

SNORKELS

THE CAPTURE GAME
by Mark Engelberg

INTRODUCTION

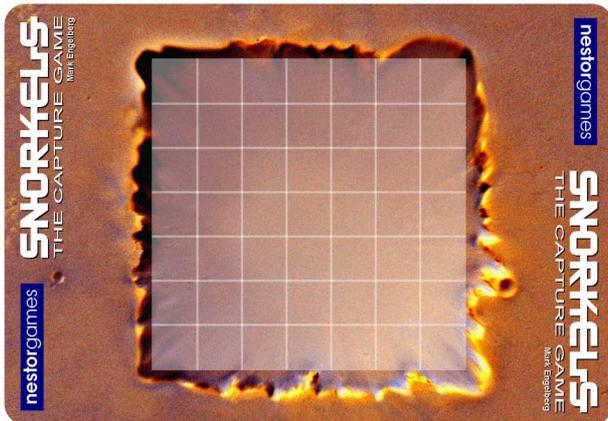
Meet the **Snorkels**, the friendly aliens from Deneb Gamma IV. One player will control the **green** Snorkels, and the other player will control the **purple** Snorkels. Each turn, you place one of your Snorkel pieces on the board. Snorkels never move once they are placed.

Each Snorkel has four breathing tubes coming out of its body. If all of its tubes get blocked by the walls at the edge of the board or by enemy Snorkels, it passes out from lack of air and gets captured by the enemy. The first player to be captured loses the game.

MATERIAL

A **Snorkels** set includes:

- A 7x7 board (the squared crater of planet Deneb Gamma IV).



- 24 **green** snorkels and 24 **purple** snorkels.



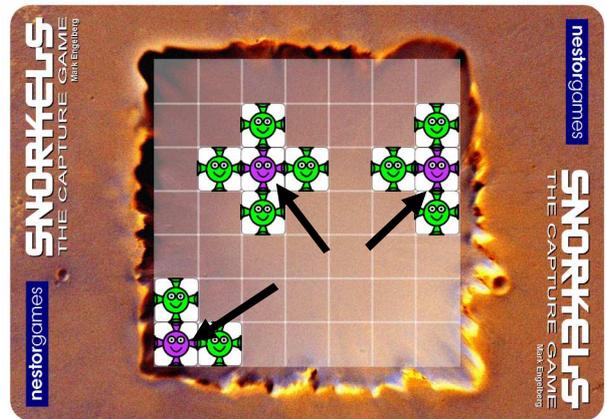
- 3 'stones'.
- Carrying case.

RULES

The first play of the game is always made with the **purple** Snorkels. One player places the first **purple** Snorkel on an empty square; the other player then decides whether to play as **purple** or **green**. The **green** player continues the game. This rule, common in strategy games and known as **the Pie Rule**, makes sure that the first **purple** Snorkel is placed somewhere that's fair for both players.

CAPTURE

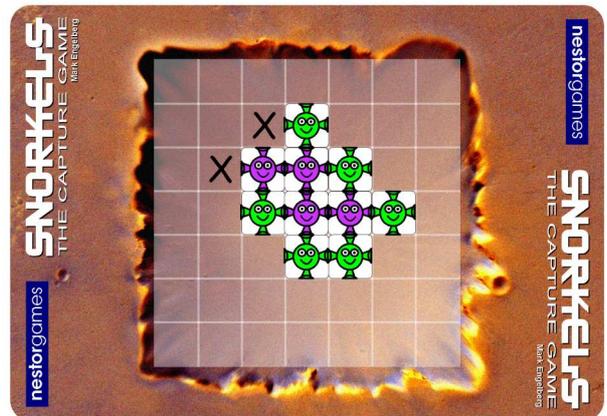
If all the tubes of a Snorkel get blocked by the walls at the edge of the board or by enemy Snorkels, it gets captured by the enemy.



Examples of captured snorkels (purple)

SHARING BREATHING TUBES

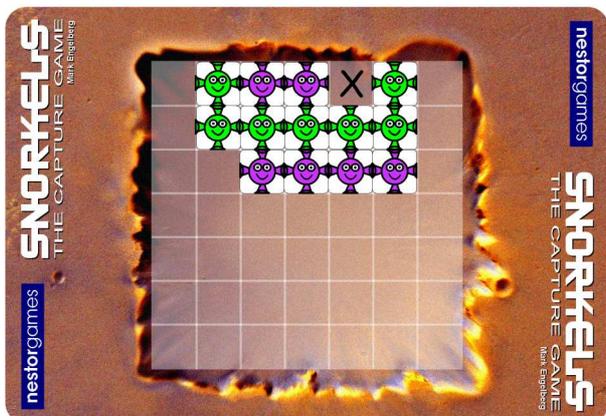
Friendly Snorkels can share their breathing tubes if they are touching one another, and can only be captured as a group if all of the group's breathing tubes are blocked.



The purple group is safe because the group still has two unblocked breathing tubes.

SELF-CAPTURE

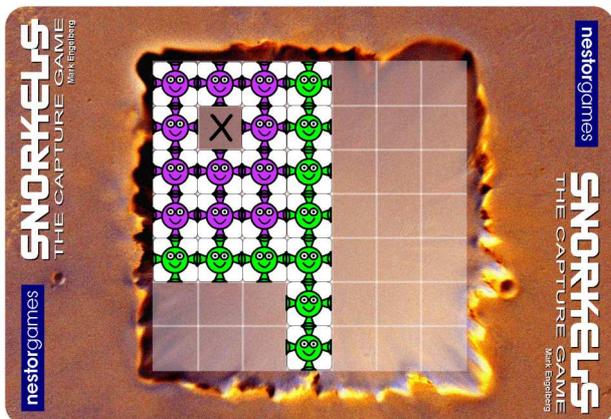
If you make a play that causes one of your own groups of Snorkels to run out of unblocked breathing tubes, you lose.



If purple plays here (X) – purple causes himself to get captured, and green wins the game.

MUTUAL BLOCKAGE

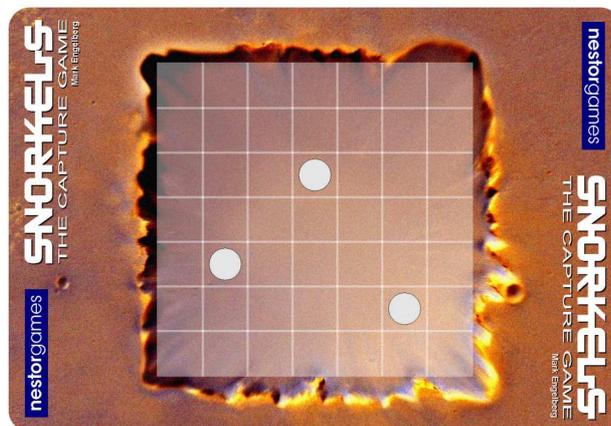
It is sometimes possible for a player to make a play that causes both a green group of Snorkels *and* a purple group of Snorkels to be completely blocked at the same time. In this case, the player who made the move wins the game – it is the opponent who is captured.



If green plays at 'X', there will be both a green group of one *and* a purple group with no unblocked breathing tubes. Since it was green's play, it is the *purple* group that is captured, and green wins the game.

OBSTACLES

For an extra challenge, place up to three stones randomly on the board. These obstacles block breathing tubes, just like the edges of the board. Be very careful when you make a play near these obstacles – it is much easier to get captured!



Stones placed on the board

STRATEGY TIPS

As players become more experienced, it becomes harder to capture them. However, since you must make a move every turn, the board will eventually fill up and someone will be captured. Expert players concentrate their initial plays on establishing large territories where they can safely go in the endgame.

ABOUT THE GAME

This system of “surrounding to capture” comes from the ancient Asian strategy game **Go**, which is widely regarded as one of the deepest and richest games ever devised. In the game of **Go**, captured pieces are removed from the board and play continues. Players may pass when the board fills up (rather than be forced to make plays which eventually result in self-capture), and the game is resolved by scoring the size of each player's territory.

If you become an expert **Snorkels** player, you are well on your way to being a strong **Go** player as well! For more information about **Go**, check out usgo.org