

# O · N · A · G · E · R

A strategy board game for 2 players by  
Néstor Romeral Andrés

## INTRODUCTION

**Onager** is an abstract game in which each player tries to reach the opponent's back rank. **Onager** is named after a Roman siege engine that is a type of catapult, as the way the pieces move resembles how projectiles are hurled forward with this device.

**Onager** was inspired by the game **Epaminondas**, a masterpiece designed in 1975 by *Robert Abbott*, and also published by **nestorgames**. **Onager** uses simple mechanics with a classy feeling similar to those in *Chinese Checkers*, *Halma*, or *Bashni*.

## MATERIAL

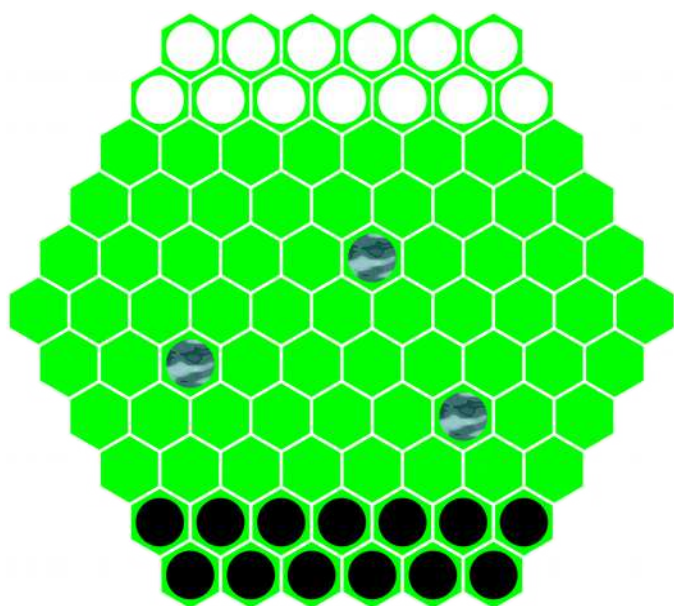
- A hexagonal board with 6 hexes per side.
- 13 black discs.
- 13 white discs.
- 3 grey discs (the lakes).

## SETUP

Each player has an allocated colour (*Black* or *White*).

Fill your 2 nearest rows with discs of your colour (one per cell).

Then, starting with *Black*, players alternate turns placing one 'lake' on any empty space of the board *except the centre space* (so *Black* places 2 lakes and *White* places 1). The lakes are used to prevent symmetric play and to create a different landscape for each game.



Setup example

## CONCEPTS

### Pieces

From now on, we shall use the term '*piece*' to refer either to an isolated disc (not part of a stack) or the topmost disc of a stack. Discs that are part of a stack but are not the topmost one are not considered *pieces* (until they are 'liberated' by moving away the disc on top of them).

### Stacks

Whenever a *piece* jumps on top of an **enemy piece** a *stack* is created. Higher stacks can be created as a result of jumps. Only the topmost disc can move from a stack (because it is a piece), therefore liberating the disc underneath (which then becomes a piece).

The height of a stack is irrelevant.

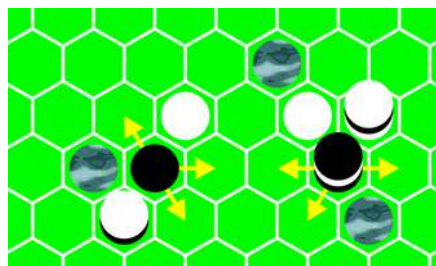
## HOW TO PLAY

*Black* starts. Players alternate turns during the game until the victory condition is reached.

On your turn, **either walk or jump** with **one** of your *pieces*.

### Walk

Move **one** of your pieces to an adjacent **empty** space.



Examples of valid walks for Black.  
Remember that only the topmost disc of a stack can be moved.

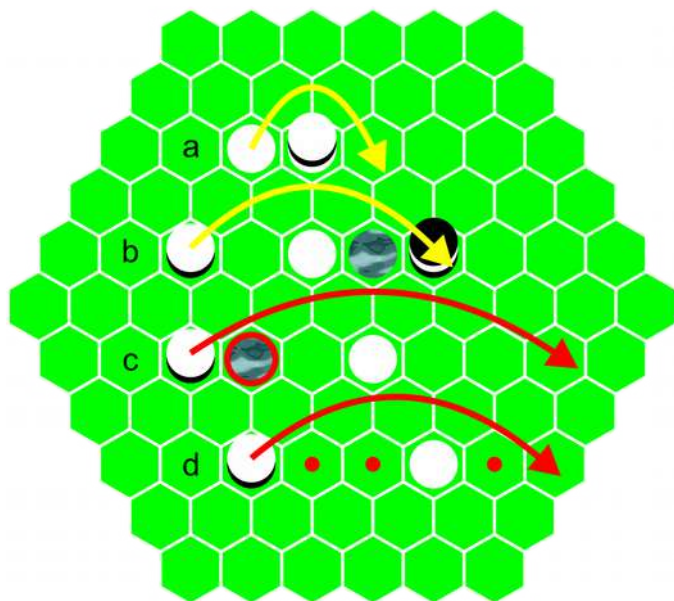
### Jump

In order to jump, 2 friendly pieces must be aligned in any of the 3 directions with no obstacles (lakes or other pieces) between them. Both pieces can be adjacent or separated by spaces.

One of the pieces then jumps in that direction over the other piece, landing on a space beyond that is at a distance equal to the distance between the two friendly pieces before the jump was made (like a mirror).

The landing space must be either empty or occupied by an enemy piece. A piece cannot land on a lake or a friendly piece. Pieces cannot land outside the board.

Notice that the spaces between the piece jumped over and the landing space don't need to be empty. If the jumping piece lands on top of an enemy piece, it creates (or enlarges) a stack of discs (see 'Stacks'). Enemy pieces are neither captured nor removed from the game.

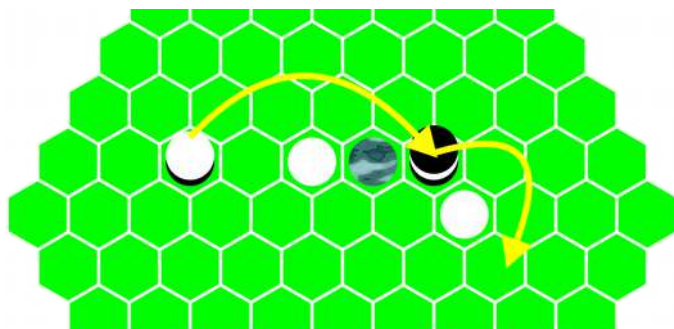


Examples of legal and illegal jumps:

- a) Legal: Landing space is empty. Same distance.
- b) Legal: Spaces between jumping and jumped-over pieces are empty. Same distance. Destination occupied by enemy piece.
- c) Illegal: Obstacle between jumping and jumped-over pieces.
- d) Illegal: Not same distance.

**Multiple jumps:** If, as a result of a jump, a piece lands **on top of an opponent's piece**, it can make another jump movement (under the same conditions), and so on. This is not mandatory.

You **cannot** combine walks and jumps. Your jumping piece **cannot** end the turn in the same space where it started.



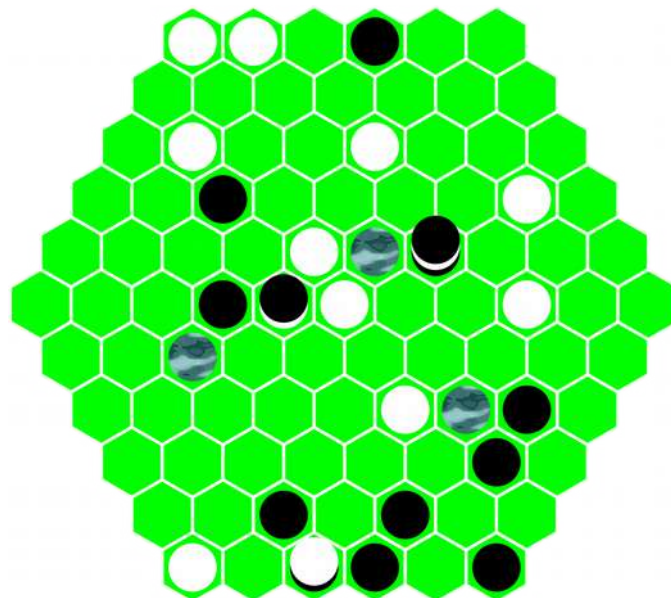
Example of multiple jumps

## Victory condition

If at the *start* of your turn you have more pieces on your opponent's back rank than your opponent has on your back rank, then you have won. *Remember the definition of 'piece'.*

If the above condition is not reached and you can't make a legal movement at the start of your turn, you lose. This rarely happens.

Players may agree on a draw at any moment during the game.



Endgame example:

White's turn. White wins by having more pieces on Black's back rank (bottom) than black pieces on White's back rank (top): 2 to 1.

## STRATEGY TIPS

Don't read this if you wish to discover the game by yourself!

- Pieces can jump from large distances, and even cross the entire board in a single jump!
- You can block a threatening jump by simply placing a piece between the two enemy pieces.
- Try to threaten several pieces with the same move.
- Try to control the centre space of the board.
- Having discs trapped in stacks is not that bad, because you're still threatening to move if they're liberated.
- Because your back rank can be reached by either walking or jumping, but only defended by jumping, purely defensive play is not a good strategy (not enough pieces to defend it). You must balance defensive and offensive play.