# Zoo Contest!

created by Steve Zagieboylo

The monkeys and the elephants at the zoo like to play a game of strategy and tactics. They have even pulled in some of the local mice to help them play!

Objective

Short game: Move the monkey, the elephant, and at least one mouse to the opponent's home row.

Long game: Move the monkey, the elephant, and at least one mouse to the opponent's home row, where they become "Royal" (i.e you flip the card over to its Royal side), then you bring them back home again. A Royal piece does not have any special abilities and behaves exactly as before; the change is just to signify that it has reached the first goal and is now headed back to player's home row.

When a piece reaches its goal, it is still in the game and may continue to move. Even if it moves off the goal (or is removed from the board), it still counts towards game completion.
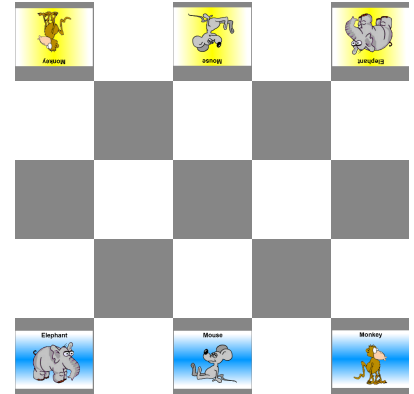
Setup

Players sit opposite each other with the board between them. The row closest to each player is considered his "home row." Each player starts with the "Common" (that is, non-Royal) version of these pieces on his home row: the elephant on his left, a mouse in the middle, and the monkey on his right.

Movement

Players alternate turns – each moving a single piece -- until one has achieved the objective.

Elephant: The elephant can move one square in any direction. However, elephants are too large to share a square with another elephant, so he may not move on to the square of the opponent's elephant. Also, elephants are terrified of all mice, so he may not move on to the square of any mouse. He may move on to the same square as his monkey teammate. If an opponent's mouse moves on his square, he must retreat. Also, if an elephant moves within one of the opposing monkey, the monkey must retreat. (See Retreating, below.)

Important Restriction: For his first move only, the elephant may not move diagonally. This only applies to the very first move by the elephant – even if he leaves from his starting position and returns to it, he may then move freely. The restriction does not apply if the elephant's first move is a retreat.

Monkey: The monkey can move either one or two squares in any one direction, but may not combine directions. (That is, he cannot move like a knight in chess.) He may move on to or through a square containing his own elephant, any mouse, or the opposing monkey. If he stops on a square with an opposing mouse, he flings the mouse off the board. (Don't worry, he does it gently, and mice can fall any distance without being hurt.) However, the poor monkey is so afraid of the opposing elephant that he can't even move within one square of the beast. (He may move through such a square on a two-square move.) If the opposing elephant moves within one square of him, he immediately retreats. (See Retreating, below.)
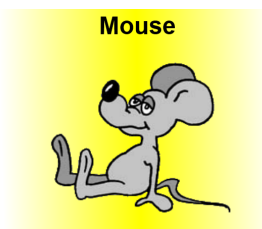
Mouse: Mice move one square in any direction, PLUS they may generate an additional mouse which moves one square laterally in either direction from the mouse's original position. The extra mouse comes from the ones off the board unless all four of a player's mice are in play. In that case, he may remove one to put it into the new position. If both adjacent lateral positions represent illegal moves, the player does not get the extra mouse. A Common mouse generates another Common mouse, a Royal mouse generates a Royal mouse. Bringing any Royal Mouse back to the home row qualifies for the mouse portion of the victory condition.

Mouse movement, continued: Mice may not move to the square with the opposing monkey, the friendly elephant, or any friendly mice, but a mouse can move to a square containing an opposing mouse or the opposing elephant. If he does the latter, then the elephant must immediately retreat. (See Retreating, below.) If the extra, generated mouse invades the square of the opposing elephant, that also causes a retreat.

A mouse can also be added to the board in any legal position on the player's home row, as the player's move. This is considered to be moving directly forward, as if there were a square straight behind the square on to which the mouse is introduced. (The direction that the mouse moved is important if the move also causes the opponent's elephant to retreat.)

Retreating

Elephant retreating away from an opposing mouse: When a mouse moves on to the square of the opposing elephant, the elephant must immediately retreat. If possible, he must retreat directly away from the invading mouse – to the square directly opposite (from his position) the one the mouse left. If that would be an illegal move (either off the board, or on to another mouse or the opposing elephant), he retreats to any adjacent legal square, at the retreating player's choice. (A 'legal square' is one he could have moved to, on his turn.) If there are no legal squares for him to retreat to, then the player with the elephant must remove one of his own mice from the board to make a legal square. If this is impossible, the attacking player must choose one mouse to remove to give the elephant a legal retreat. If the elephant retreats to a square within one of the opposing monkey, then the monkey immediately retreats.

Monkey retreating away from the opposing elephant: When an elephant moves to within one square of the opposing monkey, the monkey must retreat to any adjacent legal square, if possible, at the retreating player's choice. (He does not have to move directly away from the elephant as the elephant does when he retreats.) If there are no adjacent squares that are legal, it can move two spaces (moving one direction, only) to a legal square. If that is impossible, it can move three squares to a legal position (which is always possible). He must always make the shortest move possible in retreat. i.e., if he can make a legal retreat by moving only one square, he must do so. If he retreats to a square with an opposing mouse, the mouse is removed from the board.

A retreat does NOT cost the player his turn — it is a free move.

Pieces Sharing the Same Square

There are a number of situations where two pieces end up on the same square. In this case, place either one on top, positioned so that you can still see the name of the one underneath. There is no significance as to which was there first, nor which one is on top. Both pieces act normally, as if they were alone in the square.

These combinations are possible:

- Elephant and Monkey on the same team
- Monkey and Mouse on the same team
- Opposing Monkeys
- Opposing Mice
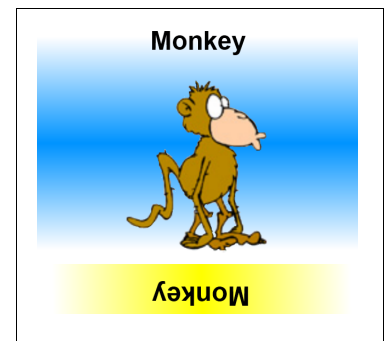
Note that there are no situations in which there could legally be three pieces on the same square. In all cases where this might occur, one of the pieces will be removed from the board or forced to retreat, based on the normal movement rules.

Strategies

- Use your elephant to protect your mice, and use the block to tie up the opposing elephant.
- Keep a mouse behind your elephant, so when forced to retreat, you'll have the choice of where.
- Use your monkey's mobility to snap up unguarded mice.
- Move unguarded mice a chess knight's move from the opposing monkey – his blind spot.
- Every turn, consider just a race to the finish, and whether you could win (or lose) that way.