

Sisyphos

2007, Ingo Althöfer, Edition Perlhuhn

Translated from the original German rules by Víctor M. González, April 2nd, 2013

<https://boardgamegeek.com/boardgame/65810/sisyphos>

Game components: a 5x5 gridded board (made of burned buffalo leather), 3 pawns (mountain spirits), 5 Sisyphus stones.



setup

Setting-Up: one player plays as Sisyphus, the other plays as the mountain spirits. The less experienced player should play as Sisyphus. The mountain spirit pawns are placed in the three fields with arrow symbols on a corner, the five stones are placed in the arrow fields on the opposite corner. The arrows indicate the way the pieces move: the spirits exclusively towards the stones' corner, the stones in every direction but always towards the spirits' corner.

Game goal: the ghosts win if one of them reaches the stones' corner or if Sisyphus is unable to reach the spirits' corner in 50 turns or less. If Sisyphus manages to move a stone to the spirits' corner in less than 51 turns, he is the winner.

Game play: Sisyphus begins the game. Then, both players alternate turns. On a turn, the active player moves one of his pieces one space in one of the allowed directions (indicated by the arrows on his corner). If the piece lands on a field occupied by an opponent's piece, this is removed, placed beside the board on hold, and its place occupied by the newcomer. During a turn, the active player can put into play one of his removed pieces instead of moving a piece. The reintroduced piece is placed in an empty arrow field on his corner, as far away of his opponent's corner as possible: if all his arrow fields are empty, he must place the piece on the corner field; if this field is occupied, he must place it on one of the two adjacent fields; and if these two are also occupied, he must place it on fields 4th and 5th.

Unlike the mythical Sisyphus, who vainly tried to roll a stone up to a hill, this game's Sisyphus has a real chance to place a stone in his opponent's corner. A complete computer-aided analysis shows that this is possible in 17 turns, even with an opponent playing as best as possible. Doing it in 30 moves is a really good achievement.