

# Rules for "latrunculus glaucus"

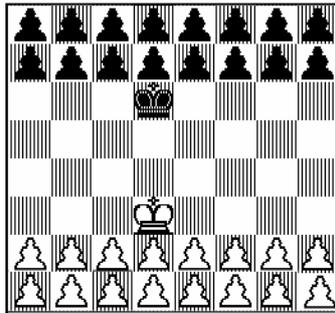
for Caelia and Helena

## 1 Introduction

Latrunculus is a war-game (like chess) that was played in Ancient Rome. Nobody knows the exact rules, but it is thought that, played as a game of pure skill like chess or drafts, it is quite boring. To get over this, I have defined rules that introduce an interesting element of chance. It was invented for the twins who played Caelia and Helena in the first performances of *für parva*.

Latrunculus was played on a grid like chess and draughts, and, as  $8 \times 8$  was a possible size, I decided for convenience to go for that.

Each side has 16 Soldiers and one King. Lay out the pieces initially like this:



The object of the game is to defeat the other side by achieving an agreed mutual advantage in terms of numbers, or by killing the other side's King. Clearly a King is your most important piece, but he can fight fiercely.

The game uses a single die (dice), which is marked, as normal, with 1 to 6 pips. Each player takes turns to throw the die. The pips thrown determine how you can move, and what you can kill.

## 2 Playing the game

### 2.1 Moving

At each throw, you can move one or more pieces the number of places; you use up a pip each time you move forward, backwards, sideways or diagonally, but always, for a Soldier, the place that you move over must be unoccupied. You cannot move to a place occupied by a Soldier of either colour.

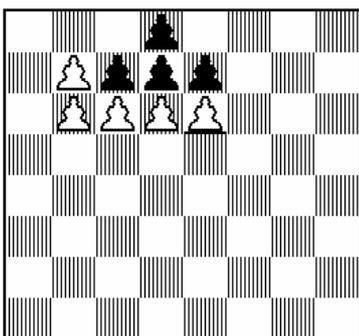
You can use pips either to move or to kill a piece, and you can go on until you run out of pips. However, you don't have to use *all* your pips.

Soldiers cannot step into or even move over a place used by another soldier. However, a King *can* step over soldiers of his own colour (up/down, sideways, diagonally), but cannot finish in a place occupied by another soldier. A King *cannot* step over pieces of the opposite colour (too dangerous!). If he has to (because he is the only piece that can move), he is automatically killed, and the game is over.

You must move or kill something if you can, and you cannot go again over a space that you have already been in or moved over in the same turn with a particular piece unless you have just killed.

### 2.2 Killing

The rules for "killing" a piece need some simple arithmetic.



In selecting a particular piece to be killed (the defender), you (the attacker) count it and the number of Soldiers of its own colour (in any) in adjacent spaces. This is its [defending] *Force*. And you look at the number of Soldiers of your own colour adjacent to it. This is your [attacking] *Force*. Take the two numbers away: this is the *Outnumbering*, which can be zero, positive or negative. The total *Force* involved in attack and defence a specific piece is never more than 9, if only Soldiers are involved, since at most there are 9 positions surrounding the defender, plus the defenders' own position.

For example, look at the simple diagram to left.

If you wanted as White to kill the bottom left black Soldier, that Soldier has a *Force* of 3 (including itself). It has four white Soldiers adjacent to itself, giving a *Force* of 4. So the *Outnumbering* is  $4-3=1$ .

If you wanted as White to kill the lower centre black soldier, it has a Force of 4, but you only have 3 Soldiers against it. So the black soldier has an Outnumbering of  $3-4 = \text{minus } 1$

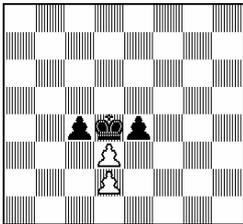
To kill a piece takes 4 pips on the dice minus the positive Outnumbering, or plus a negative Outnumbering, to a minimum of 2 pips. So to kill the left-hand black soldier would take 3 pips, while to kill the centre one would take 5 pips. You can kill and move in any order. Theoretically, you can kill up to three pieces with a single move if you throw a six. You can move back over a piece previously occupied

If Black wanted to kill the white piece in the centre, this piece has a white Force of 3 (itself and its two neighbours), and it is against a black Force also of three (ahead and to each side). So the Outnumbering is 0, and 4 pips would be required. If there were three white Soldiers behind the while Soldiers, the Outnumbering would be  $-3$ , so it would need  $4+3 = 7$  pips to kill it. So it couldn't be killed, as only 6 pips are available.

## 2.3 Kings

Kings not only move more flexibly than Soldiers, they are also excellent fighters. But if your King gets killed, you have lost the game, so you have to use him carefully.

If one of the pieces involved in a kill is a King, it adds two Soldiers to its Force (i.e. it is "worth" a total of three Soldiers in terms of Force) in both attack and defence. So, with equal numbers involved in the attacking and defending Forces, to kill a King takes 6 pips of the die; and if the King's defending Force is more than that of the attacker, it cannot be taken on that move.



In the diagram to the left, the upper white piece has a defending Force of just two, but it is up against a black Force of 3 plus 2 for the King = 5. So it can be killed by 2 pips (the minimum) and is in grave danger.

If White wanted to kill the King, the King has a Force of  $3+2=5$ , with just the single white soldier adjacent. So it would need  $4+5-1=8$  pips, which is, of course, impossible: so the black King is quite safe in this case. But if the white soldier attacking the black King were in fact a King itself, the Black Force would be 5, and the white Force 3, so the black King could be taken by throwing a 6.

That's all there is to the rules!

Anthony Hodson  
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