

Double Morphus

by Peter Hendrickson, published by Lost Horizons

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Double Morphus is an abstract two-player game published by the same folk who make [Murphy's Magic Island](#). Like **Murphy's**, **Double Morphus** is a game of moving a pawn through a maze of geomorphic tiles, collecting flat disks. However, there the similarities end.

The board of **Double Morphus** consists of four border pieces which are held together with clear plastic clamps, and 18 tiles. The border pieces create a space large enough to hold 20 square tiles in a four-by-five pattern. Since there are only 18 tiles, there is always a gap of two squares.



Players may shift tiles, therefore, to help them gain their ends. But I get ahead of myself. [...] The tiles are largely blueish gray with crimson lines and orange or yellow circles. Each of the square tiles has one such circle: they are called Energy Pools. Nine of the tiles have yellow Energy Pools, and nine have Orange Energy Pools. While each of the nine tiles is different from the others, the yellow tiles are identical to the orange tiles in layout of spaces, walls, pyramids, etc.

The tiles, when placed in the border pieces, create a double-layered maze. Some of the tiles have Aztec-style pyramids in the center of them, with ramps on one, two, three or all four sides. Each tile has four lower-level spaces, many of them separated by walls which you cannot pass through.

Each player also has one *Trover* and three guards. These, and the ten flat disks of each color representing Energy Points (EP) are adequate for game purposes, but quite plain compared to the board's attractiveness.

The game begins with players taking turns placing the tiles. The yellow player places the orange tiles, and vice versa. Once all 18 tiles are placed, the EP are placed on the Energy Pools, and players select starting spaces from those marked on the border pieces. Each player has one EP in his Morph Bank.

Each turn, a player must move all four pieces - if a piece cannot move, it is removed from the game. If you lose your Trover, you lose the game. Trovers move up to five spaces, orthogonally or diagonally. Guards move the same, except they cannot move diagonally. No guard may enter a space with an unclaimed EP. A Trover cannot enter a space with an opponent's EP, but if it enters a space with its own color, the player collects the EP and places it in his Morph Bank. Guards may not move through enemy pieces at all; Trovers may pass through each other, but a Trover may only move through an enemy guard by paying 1 EP from his Morph Bank.

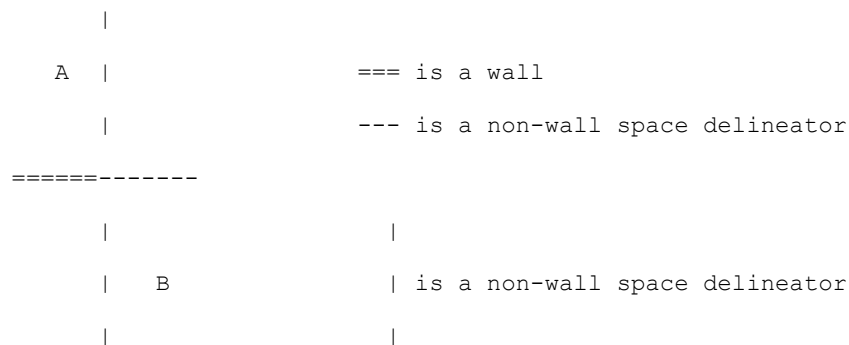
The goal is to be the first to collect all nine EP of your own color. How many you have in the Morph Bank doesn't matter - you can spend them as soon as you collect them, if you wish - though it's wise to hold onto one or two to escape being boxed in. In addition to moving through enemy guards, you can spend an EP to jump down from a pyramid (bypassing the ramp) or to shift a tile into an adjacent empty slot (morphing).

The game creates some interesting tactics. Your Trover races ahead, collecting EP, while your guards try to delay the enemy Trover - or you can send your guards with your Trover, hoping to block his guards so they can't move and thus remove them from the game.

The initial placement can also be interesting, though there are certain key tiles which almost have to go in the corners, and others along the edge, so there isn't quite as much flexibility as you might think. Still, there are enough strategies to try that the game does not easily repeat itself - it has good replay value.

The rules sheet could use another edition. The all upper-case font is hard to read, for one thing, and it's under-diagrammed - you have to figure out what a wall is, for example. (I'm serious - they're not that obvious.) Even a simple listing of components would help: 1 Trover, 3 Guards, 10 Energy Points would have helped me understand the game much more quickly. As it was, the rules rather casually drop mentions of these pieces without showing or telling you which are which - I didn't know if a Trover was the single Pawn, the three peg-like things or even the ten flat disks! One rule that had me puzzled for three readings is that a piece cannot move through an empty space - until I finally realized it meant a space with no **tile**, not a space with no pieces!

There **is** one rule not mentioned, but the designer is very gracious in answering e-mail questions, so I wasn't long in the dark: you may **not** move a Trover diagonally past the end of a wall, such as from space A to B in the following diagram:



I asked him three other questions, worried that there might be other omissions, but his answers assured me that there are no holes on these issues. Specifically:

1. A Trover may continue moving after picking up an EP if it has movement left;
2. You may move from one start space on the border to an adjacent start space on the border if they are not separated by a wall; and
3. It's legal to move a piece one space then right back to where it began the turn.

The rules don't mention these things, but a strict reading of them indeed agrees with the answers above.

All in all, an engaging, abstract, two-player game which is easy to play over and over. The rules are not complicated, but the strategies involved take some mastering. The board is attractive, the pieces less so but very servicable, the rules need editing - but, with the missing rule supplied above, it's complete, playable, and enjoyable.

Morphus

BGG description:

This out of print game is a pre-cursor to [Double Morphus](#), and by the same designer. There are 34 tiles, each containing four squares and either red or yellow colored walls. A 6 by 6 frame is assembled, and each player takes turns placing two tiles at a time to build the maze, leaving two empty spots. The maze tiles contain 12 energy points of each color. Unlike [Double Morphus](#), the maze is not three dimensional.



Each player has 3 guards and a trover. The object of the game is to collect all energy points of a player's given color, or to capture the opponent's trover.

On each turn, a player may move all of his pieces 10 squares each. Guards may move orthogonally only, and trovers may move both orthogonally and diagonally. Only trovers may collect energy points. Guards serve to block movement.

Energy points may be spent to "morph" a maze tile by sliding it into an adjacent empty square. Each point spent allows two such morphs. Tiles containing a trover may not be morphed.

To capture an opposing trover, it must be immobilized by a combination of enemy guards, walls, empty space, or enemy energy points for one full turn. A trover can

force itself past an enemy guard by surrendering either an energy point or the life of a friendly guard.



Ref: <https://boardgamegeek.com/boardgame/14802/morphus>

Double Morphus

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2. Guards (pegs) move up to five spaces **orthogonally only**.
3. You may not move through a wall, or diagonally across the end of a wall.
4. *Starting spaces* count as normal movement spaces.
5. What can a piece move through (**EP** = Energy Point):

Unit:	EP?	Empty Energy Pool?	Opposing Guard?	Opposing Trover?
Trover	No	Yes	Yes, but at a cost of 1 EP	Yes
Guard			No	No

6. You may only enter a ramp from a space on an adjacent tile directly across from the bottom edge of the ramp, or from the higher level.
7. A Trover (only) may “jump down” from a ramp or top to an adjacent space by spending 1 EP.
8. Every piece must move each turn, or is removed from the game at the end of your turn (lose your Trover = lose the game). You may simply move one space and back again if you wish.
9. Only one piece may occupy a space at the end of each piece’s move, but you may move over your own pieces freely during a move.
10. You may move a tile into an adjacent empty space for 1 EP. You may not rotate the tile as you move it. You may move as many tiles as you wish during your turn, or the same one over and over again, so long as you pay 1 EP for each move. You may not move a tile containing a Trover, however.
11. Trovers (only) can pick up their **own color EP** by landing on them, which does not necessarily end their move. **The winner is the first to collect all 9 of his own EP on the board.**

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