

NIKA

*A game for 2-4 players
By Josh Raab, with art by Chris Hernandez*

Estimated Play Time: 30-60 minutes



www.eagle-gryphon.com

You command a Greek city's hoplite soldiers who must force their way through enemy lines. Your troops can push or rout those who would block their way across the narrow battlefield. Coordinate attacks with your ally to secure victory, but make sure to watch your flanks!

Components:

1 board

24 pieces (6x white, 6x red, 6x blue, 6x black)

Rulebook

1. OBJECTIVE

The object of the game is to move at least 1 of your city's pieces into your **victory area**, marked in your color on the opposite side of the board. If either you or your ally does this, you **both win immediately**. Your ally starts the game across the board from you.

2. PLAYERS, TEAMS, AND TURN ORDER

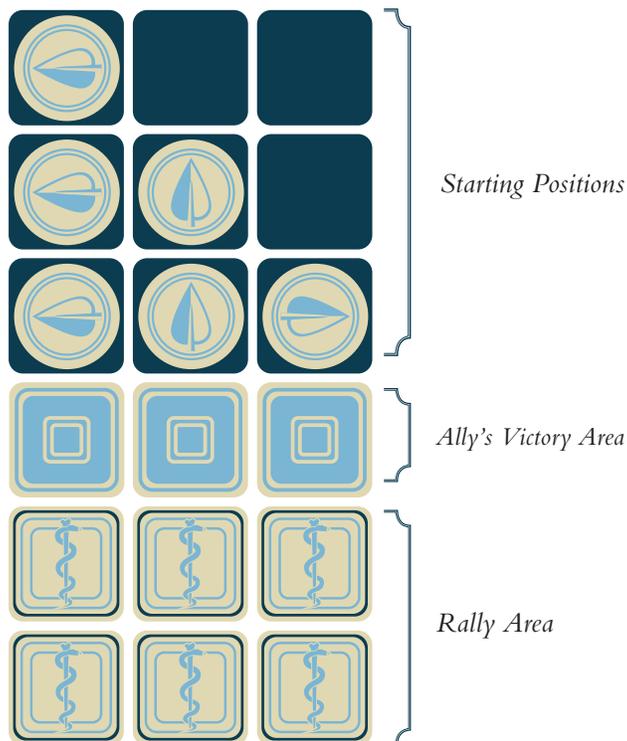
2-4 players can play *Nika*. Regardless of the number of players, **Athens and Messene** (*meh-SEE-nee*) (*White and Blue*) are always allied against **Sparta and Thebes** (*Red and Black*).

- With 2 players: Each player controls one pair of allied cities.
- With 3 players: One player controls one pair of allied cities (it doesn't matter which), while the other two players control one city each.
- With 4 players: Each player controls one city.

Cities take their turns in clockwise order, starting with **Athens** (White). This order is followed even when a player controls a pair of allied cities.

3. SETUP

After choosing teams, place each city's pieces in the orientation shown here, on the sides marked in their color. **Facing is important**, so make sure all pieces face in the proper direction.



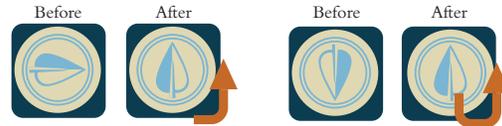
4. ACTIONS

You take **2 actions** each turn. Types of action include **rotate**, **move**, **rally** and **pass** (*i.e. do nothing*).

**Note on Diagonals: Pieces can never move or face diagonally, and diagonals are not adjacent.*

» Rotate

Rotate a single piece to face **any direction** without moving it.



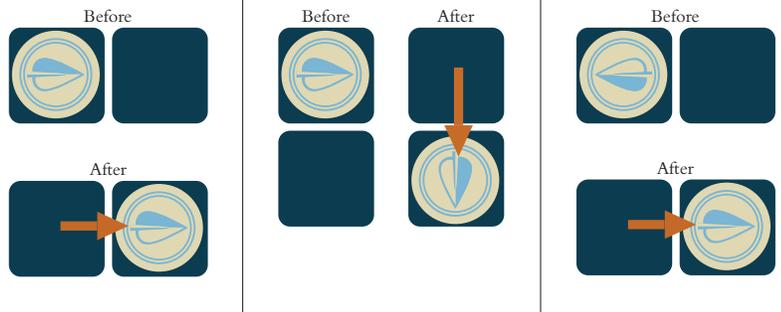
» Move

Move a single piece 1 space in **any direction**. Pieces may not move into or through an **occupied space** unless pushing or routing an enemy. (*Pushing and routing will be explained later.*)

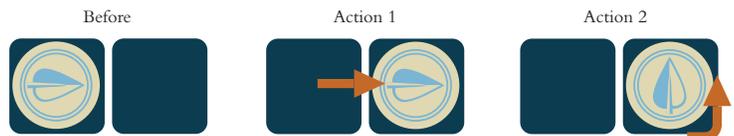
Important: Before moving a single piece, first **rotate it** to face the direction it is moving. This rotation happens as part of the move action; it is not a separate action.

Stated another way: A single piece may move forward, left, right, or back, and it **ends up facing the direction it moved**.

This is critical. Do not play until everyone understands this rule.



However, rotating a piece **after** it moves requires 2 separate actions: 1 to move and 1 to rotate.



» Rally

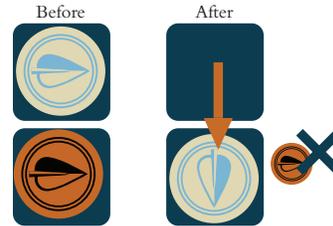
Place a single piece from your city's routed pieces area into any empty space in your **rally area**, facing any direction. Rally areas are marked with a § rod-and-snake symbol. Your pieces move through your **rally area** and **your ally's victory area**, which are adjacent, as normal spaces. Pieces cannot move into an **enemy's victory area**.



5. ROUTING ENEMIES

A piece may move into a space occupied by an **enemy piece** that is **not facing it**. This **routs** the enemy piece. Note that routs always happen as the result of a move action. Routed pieces are removed from the board and placed into **their city's** routed pieces area. They may be rallied later.

Important: You may never rout your own or allied pieces.



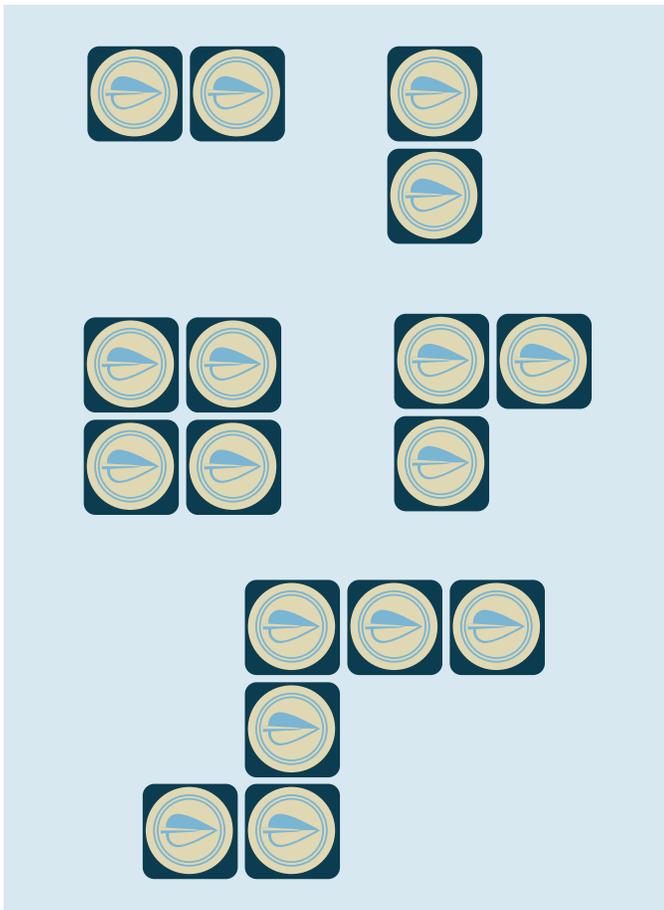
6. PHALANXES

Phalanxes are powerful formations which can move or rotate as a unit, and may be able to push enemies backward. However, they are less agile than single pieces.

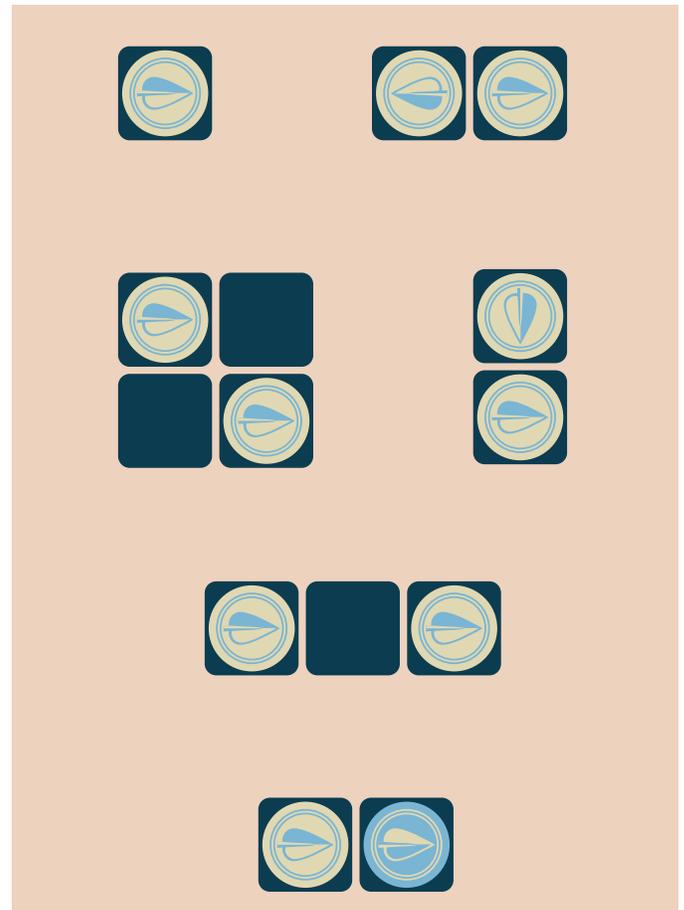
» Forming Phalanxes

A phalanx consists of 2 or more **adjacent** pieces belonging to the **same city** that face the **same direction**. They may be any shape or size (from 2-6 pieces).

These are all examples of phalanx formations.



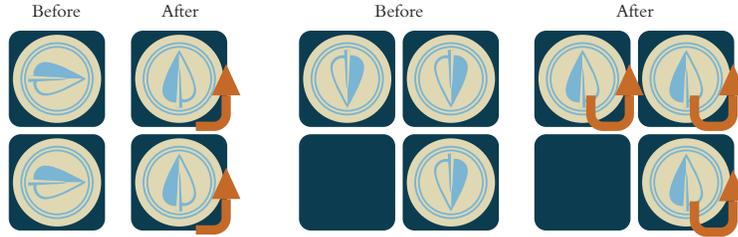
These are not phalanx formations, as they do not meet all of the requirements.



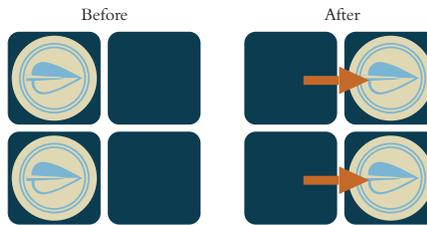
6. PHALANXES (Continued)

» Phalanx Actions

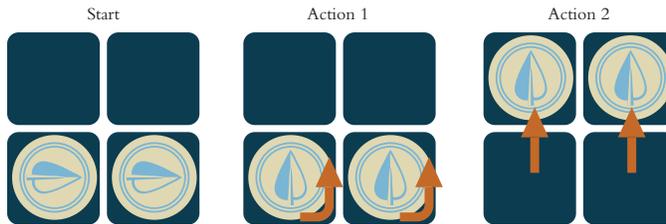
When **rotating** a phalanx, each piece being rotated stays in place and rotates.



You may **move** a phalanx 1 space forward only in the direction it faces. Unlike single pieces, phalanxes do not get a free rotation before they move.

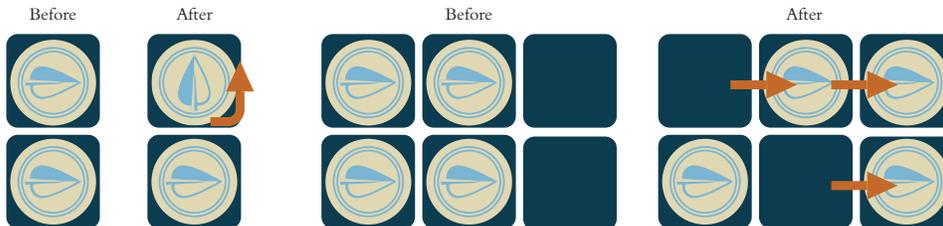


This means that if you want to move a phalanx in a direction other than the way it currently faces, you must spend a separate action to **rotate it first**.



Pieces are **not locked into their phalanx**.

You may choose to rotate or move a single piece that is in a phalanx, or a smaller phalanx that is part of a larger phalanx.



7. PUSHING ENEMIES

You may move a phalanx forward to **push enemy pieces** back 1 space, if your phalanx has **greater weight in a given line** and the **adjacent** enemy piece in that line **facing the phalanx**. Like routs, pushes always happen as the result of a move action.

Important: As with routing, you may never push your own or allied pieces.

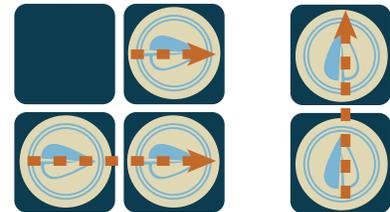


» Weight and Lines:

Lines exist along the axis of movement for the pushing phalanx.

Weight is determined line by line. Weight is relevant to pushing, **but NOT to routing.** For a **pushing phalanx**, the weight in a given line is the number of **moving pieces** in that line.

For pieces **being pushed**, the weight in a given line is the number of **contiguous pieces** in that line belonging to the **same player OR that player's ally**. Pieces being pushed that are not adjacent to the pushing phalanx always add weight, regardless of their facing.



The Athenian (White) player wants to push with this phalanx. The top line is tied 2 to 2, but the Athenian phalanx outweighs its enemies in the bottom line 3 to 2. Therefore, the bottom line can push, but the top line cannot.

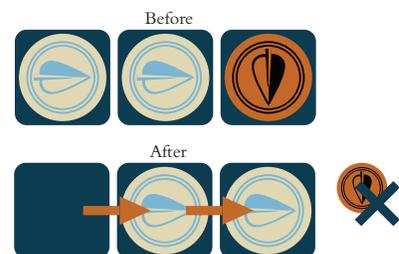


» Pushing and Routing

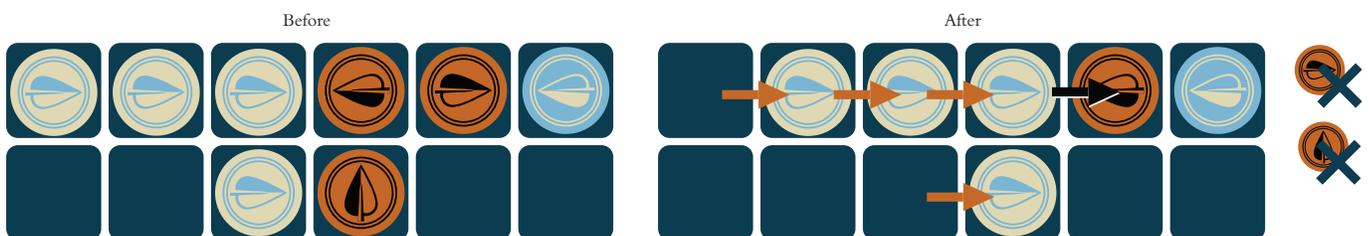
A pushed piece is **routed** if it is pushed into any of the following:

- An **enemy piece**, regardless of that piece's facing.
- An **enemy's victory area**.
- Anywhere **off the board**, including the central area.

Important: If a phalanx moves into an **enemy piece** that is **not facing the phalanx**, the enemy piece is **always routed**, never pushed.



Since routs and pushes result from move actions, it is possible for a phalanx to **push some pieces** and **rout others** in a single move, as in the example shown below.

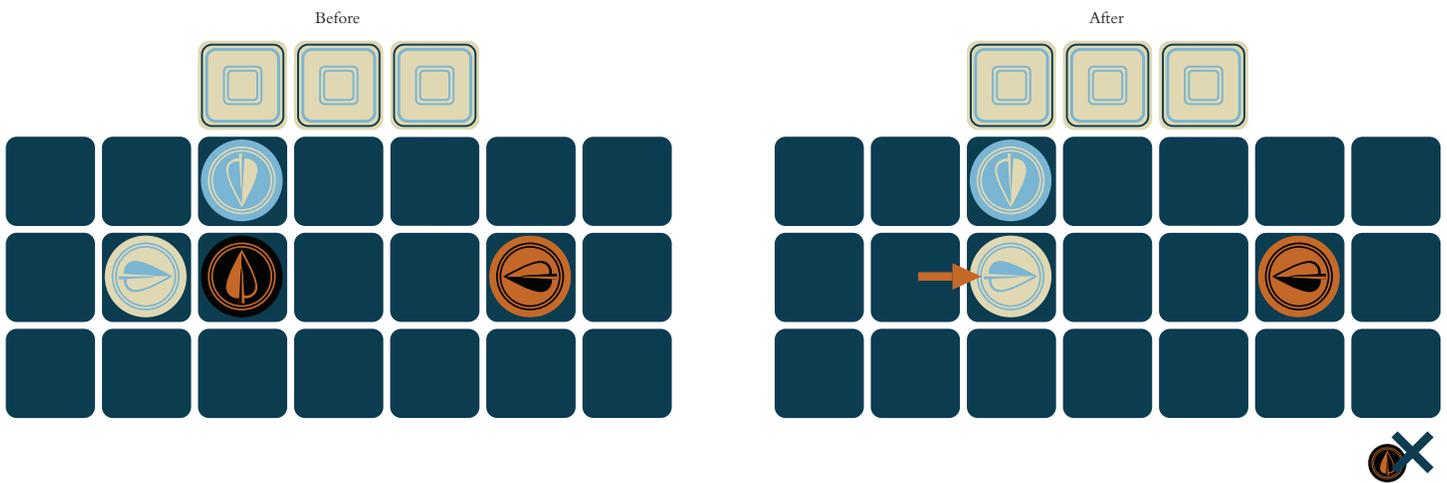


8. “NIKA”

» **Nika (NEE-ka) is the Ancient Greek word for “Conquer!”**

If you think you have secured victory and your opponent(s) cannot possibly stop you, **declare “Nika”** aloud. Assume reasonable play on behalf of all players, including your ally. Your opponent(s) may then: 1) Concede the defeat, which ends the game; or 2) Challenge you, which causes the game to continue. You may try to convince them, but they may refuse to concede as long as you haven’t actually moved a piece into your victory area yet. You may declare “Nika” on behalf of your ally or an opponent. It is simply a means of ending the game as soon as its outcome is obvious, and does not otherwise affect play.

After routing the Theban (Black) piece, the Athenian (White) player can assume the Messenian (Blue) piece will move out of the way. This guarantees the victory, as the Spartan (Red) piece is too far away to stop the Athenian piece from reaching its victory area. Unless Sparta/Thebes are threatening to win next turn, declare “Nika” now.



Remember: Your objective is to get 1 of your pieces into your victory area, which is on the **opposite side** of the board from where you start. This area is marked in **your color** and is located near your ally’s starting position. If your ally wins, you win too.

You are **not** trying to reach your enemies’ victory areas!

9. DRAWS

The game ends in a **draw** under any of the following conditions:

- 1) All 4 cities consecutively pass both actions
- 2) The same game state is repeated three times
- 3) All players agree the game cannot progress from its current state

10. FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Q: Are there rules about communication between allies?

A: No, but feel free to institute house rules. As a matter of general courtesy, try not to tell your ally exactly what to do, though it's usually okay to discuss broad strategy.

Q: Can I use the same action twice in one turn? How about the same piece or phalanx?

A: Yes, but you don't have to. For example, you could rally a piece with your first action, then move it with your second. Or you could rotate one piece, then rotate another piece.

Q: What's Messene?

A: Messene was the ancient capital of Messenia, a province in southwestern Greece. After being subjugated by the Spartans, the Messenians were forced into brutal slavery as *helots* for centuries. Messenians fought bravely as allies of Athens during the Peloponnesian War. Messene is not related to Mycenae (*my-SEE-nee*), a major center of Greek Bronze Age culture.

FROM THE DESIGNER

Hi! I'm Josh Raab, the designer of *Nika*. You've read all the rules, so feel free to go play. Below are just some notes about the game's development, historical inspiration, and strategy.

Nika came to me in a dream while I was studying abroad in Athens. At least, the board and starting piece configuration did – the rules were honed across nearly two years of testing. The board shape and core mechanics were inspired by ancient Greek geography and warfare.

Greece has many narrow valleys and mountain passes, and sometimes the only way to defeat an enemy force was to collide with them head-on and literally push them off the field. This *othismos* (“shoving”) is thought to have been the critical phase of most battles between hoplite armies. (*Hoplites* were the heavy infantry that dominated ancient Greek war for four centuries.) This game was actually called *Othismos* for most of its development. I changed the title partly to support the “Nika” mechanism, a late addition, and partly to make it catchier.

For the astute general, a few tips on strategy:

- **Remember the objective.** It's okay if most of your pieces get routed, as long as one makes it through. Likewise, if an enemy piece threatens to win, hunt it down at all costs!
- **Read the whole board.** If your ally is under pressure, rush over and help out. If your enemies are about to team up on you, prepare your defenses!
- **Fighting costs actions, not just pieces.** Seize opportunities to move without resistance.
- **Every action matters.** If there's nothing urgent going on at the front, think about rallying pieces or moving up reinforcements.
- **Numbers matter.** Commanded properly, the larger force will usually win an engagement.
- **Sacrifice.** You may need to lose a piece to gain a better position or maintain momentum.
- **Phalanxes are powerful.** Use them to push forward, or to move many pieces efficiently.
- **Single pieces are agile.** They can navigate corners and difficult situations better than phalanxes. Don't be afraid to break off a single piece from a phalanx if you need to.
- **Watch corners and enemy victory areas.** These are the hardest parts of the board to pass.
- **Flank, flank, flank.** Even a single piece can cause havoc by approaching enemies from the side or back. On the other hand, the best you can do from the front is push through.

Finally, a sincere and tremendous thank you to my wonderful friends, family, and playtesters for their invaluable support and feedback. Now then: Προσέχου και νικά – go forth and conquer!