

Dōbutsu shōgi



Catch your opponent's lion and win the game!

Dōbutsu shōgi is fun and amusing, offering delightful opportunities to grow a child's proactive thinking and to build valuable skills, because it involves the simultaneous use of memory, strategy, risk-analysis and planning, without really knowing what these are all about. The point of the game is simple. Move your pieces around so that no matter where your opponent tries to move his or her Lion, it would get captured. It is all about trapping the Lion.

The game was created by Madoka Kitao, professional shogi player, to give children and girls the basic idea of Shogi in an enjoyable manner as an induction to Shogi, - Japanese chess -, which is highly sophisticated and difficult to learn with rigid rules and pieces to play. Dōbutsu means animal or beast in Japanese. Here, Dobutsu shogi is played on a board of 3×4 squares with only 4 pieces each for the challenger's team. The pieces and the board are illustrated by Maiko Fujita, also professional shogi player. Soon after its launch, it ranked at the top of Amazon sales of all shogi related games in Japan in September 2009.

HOW THE PIECES MOVE?

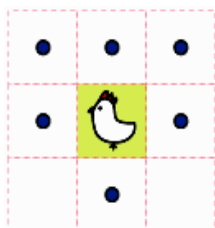
You set up the board and place your pieces in the initial position. Each piece can move to any adjacent square in the direction of one of the dots marked on the piece.

LION: The king of the animals, Lion is the strongest and is your team leader. It can move one square to all directions.

ELEPHANT: Elephant (or Zou in Japanese) is a dependable friend. It can move one square to any diagonal way.

GIRAFFE: Long neck giraffe (or *Kirin*) can move one square forward, backward or sideways.

CHICK: Chick (or *Hiyoko*) can only move one square forward. It leaves and comes back to the board actively. And, when it reaches the opponent territory in blue or green, it gets promoted and turns out to be a strong Hen on the reverse side.



HEN: When promoted to Hen (or *Niwatori*), on the reverse side of Chick, it becomes actually more powerful than Elephant or Giraffe. It can go to any direction except for diagonal backward.

Initial Position



HOW TO PLAY THE GAME

Decide who goes first randomly.

Each player moves one of his or her pieces in turn.

When you move your piece to a square with your opponent's piece, you can catch it. Take it out from the board and keep it in your hand. It now becomes your new team member.

You cannot move your piece to a square with another piece of yours, nor can move your lion to a square that any of your opponent's pieces can move to.

Instead of moving one of your pieces, you can use and put one of your captured pieces in your hand onto any blank square as your piece.

When you move your chick to your opponent's area, one of the three nearest square from your opponent, you promote chick to hen. If you put your chick that you captured to the opponent's area directly, it remains chick, and you need to MOVE once before your chick gets promoted to Hen.

When you catch your opponent's hen, it transforms back to chick in your hand. You cannot place your chick as a hen onto the board.

When threefold repetition (same board and captured pieces appeared three times) happened, the game is end in draw.

To win, catch your opponent's lion or move your lion to your opponent's area. You cannot move your lion to any square that your opponent can move to, even if the square is your opponent's area. If you have no way to move any piece anymore and have no captured piece in your hand, (i.e.: stalemate), then, you say quietly you lost the game and the players bow gently to close the game.

Credit:

Game Design: Madoka Kitao 北尾まどか

Illustration: Maiko Fujita 藤田麻衣子

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Coordination to Essen Spiel 2009: Japon Brand

For further information:

Websites for reference (Japanese only)

『DOBUTSU SHOGI (LPSA EDITION)』

<http://www.joshi-shogi.com/doubutsushogi/>

『DOBUTSU SHOGI (GENTOSHA EDUCATION EDITION)』

<http://www.gentosha-edu.co.jp/products/post-34.html>

『blog of Madoka Kitao: Link of Shogi』

<http://ameblo.jp/madoka-shogi/>