

# Ludus Latrunculorum or Latrunculi

## Rules for the Classic Roman Game



### History

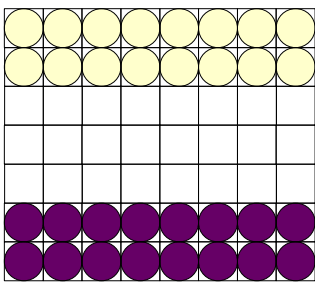
The earliest reference to Latrunculi around the beginning of the 1<sup>st</sup> century BC. The rules are not entirely clear and various game historians have come up with widely differing interpretations - notably Robbie Bell and Ulrich Schaedler. Bell has a game featuring 2 extra 'King' type pieces that have additional powers but evidence collected since implies this was probably incorrect.

### Equipment and Objective

Roman gaming boards that are thought to be Latrunculi have been found most commonly with grids of 7x7, 7x8, 8x8, and 9x10 squares. Larger boards of a more rectangular nature such as 8x12 and 10x12 (the famous Colchester board) have also been found and ascribed to Latrunculi but academics still argue whether such boards were for a different game. The number of pieces for a 7 x 8 board is likely to have been 16.

Latrunculi is a war game and it's a straight fight – the winner is the player who captures the most enemy pieces.

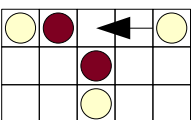
### Masters' Rules



Ancient games usually did not have complicated rules so these are designed to be a straightforward interpretation based on evidence available in 2011.

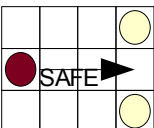
The pieces are placed on the first two rows in front of each player. Toss a coin to decide who will start - white moves first.

All pieces move like the rook in Chess – in a straight line for as many empty squares as the player chooses. Pieces cannot hop over other pieces and cannot move diagonally.



Capturing only happens when a piece is moved so that a single opposing piece ends up trapped between two of the players pieces. A captured piece is immediately removed from the board. It is possible to capture more than one piece at once as shown in this example.

Whenever a piece makes a capture, it earns another move and so in theory one piece can rampage across the board capturing several enemy pieces in one turn.



A piece can safely move to a square between two of the opponent's pieces without being captured.

Captured pieces remain off the board for remainder of the game. The game is finished when a player loses all pieces or when it's clear (and players agree) that the side presently losing will not be able to force any more captures.

### Strategy

It should be apparent that 2 pieces next to each other are safer than a single piece alone. A square of 4 men is invulnerable.

A line of men, whether straight or otherwise from one edge of the board to another can provide an impenetrable barrier. One strategy for a player who is ahead is to form such a wall ensuring that any remaining pieces are behind it. If the player then refuses to break this blockade, the game ends with the blockading player victorious.