

# Analog Game Idea: **Royal Ambush** *(working name)*

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*Royal Ambush* is a modern re-imagining of the ancient Nordic/Celtic chess-like board game *Tafl*.

It is a two-player board game where all player actions involve taking turns placing and moving pieces on a hexagonal game board.

## Overview

The intended player experience involves **competitive rush, strategic planning, abstract war-games-like tactical execution, and the accompanied sense of role-play**. For the sake of heightening that enjoyment, this game also has a slight element of narrative:

In a time long ago, when battles were fought on horseback, two neighboring nations were locked in war. A ceasefire was called, and the King of the larger nation is on a diplomatic journey to the capitol of its rival to pursue a more long-term peace treaty. However, some imperialistic factions in the larger nation felt the war should continue. A plot was hatched, and it was decided to make the King “disappear” while in the rival nation.

A number of professional highwaymen launch an ambush on the royal company! They are surrounded, but the royal guards spring into action. The King must escape, even if they must sacrifice themselves...

## Resources

2 Players. A 4x4 Hexagonal board. A number of pieces (at least 10) in two distinguishable forms, and one special piece. (5-8) minutes per round.

## Gameplay

There are two teams: **Ambushers** and **Royalty**. The Ambushers must “capture” the King to win. Royalty must have the King “escape” to win. What those mean will be covered later.

The initial set up of the board is depicted below:

The hexagonal spaces are the board.

Green is the **escape hex**.

The Royalty wins if the King lands in this hex. This hex has special rules for captures.

Maroon is the **starting hex**.

Its simply where the King starts, but no unit can enter that space once the king vacates it. This hex also has special rules. The other hexes are normal spaces, all units can land on those hexes, assuming they are not already occupied.

The smaller circles and stars are the player pieces. **The red stars are the Ambushers.** **The Purple Circle is the King.** The Royalty units are also circles, but are not shown in the initial set up since they must be deployed.

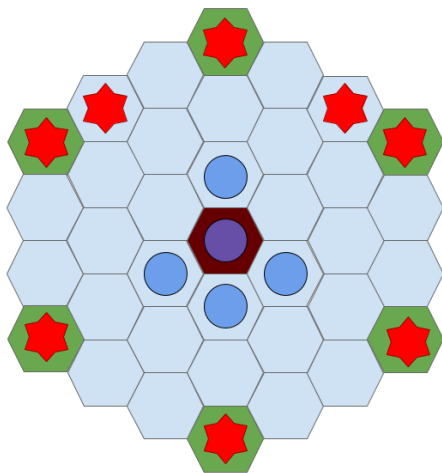
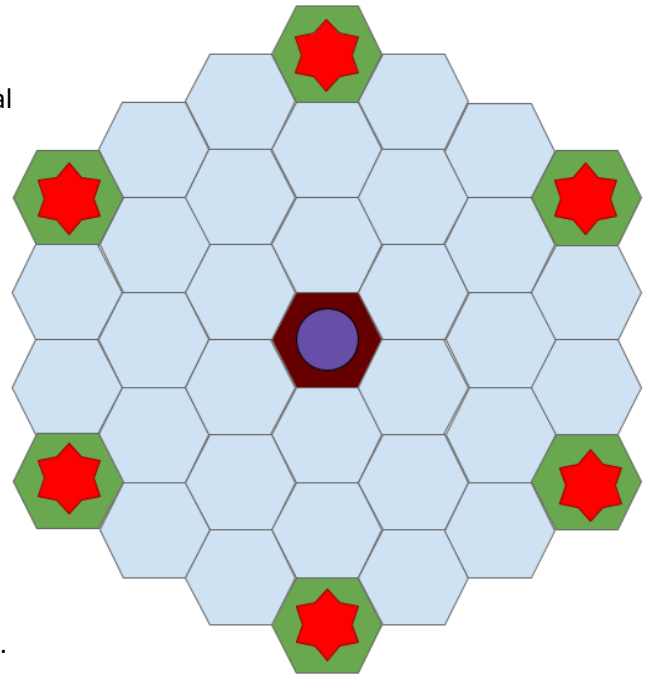
### Deployment

In the beginning of the game, players take turns deploying units.

Players can only deploy units to hexes adjacent to an existing unit on their side.

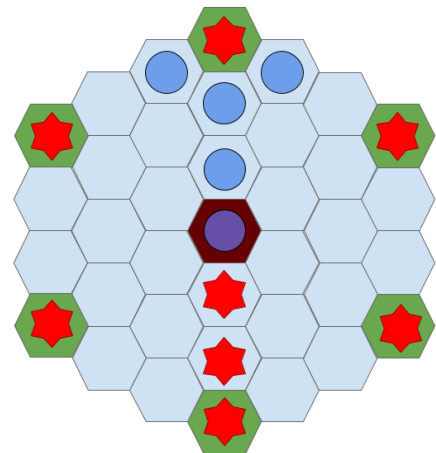
The Royalty side starts by placing **two** units. Then the Ambusher places **one**. Then the Royalty places **one**. Then the Ambusher **one** more. Finally, the Royalty places **one**. Ambushers would thus end with 8 units, and the Royalty with 4 plus the king. In summary the order is: 2 -> 1 -> 1 -> 1 -> 1

(Meta note: the number of units is the starting point for adjusting balance)



On the left is a possible deployment.

On the right is another, less orthodox one.



### Battle

Players take turns moving their units one move per turn. The starting player is decided by a coin toss.

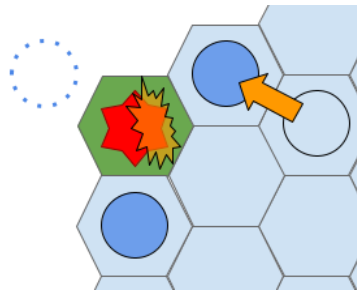
Units can move in a straight line any number of spaces, if the path is clear of units – similar to rooks in chess. The King can only move up to two spaces.

If a unit lands adjacent to an enemy unit, they will attempt to capture it. A capture will only succeed if the enemy unit is flanked by friendly units. A successful capture removes the enemy unit from the

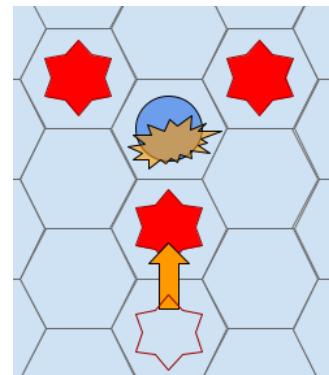
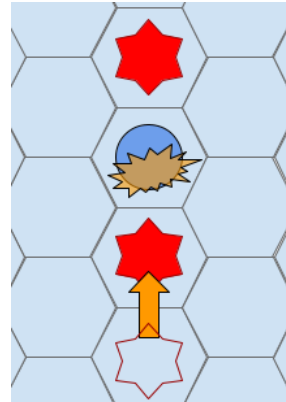
board. A failed capture does nothing. **The King cannot initiate a capture, but can count as one of the flanking units.**

**Normally**, the following are the possible flanking configurations:

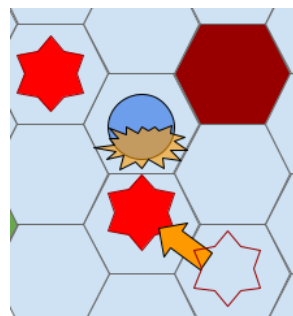
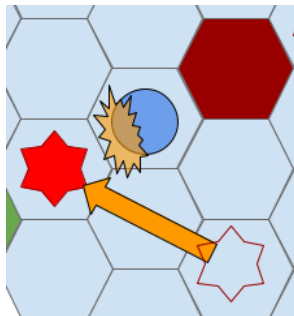
A special rule exists for the **escape hexes**. The flanking configuration is as follows:



We can think of it as if there were a friendly unit on a far side of the escape hex, and we follow configuration 2 on the right.



The **starting hex** also has a special rule: Once the King leaves it, no other unit may land on it. However, **after the King leaves**, the hex itself for all intents counts as an **unmovable, uncapturable unit belonging to the Ambushers**. This means units cannot pass over it. It also means the Ambushers can use it as a flanking unit:



Using these capture rules, the Royalty should try and clear a path for the King to escape, while the Ambushers must capture the King.

## Strategy

There are many play styles possible here. A large part of strategy is the deployment phase. Royalty can deploy very aggressively, in which case the Ambushers must respond by being defensive on that escape corner, or aggressive on the weak side of the king. To balance, since neither player knows who will be the first move (decided by coin toss AFTER deployment) they cannot over extend for an easy early capture, in case they go second and are caught out.

On more traditional deployment, it is on the Ambushers to try and capture Royalty units, so the king ends up exposed. The Royalty need only look for openings to get a quick capture. Thus, we get defensive formations by the Royalty, with openings to easily capture attacking Ambushers.

Also, the decision of when to first move the King is a critical one. The King becomes very exposed once moved, and the starting hex becomes an advantage to the Ambushers. The Royalty would do best to eliminate many Ambushers and have a clear path to an escape hex for the King before he first moves.