

[This is an excerpt of the following [German review](#) by Smukers Meinung]

Frank Czarnetzki (nicknamed Czarné) received the “Young Author Award” from the *Spiel des Jahres* jury in 2002. Only two years later, with *Black Elephant*, he proved that he knows how to design games of all kinds, including tactical ones. In *Black Elephant*, players quickly realize that keeping a herd of working elephants under control is no easy task. Each player starts with 10 of these largest living land animals, which weigh up to 100 kilograms at birth. These specially trained elephants are used to collect logs, and their owners must guide them across the playing field. To prevent opponents’ elephants from snatching logs from right under their trunks or luring their own elephants off the “right path,” two elephants per player have received special training. These are the *Black Elephants*—the dark giants. They can block the paths of working elephants and are even strong enough to capture others. This game demands stamina, strategy, and the proverbial stubbornness of elephants.



Components

The game comes in a fine wooden case. Inside: a 40x40 cm board with slots, 24 heavy tin elephants (10 silver, 10 bronze, and 4 black), and 54 small bamboo logs (six of them black).

Strategy

“Hup two three four, keep it up two three four!” Each player begins by choosing a color (silver or bronze) and taking their 10 cast elephants. These are placed on the starting fields. The quartet of black elephants is set on the four brown areas behind the players’ start and goal fields. Next, bamboo logs are placed on the 48 spaces, one log per space. Finally, each player receives three black bonus logs, and the game can begin.

The goal of the game is to collect as many logs as possible, guide your elephants across the board to the goal, and capture enemy elephants. Points are awarded for all of these, and the best herdsman is the one with the highest total score at the end.

Basic Rules

Collecting Logs:

When an elephant enters a space containing a log through a forward move (and only then), it collects the log and places it in front of itself. A forward move means stepping in the direction the elephant is facing.

Starting Fields:

An elephant may move from its starting field to any of the seven adjacent spaces. The elephant may only enter or leave the start field with a forward move.

On a turn, a player has three options:

1. Move one of their elephants
2. Place a black log
3. Move one of their black elephants

Moving Your Own Elephant – “Graceful as a gazelle... or what’s that animal with the long trunk again?”

Elephants may move forward, sideways, or backward. Diagonal movement is not allowed (in case you hadn’t noticed, this game is about clumsy elephants, not nimble gazelles). The orientation of the elephant may never be changed during a move. If an elephant enters a log space through a sideways or backward move, it may step onto it but cannot pick up the log. Both the elephant and the log then share the space, and the log remains when the elephant leaves. Once an elephant enters a log space, its move ends. A stump space may never be jumped over. Only one elephant fits per space.



Free Spaces: If a space contains neither an elephant nor a log, it is a “free space.” An elephant may move up to three free spaces forward, sideways, or backward, but the move must end on a free space. If the elephant starts its move from a log space, it may move only one space.

Reaching a Goal: If an elephant reaches one of its six goal spaces, it is removed from the board and placed in front of the player. This only happens if it reaches the goal with a forward move (it must be facing the goal). If it enters the goal otherwise, it remains on the board. A goal space occupied by a black log cannot be used that turn. If a black elephant controls a goal space, the capture rules apply, and the elephant goes to the opponent.

Jumping Over an Elephant: If another elephant stands directly in front of yours, you may jump over it if the space behind it is empty.

Rules:

1. The elephant to be jumped must be directly in front (no empty space between).
2. Only “forward” jumps are allowed.
3. The space behind must be empty.

Logs are ignored during jumps and are not collected. After jumping, you may freely rotate the jumped elephant.

Turning an Elephant:

Rotating an elephant can be risky—it will continue moving in its new facing direction and may no longer reach its goal. To fix this, another of your elephants must jump over it and reorient it. If this happens on a goal space, it is immediately removed. If an elephant lands on an opponent’s goal, it is rotated 180 degrees. If it later reaches any starting space (yours or the opponent’s), it may start again with a forward move. If your last elephant is stranded facing the wrong way, you may use your opponent’s goals instead.

Throwing Black Logs:

Instead of moving an elephant, you may place a black log on a free space. These logs are “burnt” and make the space permanently unusable. Rule: never more than two black logs may be adjacent (orthogonally or diagonally). Black logs cannot be used by black elephants, nor do they score points. Once placed, they remain until the end of the game.

Moving Black Elephants:

The third option on your turn is moving one of your black elephants. Each black elephant controls a row on one side of the board and can move back and forth. No other elephant may enter its path. Each player controls two black elephants: one behind their own start and one behind their opponent’s goal. Moving a black elephant costs one collected log per space moved, which is paid into the storage area on the board. Without logs, you cannot move black elephants. They are mainly

used to block paths or capture enemy elephants. Captures occur at intersections of black elephant lines. Where two or more lines cross, the space is blocked, and any elephant there is captured. You may only move your own two black elephants, but must pay attention to how all lines interact. Capturing grants you 2 points and makes your opponent lose 3 points. Special rule: if a player gets their seventh elephant to the goal, they may release one captured elephant from the opponent's prison.

End of the Game:

The game ends when the last log (not counting black logs) is collected or when a player has no elephants left. Elephants still on the board at the end do not count.

Scoring:

- 1 point per collected log
- 2 points per captured elephant
- 3 points per elephant that reached the goal

Winner is the player with the most points.