

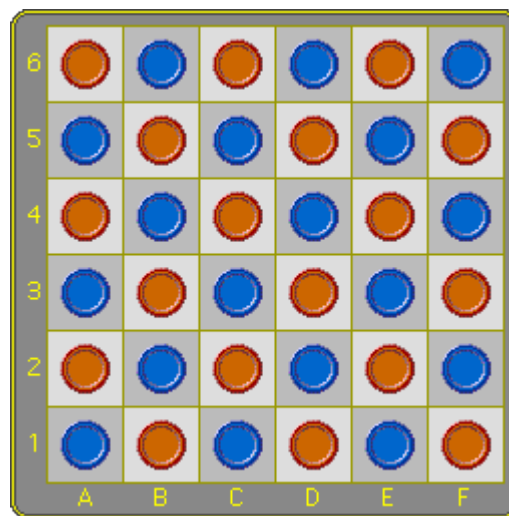
Grabber

Grabber is a combinatorial game based on the column checkers method of capture found in games like [Bashni](#), [Lasca](#), [Stapeldammen](#) and [Emergo](#). It is the column checkers version of a traditional Hawaiian game called [Konane](#).

Rules

The diagram shows the board with the men in the initial position. There are two players, white and black. White moves first after which turns alternate. Moving is compulsory.

All movement is straight only.



Columns will arise in the game. Single pieces are considered 'columns of one'. Columns may be of one or both colors. By the nature of the mechanism there will, in the latter case, always be one color on top with prisoners underneath. The top part is called 'the cap' and determines the owner.

Moving

On each of his first two moves, each player takes one friendly man off the board. After these initial moves, every move must be a capture. A piece captures an orthogonally adjacent opponent's piece by jumping over it to a vacant square immediately beyond, taking the top man along under it as its prisoner. If a player after the first capture can proceed in a similar matter in the same or a perpendicular direction he may do so, but is not obliged to do so. A multiple capture may be terminated at any square.

In the course of a multiple capture a piece may visit the same square more than once as well as capture the same piece more than once.

If more than one capture is available, players are free to choose.

Object

If a player on his turn cannot make a capture, he loses the game.

Note: every time a single man is captured, the number of pieces decreases by one. Since there is no way to *increase* the number of pieces, there will be progressively fewer pieces.

Note: Grabber is not an elimination game. A player may have plenty of pieces but no capture. So making multiple captures may not always serve the game's object and will often run counter to it.

Note: On small boards Grabber can be seen to be a win for the second player most of the time. This behaviour seems to cast a long shadow: on a 6x6 board the [Axiom Game Engine](#) if playing against itself, gets a second player win in about 70% of the games. In human terms this may be less relevant, but it is certainly not altogether insignificant.

Grabber

Grabber just so happened, the afternoon of sunday the 16th of January 2011. I had no special reason to seek another game, but suddenly the idea behind the combinatorial game Clobber merged with the method of capture of Emergo and that basically was it.

In retrospect it was only Clobber's object and its initial position that fitted Grabber's mechanism. A game that has more right to be mentioned as an ancestor is actually a traditional Hawaiian one called Konane. But fence two rows of men around a two square 'hole' and you get a 5x6 board.

The next day, when I found the initial position to be somewhat cramped and tainted by a somewhat cumbersome way to avoid symmetrical play by black, I decided to enlarge the board to 6x6 and allow for a variable initial position by starting with a full board and having the players remove one friendly man on each of the first two turns.

A mysterious turn order imbalance.

Grabber was programmed on the Axiom Game Engine. When playing against itself, two out of three games turned out to be won by the second player. After careful examination no bug was found in the program. The phenomenon is as yet unexplained.

Christian Freeling [[ref](#)]