



## *Fanorona*



## *History & Rules*

## *Games from Everywhere*

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### *Fanorona*

Fanorona is the national game of Madagascar and was derived from the game “Alquerque” which might be over 3000 years old. Fanorona has three standard versions: Fanoron-Telo, Fanoron-Dimyand, and Fanoron-Tsivy. The difference between these variants is the size of board played on. Fanoron-Telo is played on a 3×3 board and the difficulty of this game can be compared to the game of tic-tac-toe.

Fanoron-Dimyand is played on a 5×5 board and Fanoron-Tsivy is played on a 9×5 board. We will call Fanoron-Tsivy simply “Fanorona” since the Fanoron-Tsivy variant is the widest-known variant.

There exist some legendary stories about Fanorona and one of them involves a King called Ralombo.

King Ralomba became sick and decided that it was time for one of his sons to inherit his kingdom. The king did not want to split up his kingdom so he decided that the first son which arrived at the castle was the most devoted one and therefore should become the next king.

So the king sent out messengers calling for his sons. The elder son was playing Fanorona by the time the messenger arrived. He did arrive at a very difficult situation called telo noho dimy which is a 3 pieces against 8 pieces situation.

He was so concentrated on how he could win this situation that he did send the messenger away so that he could concentrate on the game. By the time he arrived at the castle of the King the younger son had inherited the throne.

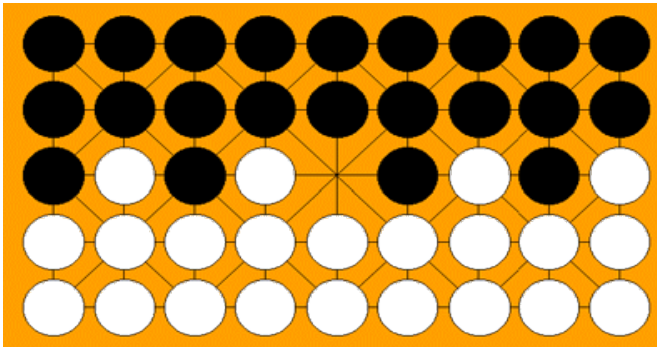


## Game Rules

Fanorona is played on a 9×5 board and it is played along the lines and on its intersections just as Go. A line represents the way along which a piece can slide during the game. There are strong and weak points (intersections).

On a weak point it is only possible to move a piece horizontally and vertically (there are no diagonals), while on a strong point it also is possible to move pieces diagonally. A piece can only move from one point to another at a time.

Each player has 22 pieces at the start position as shown in the picture below. The player to start is White.



The start position of a Fanorona game.

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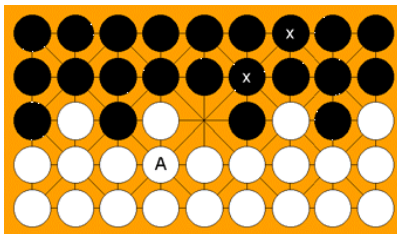
## Capturing

A piece slides **one space only** along the lines of the board, either straight or diagonally. Pieces can only slide onto empty spaces, they cannot land on top of another piece. And you can only make diagonal moves along the diagonal lines shown on the board.

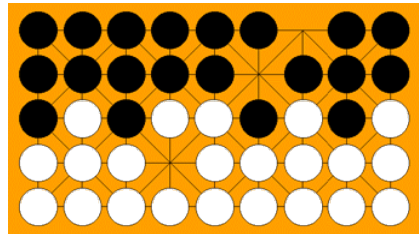
Whenever you make a move, you **must** make a capturing move if you can. You capture a single piece or line of pieces by moving directly **towards** them, so that your piece ends up next to them. Or else by moving directly **away** from them, if your piece was already standing next to them.

Suppose that you are White in this game. You can move your piece marked A in the first picture below one space diagonally forwards to the empty place in the middle of the board. Then it has moved directly towards the black pieces marked x and ended up next to them. So they are both captured.

You can capture any **unbroken** line of black pieces in this way. Because you captured these pieces by moving towards them, this is called capture by *approach*. The second picture below shows the position after you have made this move. It is now Black's turn.



Before the First Move



After your First Move

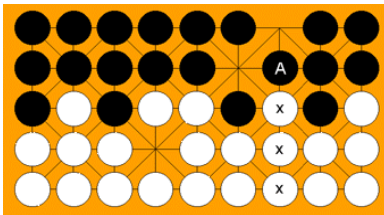
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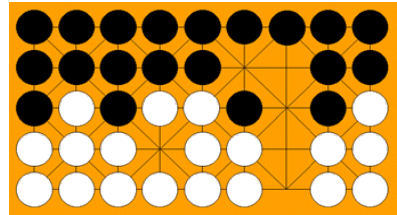
## Relay Capturing

When you make a capture, it is not necessarily the end of your turn. You are allowed to move the same piece **again** to capture more pieces. You can do this **several times** during the same turn, so long as you keep capturing each time you move the piece. We could call this a relay capture.

For example, in this game it is now Black's move. As we can see in the picture on the left below, Black can move the piece marked A one space up the board. This captures the three white pieces marked x by moving away from them. This way of taking pieces is called capture by *withdrawal*. The second diagram shows the situation after this happens.



Before Black's first capture



After the capture

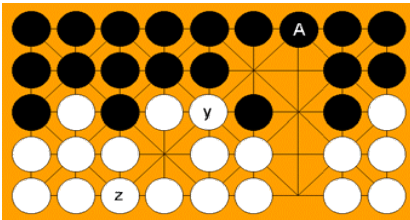
..But this is not necessarily the end of Black's move. Black can now capture some more of your pieces! Look at the left-hand board in the next picture. The same piece which has just moved is again marked A. It can now move diagonally down to the left and capture the piece marked y. The piece marked z will **not be captured** because of the **gap** between y and z.

The right-hand board shows the situation after this happens. Black could now make another capture in this same turn - can you see how?

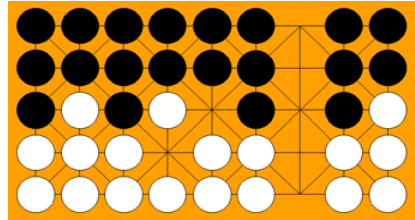
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Although Black could now capture more pieces, Black is allowed to *choose* whether or not to do this. Although you always have to capture some pieces on your turn if you can, you do not have to keep making more and more captures on the same turn if you don't want to. You can choose to *stop* at some point instead of moving your piece again.



Before Black's second capture

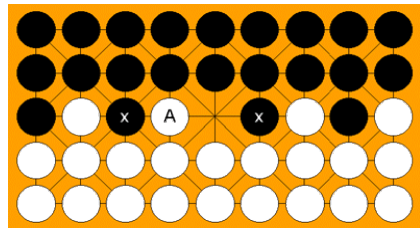


After the capture

## Capturing Restrictions

During a capturing move, it may happen that you move a piece in a way that could take some pieces by withdrawal or some others by approach. If this happens, you *must choose* which of the two captures you want to take.

You are *not allowed* to take them both.



As an example, we could go back to the opening position. Here you could have started by moving the piece marked A one to the right.

If you did that you could choose which of the two pieces marked x to

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take off. But you are not allowed to take them both.

There are a few other rules about what happens during a relay capture. All the capturing must be done by the **same piece**. The piece must **change direction** each time it moves during the relay capture. And it must not stand on the **same spot** twice during this sequence.

As long as the piece changes direction at each stage during the move, it is free to re-use one of the directions it has used earlier at a later stage in the move.

### Paika Moves

If you cannot make a capturing move, then you are allowed to make a non-capturing move. This is known as a **paika** move. To do this you **simply move** one piece along a line to an adjacent point.

For example, let's go back to the game we were playing before. The left hand board in the next diagram shows the position later on in the same game. You now have four pieces and Black has only two, so you may have a good chance to win!

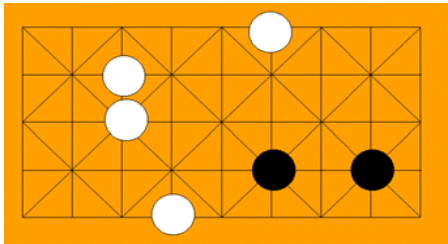
Here you can't make any capturing move, so you have to make a paika move. Suppose you move your piece at the bottom of the board one space to the right. This looks a bit odd, because Black is now forced to capture this piece by withdrawal.

After that, you will get to the situation shown in the board on the right. Your move was not so silly after all, because now you can move your piece at the top of the board straight down one space.

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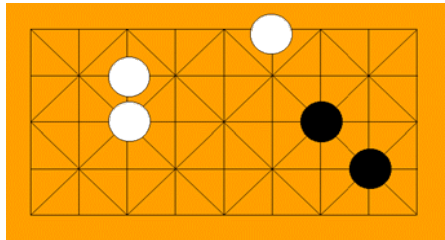
Then the following move you will definitely be able to make a capture. So Black will be down to only one piece. See if you can work out what happens.



Before your paika move

## End of the Game

The game ends when one player has no pieces left, or is unable to make a move. Then they have lost. If neither player can force the other into this situation, the game is a draw.



After Black's capture

*Enjoy The Game!*

Acknowledgement: Paul Smith, Mind Sports.

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