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 - Games: A-Z
 - Card Games
 - Party Games
 - Games by Genre
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 - FAQs and Histories
 - Inventor Resources
 - Finding Games

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 - Best Party Games
 - Best Word Games
 - Games for Family Gatherings
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- Forums
- Most Popular Articles
- Latest Articles
- Help

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Praetorian

An entry in the 2002 Unequal Forces Game Design Competition

Designed by Kirk Uhlmann
For 2 players

Components

- One 8x8 grid board (e.g. chess)
- 2 Pieces to represent the praetorian guards/police (e.g. two rooks)
- 24 unique pieces to represent the civilians (e.g. bingo markers 1-24, or labeled checkers 1-24 -- or any other grouping of 24 distinctive pieces)

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Rules

The Assassin player secretly writes down the number/identity of the assassin (1-24) and of two targets. The Praetorian (police) player then shuffles the civilian pieces and sets up the board as follows:

One police unit in the upper left hand corner and one in the lower right hand corner. Then, starting from top to bottom, three civilian pieces are placed on each row such that no two civilians are adjacent either horizontally or vertically.

The assassin moves first and may move *any* civilian piece (including the assassin or targets) one space in any direction, so long as the space is not occupied.

The police may move any one piece, either a civilian as above or one of the police units. Police units may move any number of spaces in any direction so long as the path is clear (i.e. like queens in chess).

When a civilian piece is moved, the following player may not move that piece on their immediate next turn. In other words, you cannot move a civilian piece that was just moved by the opponent until your next turn (unless the opponent moves that piece again).

If the assassin piece is adjacent to one of the targets, instead of moving, the target may be eliminated and removed from the board. If both targets are eliminated, the assassin wins. The assassin need not reveal his identity, as there may be more than one piece next to the target which would hide who the real killer is.

On the police player's turn, instead of moving any pieces, each police piece may question one civilian adjacent to them. The police player specifies which civilian piece adjacent to each police unit will be questioned. If a questioned civilian is the killer, the police win. The police must find the killer before his mission is completed.

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The assassin must eliminate both targets in order to win.

Variants

These optional rules may be used to make the police player's job easier or harder:

- The police player may choose only one of the two police pieces and then question one civilian adjacent to the chosen piece (harder).
- The police player may question one civilian piece adjacent to each police unit every turn in addition to moving any one piece (easier).
- Allow a greater number of adjacent suspects to be questioned (easier).
- Give the assassin player only one target in order to complete the mission (easier for the assassin, but possibly too easy if both pieces begin very near each other).

Strategies

The assassin will move civilian pieces in an attempt to block or slow down access from the police, while at the same time moving the killer near the targets (or draw the targets near the killer). The assassin must not be too obvious in the moves lest the identity of the pieces be tipped off. The assassin should have both targets nearby before striking either one.

The police player must attempt to question as many suspects as possible quickly and be aware of imminent threats in areas where pieces have been moved and where the killer might be. The police player may be able to make better guesses based on the moves of the assassin player, but wary that such moves may be deceiving.

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