

FIRE & WATER

Struggle of the Elements

A clever tactical game for 2-4 players



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Latest version and download on http://www.spielefreun.de/feuerundwasser/index_en.html

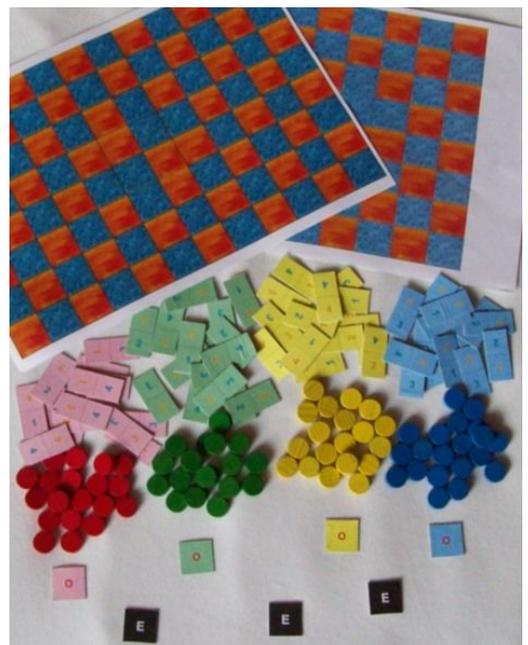
Game Idea

Fire and Water, the raging elements, play the main roles in this clever tactical game for 2 to 4 players. Who will get the upper hand? With the unrestrained strength of the elements on one hand, and with the help of the tender elementals on the other, a clever player will direct the outcome of the struggle of the elements and become the Master of the Elements...

This game reached the finals of the Hippodice Game Designer Competition 2012.

Contents / Material

- Two game boards – one for 2 players and a larger one for 3 or 4 players
- 16 cardboard influence markers in 4 colors, each marked with 2 values of 1 to 4
- 20 wooden possession tokens in 4 colors or a total of 60 tokens in a neutral color
- A leader marker, indicated by (○), in 4 colors
- 3 elemental markers, indicated by (E)



Goal of the Game

The players attempt to gain the most influence in the world of the elements by placing as many of their possession tokens as they can in order to become Master of the Elements.

Each turn, players have to decide whether to increase their influence by placing an appropriate marker or to secure their square by placing a possession token before an opponent changes the influence on that square in his favor..

Game Preparation

Use the appropriate game board that corresponds to the number of players. For 2 players, use the smaller 8x8 board, for 3 or 4 players use the bigger 8x12 board.

Each player takes the possession tokens, the leader marker, and the influence markers of their color. With 4 players remove the influence markers with values 1-1, 2-2, 3-3 and 4-4. The remaining influence markers are shuffled and remain face down in front of their respective players.

no. of players	Board	Possession tokens	Influence markers
2	small (8x8)	20	16
3	big (8x12)	20	16
4	big (8x12)	15	12

The fieriest player starts the game by placing an elemental (E) on any square on the game board other than on an edge or a corner square. There must be at least one free square on each side of the elemental marker.

The next (clockwise) player likewise places an elemental marker, also not on an edge or in a corner, and furthermore not directly next to or diagonally to the first elemental.

The next player – who, in a 2 player game, is the starting player – places the third elemental marker according to the same placement rules.

At this point, each player reveals 3 of their influence markers.

After this preparation phase, the actual game begins with the next player's turn as described in the next paragraph.

Game Turn

On their turn, a player executes one of the following actions, followed by the next player.

- place an influence marker
- place a leader
- place a possession token
- claim an elemental

The details of each action are described below.

1) Place an influence marker

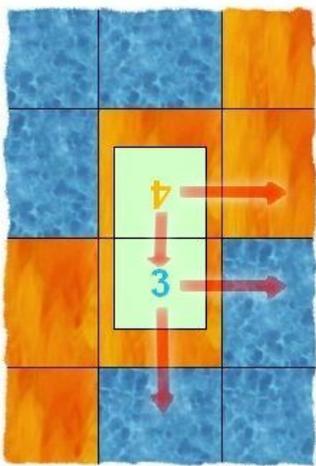
The player places one of their 3 revealed influence markers on two adjacent empty squares of the game board.

Hint: The markers are slightly smaller than both squares, so that one can recognize the colors of the squares below the marker.

An influence marker may not be placed on a square which is already occupied by a possession token or another marker.

After placing an influence marker, the player reveals another of their face down influence markers, so that 3 influence markers are always revealed. These are available for future turns.

Each influence marker shows two values of 1 to 4 in two different colors. The colors stand for the elements water (blue) and fire (orange-yellow). Markers influence their 4 vertically and horizontally neighboring squares (i. e. also the other half of the influence marker) according to their color and value, but have no influence on diagonal squares.



This image explains how the influence markers affect the game board:

The green player's yellow 4 exerts its influence only on the adjacent fire squares, regardless of which player's markers are on those squares. Therefore, it influences the square to its right as well as the square occupied by the blue 3 (by the same marker). The two diagonal squares are ignored, since a marker only exerts its influence vertically and horizontally. Also, the marker does not influence the square it is placed on.

The blue 3 only influences the water squares below it and to its right. Again, diagonal squares are ignored.

Hint: Counterintuitively, because of the chessboard-like structure of the gameboard, players should always place their influence markers in a way that its blue number is on a fire-square and the yellow number is on a water-square. An exception is the area around the center of the gameboard.

2) Place the leader

A leader may be placed on a single empty square, and may not be placed adjacent to an elemental. Also, a leader may not be placed on a corner square.

Hint: A leader should only be placed on a square that the opponent cannot conquer, since it is extremely difficult to win the game with a conquered leader. Your own leader is required to gain an elemental and is important for the final scoring.

The influence value of a leader is 0 in both elements.

3) Place a possession token

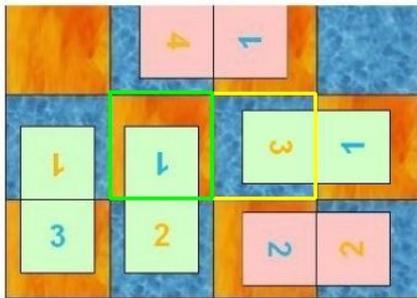
A player may place a possession token on a square if:

- all orthogonally surrounding squares (usually 4 squares, 3 on an edge of the game board, 2 in a corner) are occupied by a marker of some type, either a possession token, an influence marker, or an elemental,
- the player has the most influence over that square. Having an equal amount of influence is not sufficient. If the square has an influence marker on it, that marker's influence value is not included in determining total influence over that square for this purpose and
- there is neither a possession token nor an elemental on the square (an influence marker or another player's leader may be on the square, however).

If (half) an influence marker is covered in this way, it no longer exerts any influence on adjacent squares.

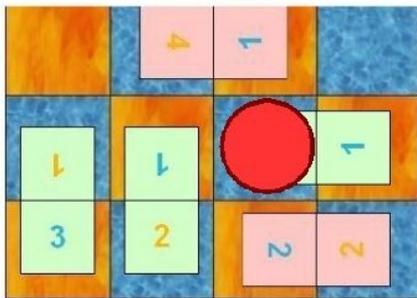
Hint: Through this action, influence majorities can change drastically, and a player should cover their own influence marker only with careful consideration.

The following diagrams illustrate this action:

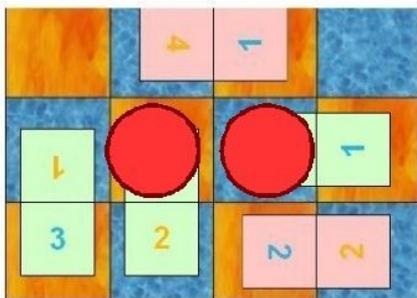


Picture 1) It is Red's turn. This player cannot occupy the square to the left of the center (green frame) because they only have an influence of 4 there while Green has an influence of 6 (1+2+3). Red controls the square right of the center (yellow frame) with an influence of 3 (1+2), with Green having an influence of only 2 (1+1).

Note: the diagonally adjacent squares are ignored.



Picture 2) Red has placed their possession token on the square with Green's influence marker. Now, the total influence on the square to the left has critically changed: while Red still exerts a total influence of 4 on this square, Green has only 3 (1+2) points of influence. Green can do nothing about it, and therefore continues at another location on the board.



Picture 3) Red has now placed their possession token on the other square.

One can see that, as a rule-of-thumb, it is advisable to conquer squares with high influence markers of an opponent, while it may possibly be harmful for a player to conquer a square occupied by their own influence marker. Accordingly, there is no effect on the influence when an empty square is conquered. However, the newly conquered square is now considered occupied, so that influence majorities in the neighboring squares are now possibly determined – at least temporarily.

If a square with an opposing leader is conquered, the conquering player puts 2 instead of 1 possession tokens on this square, covering the leader marker. For the remainder of the game the opponent is treated as if they had not played their leader at all. This is important regarding the elementals and the final score.

It is not possible to place a possession token on a player's own leader.

4) Claim an elemental

An elemental follows only the player who can convince it of their lenience. In return, the player who succeeds may place two possession tokens on the elemental marker.

The conditions to claim an elemental are:

- all 4 squares adjacent to the elemental marker are occupied with either possession tokens or influence markers,
- the player has the lowest sum of their influence markers surrounding the elemental (regardless of the element, fire or water), but has an influence of at least 1,
- the player has already placed their leader (and the leader marker is not occupied), and
- there is no possession token on the elemental yet.

Therefore a player must have at least one influence marker (not just a possession token) on a neighboring square of the elemental. In the event of a tie, no player can claim the elemental until the tie is broken. If there is only one player that has influence markers adjacent to the elemental, they will claim the elemental, regardless of said influence markers' value.

Game End and Scoring

The game ends prematurely if a player has placed all of their possession tokens. This player is the winner and from now on called Master of the Elements.

The game usually ends if it is no longer possible to place an influence marker because there are no two free adjacent squares left on the board. The player who placed the last influence marker is the last one to make a regular turn. After that, each other player may place a possession token (if they can). The player who placed the influence marker has no more turn.

Each player receives one point for each placed possession token on the board. If a player has not placed their leader, or if their leader has been conquered, they lose 2 points.

The player with the highest total score wins and is designated Master of the Elements. In case of a tie, the player whose turn it would be next wins (i. e. the one who placed the last marker, then the one to his left and so on).

Common Mistakes

- To determine total influence of a particular square, do not count the value of an influence marker that is placed on the square in question. Only the surrounding adjacent squares contribute their influence values.
- Only the color of the number on the influence markers determines the squares they influence.
- A possession token can only be placed on a square if all 4 adjacent squares (3 on an edge, and 2 in a corner) are occupied.
- Each player always has 3 face up influence markers available on their turn, unless the game is coming to a close and the influence markers are used up.
- A leader may never be placed adjacent to an elemental marker, nor on a corner square.

Translation by Scott Borrer and Jens Bernsdorf