



A strategy game for 2 players with a variant for 3 or 4
by **Néstor Romeral Andrés**

INTRODUCTION

Naja is a genus of venomous snakes known as cobras, and in ancient Egypt they indicated sovereignty, royalty, and even divinity. The gods themselves are depicted crowned with a naja.

The scarab rolls the sun around to rise each day, and thus ensures renewal and prosperity. As royalty, veritable deities, you send your najas to lay claim to scarabs, ensuring new life for your lineage.

In the game Naja, players take turns placing cobras on the board trying to surround as many scarabs as possible. But try not to claim bonfires, lest they harm your najas and weaken your reign!

EQUIPMENT

This is what you need to play Naja:

- 9x9 board with a scarab on each cell
- 20 white najas (snakes)
- 20 black najas (snakes)
- 7 bonfires
- 40 black baskets
- 40 white baskets



You can also get the expansion for 3–4 players:

- 15 gray najas
- 15 purple najas
- 30 gray baskets
- 30 purple baskets

SETUP

Place the board in the middle of the playing surface. Each player takes all najas and counters of her colour.

Randomly place 5 or 7 bonfires (not 6) on different spaces of the board, **except** for the middle space (to avoid symmetric play) and the border spaces (where they pose almost no risk).

HOW TO PLAY

White starts. Players take turns in clockwise order legally placing a naja of their colour **until no legal placement remains**, at which point the game ends.

Najas have 4 segments:



Each naja must be placed so that:

- All four segments lie on 4 segments of the board.
- They don't overlap.



Example: Black places a naja correctly. Then White places a naja doubly incorrectly, because one of its segments lies outside the board, and also a segment overlaps a previously placed naja.

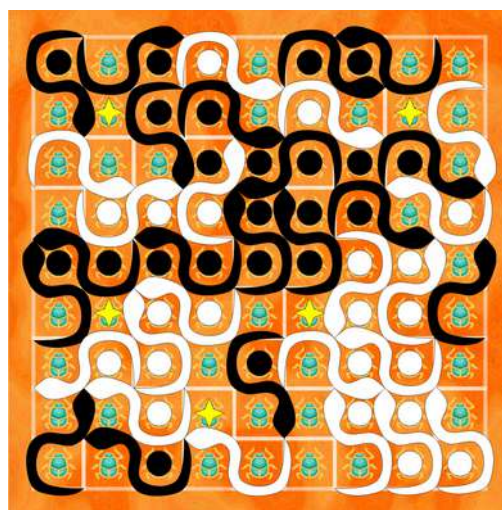
GAME END

Don't claim areas during play! Areas are claimed at the end.

The game ends when **no more placements are possible**. Check for possible placements before declaring the endgame.

Players then claim areas as follows: The player with *more* naja segments surrounding an enclosed area must claim it by placing a basket of her colour on each scarab in the area *except for areas with bonfires on them* (scarabs on areas with bonfires don't score points). If two (or more) players tie in claiming an area, it remains unclaimed. The edge of the board *is not a wall*, so some areas around the edge might remain unclaimed.

Each basket on the board is worth +1 point, but each claimed bonfire is worth -3 points (najas don't like fire!). Ties are possible and are OK: Just play again!



Endgame example (2 players and 5 bonfires): Black claims 22 scarabs and 1 bonfire for 19 points. White claims 21 scarabs and 1 bonfire for 18 points. Black wins the game (18-19). Note that three bonfires and 33 scarabs have remained unclaimed.