdrawal capture are possible in the same direction at the same moment, the player must choose one or the other.

CONTINUATION CAPTURES

After completing a capture, the same piece may make further capturing moves in successive steps. Continuation is optional: the player may stop after any capture. Two restrictions govern continuation:

- 1 The piece may not land on an intersection it has already visited during the same turn.
- 2 The piece may not move in the same direction as its immediately preceding step.

WINNING

The player who captures all of their opponent's pieces wins. If neither player can achieve this, the game is a draw. In 2007, Schadd and Winands demonstrated that perfect play from both sides leads to a draw.

ATTRIBUTION

Fanorona. Indigenous game of Madagascar. Public domain. Sources: ICGA (International Computer Games Association) Fanorona entry; Masters Traditional Games, Fanorona Rules (2019); UltraBoardGames, Fanorona game rules; MindSports Fanorona entry.



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