

Sáhkku is a traditional board game of the Sámi people of northern Scandinavia. It reflects a unique blend of strategy and unpredictability, shaped by the rhythms of Arctic life and oral tradition.

Ethnographers recorded Sáhkku in the early 20th century, but it had already been widely played for generations. In the 19th century, it was banned by the Laestadian Lutheran revival movement, which condemned it as the "Devil's Game."

We imagine two Sámi herding groups competing across the tundra for grazing rights. Guided by wind and instinct, they maneuver to drive off rivals and secure the land.

We chose Sáhkku for its rich storytelling and unpredictable flow. It offers a strategic experience shaped by Arctic survival, ancestral knowledge, and the enduring spirit of the Sámi people.

Krisztina & Tamas, Lemery Games

Across the frozen tundra, two Sami herding groups compete for grazing rights. Guided by the shifting winds and their knowledge of the land, they maneuver their reindeer herds, seeking to drive off rivals and secure the best territories. This ancient game of Sáhkku mirrors the traditional challenges of herding in the Arctic.

Which herder will prove their mastery of the land?

- Narrative based on the imagination of Lemery Games -

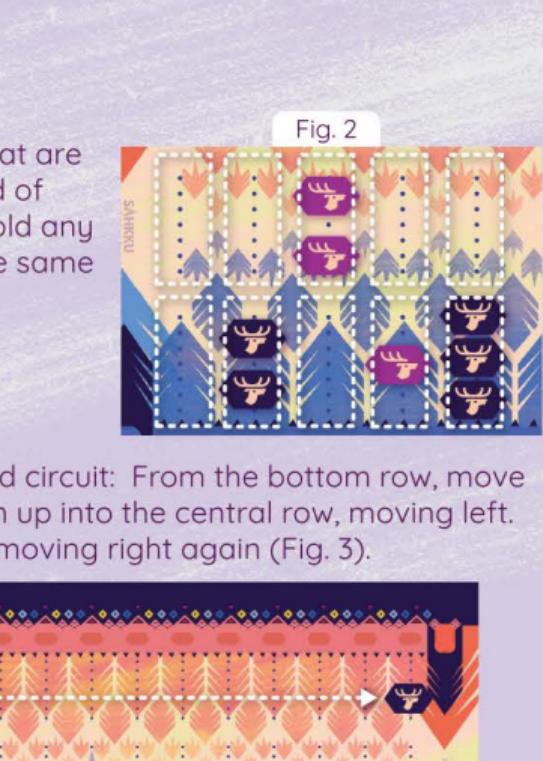
Sáhkku is a 2-player running-fight game in which each player controls 15 Reindeer, racing across the tundra to drive away the opponent's pieces and claim dominance.

OBJECT OF THE GAME

Drive off the opposing Reindeer herd.

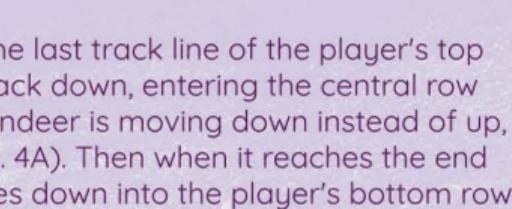
GAME CONTENTS

1 travel bag
1 game mat
15 purple Reindeer pieces
15 dark blue Reindeer pieces
1 beige Lead Buck piece
3 barrel dice
1 rulebook



SETUP

1. Lay out the game mat as shown in Fig. 1.
2. Give each player 15 Reindeer of the same color.
3. Place the 15 purple Reindeer pieces in their home row with their 3-antlers side up (Fig. 1).
4. Place the 15 dark blue Reindeer pieces in their home row with their 4-antlers side up (Fig. 1).
5. Place the Lead Buck in the central space of the board, with either side up (Fig. 1).



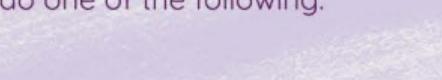
HOW TO PLAY

To decide who begins, both roll the dice; the first to roll a Sáhkku (X) will go first.

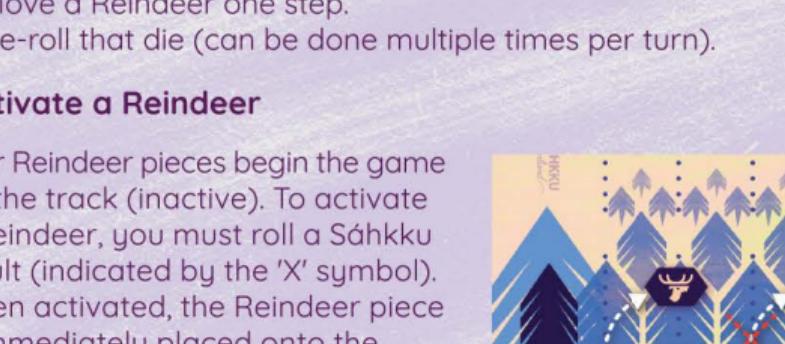
Players will take turns throwing the barrel dice and moving their Reindeer around the track- sometimes "capturing" other Reindeer (removing them from the board) or taking control of the Lead Buck piece.

Moving

In this game, there are what are called "track lines" instead of spaces. These lines can hold any number of Reindeer of the same color (Fig. 2).



The Reindeer follow a fixed circuit: From the bottom row, move rightward to the end. Then up into the central row, moving left. Then up into the top row, moving right again (Fig. 3).



When a Reindeer reaches the last track line of the player's top row, it then starts moving back down, entering the central row again. To indicate that a Reindeer is moving down instead of up, flip it to its 2-antler side (Fig. 4A). Then when it reaches the end of the central row and moves down into the player's bottom row again, flip it back to its original side (Fig. 4B). It will begin moving back up to the top row again, following the path shown in Fig. 3. Reindeer continue repeating this circuit unless they get captured.



Barrel Dice

The game uses barrel dice, which is similar to throwing dice, with the result being determined by the marked sides that face up. On each turn, roll all 3 dice. Each die result may be used separately to move three different Reindeer, or combined for one or two Reindeer.

Results:

Blank = no move

II = move 2 track lines

III = move 3 track lines

X (Sáhkku) = move one track line, or take a special action (see explanation below)

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The Lead Buck

Begins inactive and neutral on the central space of the board. It Moves orthogonally (vertically or horizontally) along the track to an adjacent track line (Fig. 6).

The Lead Buck cannot be captured, only recruited by the opposing side if their Reindeer lands on the same line occupied by the Lead Buck.



Fig. 6

Recruiting the Lead Buck

A Reindeer that lands on the track line occupied by the Lead Buck, recruits it. Flip the Lead Buck to its purple or dark blue Reindeer side to mark who's in control (Fig. 7A). The Reindeer that recruited the Lead Buck is removed from the game (Fig. 7B).



Fig. 7

Capturing

Landing on a track line occupied by rival Reindeer captures them. All rival Reindeer on that line are removed from the game (Fig. 8). Inactive Reindeer can't be captured by any player.



Fig. 8

GAME END

The player who captures all of their opponent's active Reindeer — or at least five, as long as the rest remain inactive — wins the game. A victory is considered especially glorious if the defeated side still controls the Lead Buck at the end.

TIPS AND TRICKS

- 💡 The middle row is the key corridor; dominating it with your own pieces gives flexibility.
- 💡 Recruiting the Lead Buck can swing the balance. Use him aggressively, but beware of losing it to the opponent.
- 💡 Sometimes it is worth sacrificing a Reindeer to lure your rival into a vulnerable position.

GAME VARIANTS

Choose to modify the game with any or all of these variations.

- Sáhkku (X) die: The X result may only be used to activate a reindeer or move a reindeer one step (no re-rolls are allowed).
- Reindeer Activation: When a Reindeer is activated, it may enter the track but does not advance an extra step.
- Inactive Reindeer: Inactive Reindeer CAN be captured if the opponent lands on the adjacent track line.
- Blank die roll: Instead of 0, give it the value of "4" (recommended for faster and more dynamic games).

DIFFERENT BOARD SIZE

Sáhkku can be played on boards of various sizes, with the number of Reindeer adjusted accordingly. The Lemery Games edition comes with a 9x3 board variant that uses 9 Reindeer per player, which works well for a quicker game or for introducing new players to the basic mechanics of Sáhkku.

To play on a different board size, lay out the game mat with the variant side up, give each player 9 Reindeer of the same color, and play exactly as the base game (Fig. 9).



Fig. 9

MINI EXPANSIONS

HEROES OF EUROPE

Coming soon.

CHALLENGES OF EUROPE

Coming soon.

ORACLES OF EUROPE

Coming soon.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We would like to thank all XXX Kickstarter backers who helped LUDOS Europe come to life. Your contribution is key in preserving this game for future generations. Spread the word, and have fun!

To follow our journey and see all of our games, visit LemeryGames.com



Publisher: Lemery Games
Illustration: Tamás Kőszegi and Lívia Varga
Rulebook editing and proofreading: Dario Jara & Jeremy Rozenhart

THANK YOU

These rules of Sáhkku were inspired by Alan Borvo's 2001 article "Sáhkku, the 'Devil's Game'" in Board Game Studies.

Coming soon.

Coming soon.