

## Hnefatafl

The Vikings played a board game called Hnefatafl. In this activity you can make the pieces for the game and play it.

		A	A	A		
			A			
A		D	D	D		A
A	A	D	K	D	A	A
A		D	D	D		A
			A			
		A	A	A		

Diagram 1

1. Make a playing board 21 cm x 21 cm. Divide it into 49 squares with 3 cm long sides and shade in the corner squares as diagram 1 shows.
2. Make 12 attackers, 8 defenders and one king using diagram 2 to help you.
3. Arrange the attackers, defenders and king according to the A, D and K pattern in diagram 1.

### Playing the game

Here are the basic rules:

One player has the king and defenders. The other player has the attackers. The aim of the game is to move the king to one of the four corners

without him becoming surrounded by four attackers. The attackers surround him by coming to his left and right sides and directly in front and behind him. If the king gets to the side of the board he may be taken if three attackers surround him. Attackers are not allowed on the corner squares. If at least one defender can stay around the king until he gets to the corner the king will be safe.

1. The attacker moves first. A piece can move in straight lines only not diagonally. It can move until it reaches a piece in its way. It cannot go over a piece.
2. The defender moves after the attacker, then the attacker moves again and so on.
3. You take one of your opponent's pieces by getting two of your pieces on either side of it or in front and behind it. This means your opponent's piece is sandwiched between two of your pieces. When this happens, you remove your opponent's piece and he or she has to play on with one less piece. You may lose and take many pieces in the game.

It is important to think carefully before you make your moves, as you may find your piece becomes in danger of being taken after you have made your move. Sometimes you may have to decide to let a piece be taken to help you move the king.

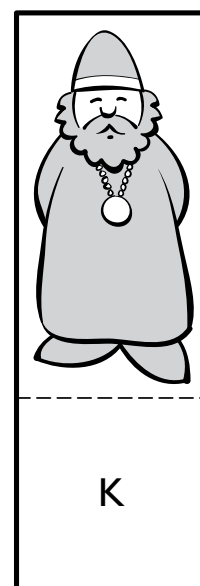
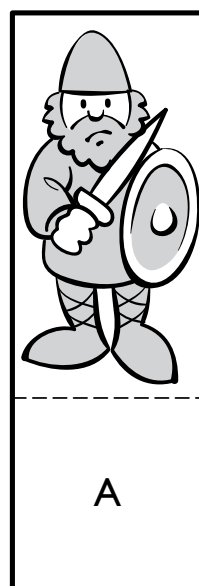
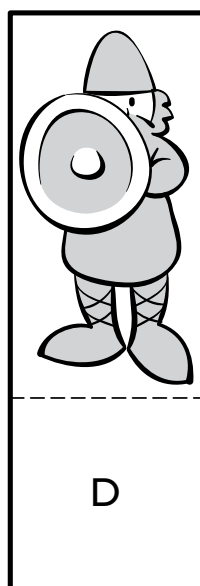


Diagram 2

# Hnefatafl

## Age range

- Years 3/4 (SP4/5) with help.
- Years 5/6 (SP6/7).

## Resources

Copies of the worksheet, card, scissors.

## Using the worksheet

Hnefatafl was a board game played on dark winter nights to while the time away. It is similar to chess in that the pieces move like the rook or castle and that strategies have to be thought out to try and win. You may like the students to make their own pieces using the illustrations in diagram 2 to help them. Alternatively you may like to photocopy the characters in diagram 2 and make up a sheet of 12 attackers, 8 defenders and a king onto one photocopiable sheet and let the students cut them out and fold back the bases.

## Younger students

The emphasis with younger students may be on making the game by drawing their own attackers, defenders and king, then letting them all try it. Some may find it too complicated but some may enjoy it. There are some extra rules which have been omitted to make the game as simple as possible.

## Outcomes

The students can:

- Make a Viking board game.
- Play Hnefatafl.

## Older students

Older students may like to use a photocopiable sheet you have made as explained in the 'Using the worksheet' section of this activity. The emphasis here could be on playing the game. If enough students enjoy the game they might like to organise a knockout competition.

## Outcomes

The students can:

- Make a Viking board game.
- Play Hnefatafl.