

PLAY IDEAS BANK

Practical Ideas for Creative Play - A comprehensive collection for Playworkers & Playschemes everywhere

No. 26

BOARD GAMES



Most modern commercial board games (with a few outstanding exceptions) are a waste of time on play projects; little pieces get lost, broken or scattered around your centre, while players just get bored. But there are thousands of easy-to-make traditional board games, and unlimited possibilities for inventing your own, so for this leaflet we have concentrated on games you can make with the children, and tried to combine old favourites with some good, but less familiar games from around the world.

This leaflet has been written and drawn by Harry Shier, with additional material from the Islington Training Unit and Peter Middleton.

Make your own

MAKING GAME BOARDS

- * Disposable game boards for immediate use can be drawn directly on a piece of stiff card.
- * The game board can be drawn and painted on paper and pasted to a stiff board. Then cover with clear fablon. For a folding board score the back down the middle and reinforce with sticky-tape.
- * For boards that survive under Playcentre conditions, draw or paint on to plywood (after sanding smooth edges) and cover with several coats of varnish. Masking tape will help you paint straight lines neatly.
- * Boards can be painted directly on to table-tops and varnished. They are not only stable and unbreakable in use, but a nice decorative feature the rest of the time.

DICE

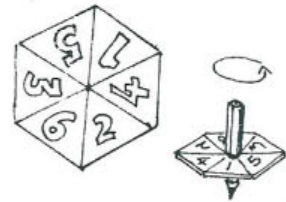
It's worth buying a stock of dice (from good toy shops) as they're only a few pence each, but if you want to make your own:

- * Cut a cube of wood (from a piece of 1"x1" or similar) and round off corners with sandpaper. Draw spots with pencil, felt-tip or paint - opposite sides always add up to seven.
- * For giant dice games you can buy enormous foam dice, but again you can easily make your own from a block of foam or polystyrene.

- * Mark the sides of a six-sided pencil and roll it.



- * Make a spinner: Cut out the hexagon pattern and add numbers 1 to 6. Poke a short pencil through a hole in the middle.



- * *Cowrie shells:* Traditionally thrown in games of chance in India and much of South-East Asia. Your throw is the number of shells that land with their mouths upwards. If you can't get cowrie shells you could substitute coins, or buttons with two distinct sides.

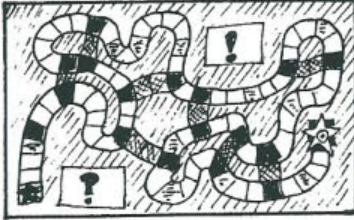


COUNTERS

- * Put a length of dowelling or broomstick handle in a vice and saw off small pieces with a tenon saw, paint and varnish.
- * Cut small shapes from thick card.
- * Make playing pieces from clay or self-hardening modelling material. Can be tiny figures, related to theme of game.
- * Pebbles, shells and other found objects.
- * Buttons.
- * Try your local Play Resource Centre; they will probably have all kinds of things you could use for game counters.

Inventing Games

Most six-year-olds could invent a better board game than Snakes and Ladders, so why not have a go. Make up your own race games and have fun playing each other's.



Track can be any shape: square, spiral or meandering from start to finish. Players take turns to throw the dice and move their

counter(s) along the track. The game can be based on any theme and the board decorated to show this. Some squares can have hazards or bonuses on them ("School burns down, have another turn"). For greater suspense have the hazards on cards, which are turned up and read out when you land on a "Hazard" square. There can be detours, short-cuts and all sorts of other refinements, as long as the inventor of the game makes all the rules clear before play commences.

General knowledge or trivia quiz games are a popular variation. Writing questions of the right level of difficulty for your group can be quite tricky so get groups of children involved in this too (as long as they don't get asked their own questions).

other parts of the world and is a good game to introduce on play projects, as it is easy to learn, fast and exciting, and involves a good balance of counting skill and pure luck.



The board is usually in the form of an open box, which retains the dice and speeds up play, but you can easily use a home-made flat board as described above. You can also use draught pieces, though you need 15 of each colour, which means a second set, and two dice. There isn't room here to explain the rules, but it shouldn't be too hard to find someone who can teach you.

Fan Mien/Reversi

An old Chinese game, also known as Reversi or Othello, Fan Mien can be played on a chessboard, but you need 64 counters all with opposite sides different colours (you could paint draught pieces). Players have 32 each and take turns to place them on the board, with their own colour upwards, starting with the four middle squares, then anywhere as long as it's next to another piece. If you can get one or more of your opponent's pieces in a line (up, down, sideways or diagonal) with one of your own at either end, you claim your opponent's pieces and turn them over so they're your own colour. You may capture lines like this in several directions at a single turn. When all pieces have been played whoever has most of their colour showing is the winner.

Chess, Draughts & Dominoes

You may prefer to buy these ready-made, as they are all cheap and easy to get. Rules are widely known in most communities so if you don't know how to play, ask around.

* There is an important difference between English draughts and Jamaican draughts, which you should be aware of, to avoid confusion: In English draughts a king's moves are the same length as those of an ordinary piece, while in Jamaican draughts (and in many parts of Europe) a king may move as many squares as it wants in a straight diagonal line, as long as no other pieces are in the way.

* The main difference between Jamaican and English domino-playing is that the English game is played sedately, while the Jamaican version is fast and furious with dominoes slapped on the table as loudly as possible.

Making a chess set is a good craft project. You could use wood (you don't have to have a lathe - attractive designs can be cut from 1" dowelling with only a tenon saw, hand-drill and vice, plus sandpaper, stain and varnish), clay (fired or self-hardening), plaster of Paris, cardboard or assorted junk. For a special event you can paint a giant chessboard on the ground and use human pieces.

Backgammon

Backgammon originated in the Middle East and is probably the foremost board game amongst Arab peoples (generally played for fun, not gambling). It is well known in many

Awari

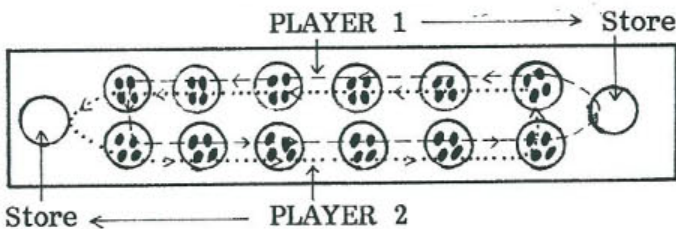
Also known as Wari or Mancala, this is a terrific game from West Africa. It is also found in the Caribbean and in many other parts of the world. There are lots of variations and different names from different places.

The board has 14 holes or hollows arranged like this:



Boards can be made of wood or clay, but for an instant game a couple of egg boxes or bun-tins will do fine. You can even play with two rows of hollows scooped out of the ground. You also need 48 beads or dried beans (all the same).

Start with 4 beans in each hole (except the stores). Player 1 picks up the beans from any hole on her side and goes round the board anti-clockwise, dropping one bean into each hole, including her store when she comes to it, but missing out her opponent's store.



When she drops the last bean into a hole, she takes out all the beans in that hole and continues as before. As long as she drops the last bean in a hole that already has beans in it her turn continues in this way (so for each complete circuit of the board she gets one bean in her store). If the last bean lands in an empty hole, or in her store, her turn ends (beans are never taken out of the store). It is then the other player's turn to pick up the beans in any hole on his side and sow them one by one into the holes as he moves anti-clockwise round the board, again scoring one in his store when he comes to it and missing out player 1's store. The two players take turns till there are only seven beans left in play. Whoever then has most beans in their store is the winner.

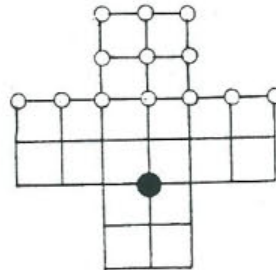
Awari is beautifully simple to learn and play, even for very young children, but can be played to a high level of strategy and skill by experienced players.

Pulijudam



Or "Tigers and Lambs" - a traditional Indian game. The board is a simple pattern of lines and pieces are moved from point to point. One player has three tigers, the other has fifteen lambs - so the two sides are unequal.

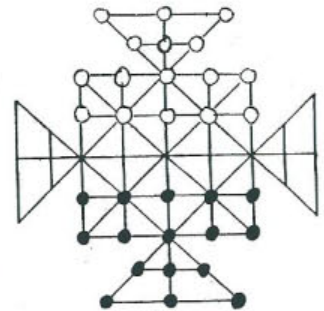
Three tigers are placed as shown. Lambs are placed on the board one by one, alternating with the tiger's moves. When all lambs are on the board they can move from point to point as well. The tigers can take lambs by jumping them as in draughts. Jumping is compulsory if possible. The lambs aim to shut in and immobilise the tigers, while the tigers aim to take all the lambs.



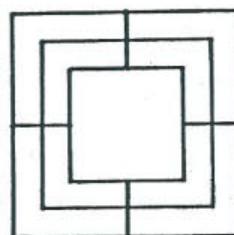
This is one of a family of similar games going back thousands of years. An old English variation is called fox and geese and is played in the same way on a board like this.

Sixteen Soldiers

A traditional game played throughout S.E. Asia on a simple grid of lines. Players take turns to move from point to point along the lines one place at a time in any direction. Take opponent's pieces by jumping over them as in draughts. This is compulsory - you lose your piece if you don't jump. The aim is to take all your opponent's pieces. Variations of this game are played on boards of different patterns throughout Asia.

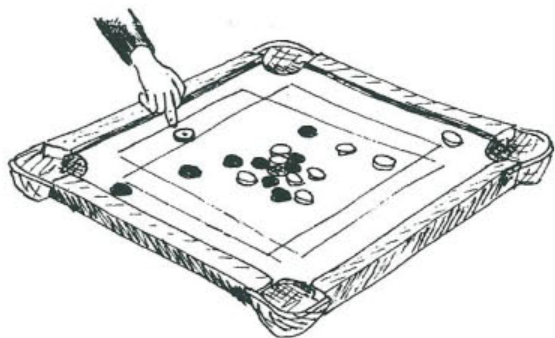


Nine Men's Morris

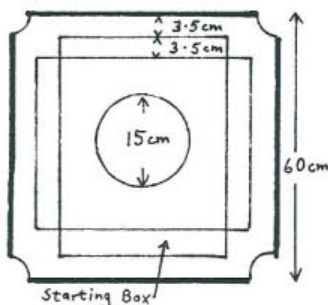


Nine pieces each. Take turns to place them on vacant points, then to move them from point to point. Every time you make a line of three, remove one of opponent's pieces.

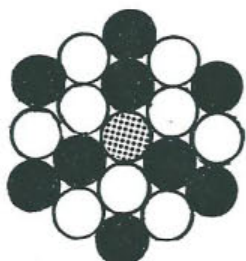
Carroms



Carroms, said to originate in Burma, is popular throughout India. The board is shaped like a large square tray, with a highly polished wood surface, a raised wooden rim and pockets at the four corners.



Playing pieces are wooden discs, nine white, nine black and one red "queen" (Draught pieces can be used; paint one red). There is also a heavier striker disc, traditionally of ivory.



To start with the pieces are arranged in a cluster like this at the centre of the board. First player places the striker in her starting box and flicks it with her middle finger trying to knock a disc of her own colour into a pocket. If successful she returns the striker to the starting box and continues. If not it's the other player's turn. Score 1 point for each of your opponent's pieces left when all yours are potted, plus 5 if you pot the red, then set up and start again; a game is 30 points. This is a simplified account of the rules; for the full rules either find an experienced player or get one of the books listed below.

Carroms boards can be obtained quite easily in England, either from Asian specialist suppliers or from certain major educational suppliers, but it's a good woodwork project to make your own. All you need is a square of plywood and four strips of hardwood for the rim.

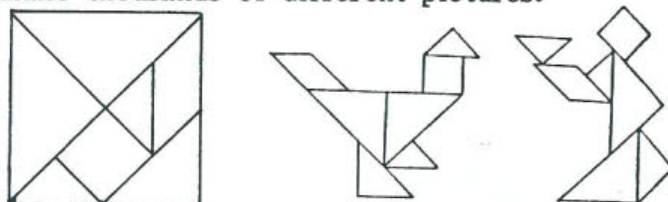
Co-operative Games

Nearly all board games are competitive, and work best if played to win. However, here are a some good co-operative alternatives:

JIGSAWS - of course!

TANGRAMS

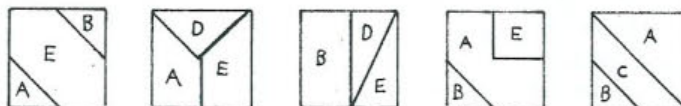
This ancient Chinese game/puzzle/art consists of these seven shapes, cut from a single square of card. They can be arranged to make thousands of different pictures.



THE SQUARE GAME

A co-operative game for five players

1. Cut up five identical squares of card as shown (all lines meet at corners or exact mid-points of sides).



- Put the pieces marked A in one envelope, those marked B in another and so on.
- Players are each given one envelope.
- The aim is for each player to have a complete square in front of them (all squares must be the same size). But rules are:
 - No talking.
 - No signalling either.
 - No one may take a piece from anyone else. You may give away, but not take.

This game explores co-operation between people. You learn that you have to share and give up some of your own in order to win, as you can only win when everyone does. Play it with children and also with older groups. Discuss the experience afterwards to help people learn about co-operation.

Books

Diagram Group: The Way to Play
 Love, B.: Great Boardgames.
 Love, B.: Play the Game.
 Games of the World (UNICEF)
 Bell, R.C.: The Boardgames Book

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