

Daldøs – The rules⁽¹⁾ / Erik Østergaard and Anne Gaston

The game consists of a board measuring 31 cm by 8 cm divided into three rows of holes. It is round at one end, and is probably a model of a boat. The middle row has seventeen holes, and the two outside rows have sixteen holes (fig. 1).

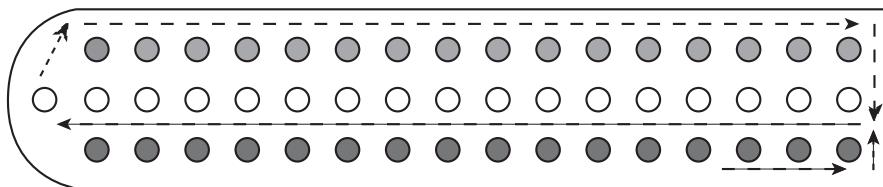


Fig. 1

Before the game begins, thirty-two pegged men are placed in the two outside rows, one set of 16 men for each player (fig. 2). The middle row is vacant. The two sets of men are made in different shapes. One set looks like flat obelisks and the other one like spatulas (fig. 3). The men are placed with the flat sides facing in the direction of movement.



Fig. 2

Two four-sided dice are also needed to play the game. These are marked with the roman digits II to IV and 'A' for the number one, also called '*dal*'. The sum of two opposite sides is 4 or 6, not 5. The four sides are rectangular, and the ends of the dice are low pyramids. This makes it impossible for the dice to land on the ends. The two dice are used in turn by the players. If the result is two '*dal's*', called



Fig. 3

'dal dal', the player has an extra throw. To start the game the players throw the two dice in turn, and the higher throw decides who starts.

A man cannot go into play before it has been turned with the short side in the moving direction and then moved one hole forward. This is called '*fordalle*' in Danish (Norwegian: '*dala*') = 'to *dal*' or to activate. All men must be activated in this way (*i.e.* turned and moved one hole), one by one from one end to the other before they can enter the game. As soon as a man is activated, it can start to move. All throws of the dice are invalid until a player has thrown his first 'A' and thus activated a man, and an activated man can move as far into the middle row as the results of the two dice allow. If the first player's initial throw does not result in at least one 'A', the dice are passed on to the opponent.

It is optional to use a '*dal*' either to move an already activated man anywhere on the board or to activate an unactivated man. A throw can be used to move either one man or two. When only one man is moved, the results on the dice must be used separately (as in backgammon).

Fig. 1 shows the direction of movement for one player's men. The player with the striped men move from left to right into the middle row at the flat end of the board. When a man has travelled to the end of the middle row it moves into the opponent's home row and through it. Then it re-enters the middle row and from then on continues to move in the middle row and the opponent's home row, never to return to his own home row. A man goes on moving in these two rows until it is knocked off or the game is over. The opponent moves his men from right to left in his home row, but otherwise his men follow the same pattern as that of the other player.

A player is not allowed to jump over his own men, but he can jump over the men belonging to the opponent. If a throw enables a player to land his man in a hole occupied by one of the opponent's men, the latter is dead and taken off the board and cannot be brought back into play. The strategy is for a player deftly to combine his moves in order always to stand behind any activated men belonging to the opponent. It is an advantage to have an activated man ready at the beginning of the home row in order to chase the opponent's men as soon as they move into the middle row.



Fig. 4

A man moving through the opponent's home row can 'kill' as many men, activated or not, as the dice allow for and cannot be 'killed', unless it is placed in the hole right in front of the man whose turn it is to be activated, or in any hole in front of any already activated man.

It is possible to play a game of *daldøs* with non-turnable men which don't show by their shape if they are activated or not⁽²⁾. These men are similar to large Ludo pieces – see figs. 4 and 5. To avoid arguments about whether a man is activated or not, several methods can

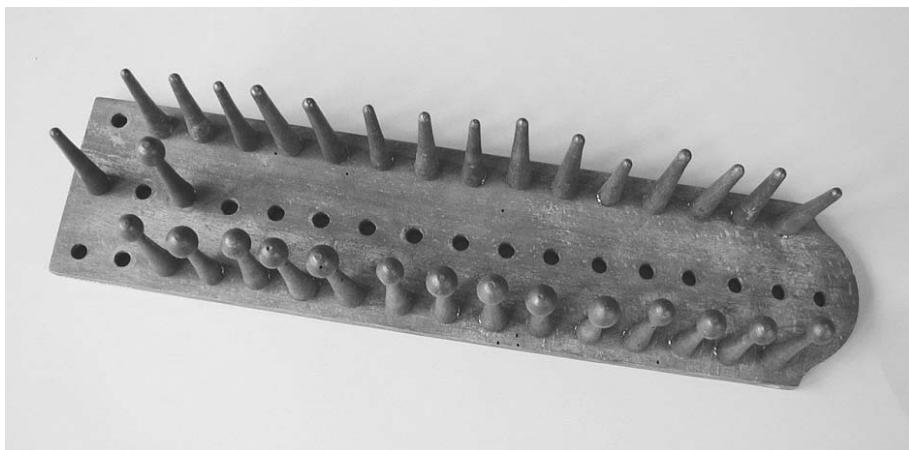


Fig. 5

be used: 1) Place a ring around the next man to be activated, 2) place a small ball in the hole in front of the next man to be activated or 3) place a small coin or a match in front of the next man to be activated.

Notes

1. The reconstructed rules of the game are based on the article ‘Daldøs’ by H Billeskov Jansen in *Danske Studier*, 1927, pp. 97-100, but the playing direction is documented in the rules for the Norwegian game *daldøsa* from the Jærmuseum in Kvås, Rogaland, Norway. They got the rule from Ola Barkved, Eit gammalt morospel, In: *Frå by og bygd i Rogaland*, Bryne, 1968, pp. 108-110.
2. *Daldøs* at Morslands Historiske Museum is such a game.