



# Mancala



Be a strategist today! In this activity, you are going to create and play a game that has been played for thousands of years around the world. Sometimes, the game had spiritual significance, other times, it was used to decide strategies in trading goods. What will it mean to you?

## Why are we doing this activity?

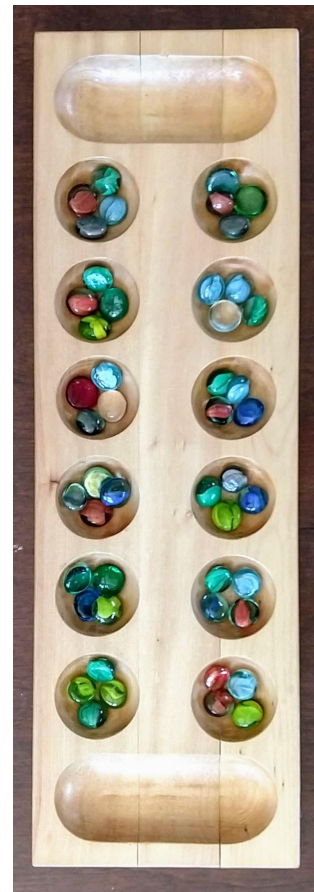
Mancala is a two-person game in which small objects, such as seeds or stones, are moved around a board with the winner earning most of the stones. The name "mancala" comes from the Arabic verb "naqala," meaning to move something about.

Now, people play Mancala all over the world, but it was probably first played by people who lived in Egypt and the Middle East, as many as 3500 years ago - archaeologists have discovered game boards that old in Egypt! It might be the oldest game in the world. Over the centuries, the game has been carried around the world by trade.

You can set up your game by arranging cups, saucers, or something similar as described in the directions. Or, if you're feeling creative, you can make your own mancala board - try constructing one out of cardboard, wood, fabric, or anything you can think of!

## Supplies Needed

- 12 cups, saucers, or similar small containers
- 48 seeds, buttons, stones, or similar (any color)



Mancala board set up to begin play





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### What to do

1. Set up your Mancala board: Arrange your cups, saucers, or similar in two rows of six cups each, so that each player will face one row of cups. Place four seeds, buttons, or similar in each cup. Determine an area at each end of the row to act as each player's "store," the area where they collect their seeds.
2. Players will face each other across the two rows of cups, with each person's store located to their right. This is empty at the beginning of the game.
3. The object of the game is to capture more seeds than your opponent.
4. The game begins with one player picking up all of the seeds in any one of the cups in the row nearest to them.
5. Moving counter-clockwise (start to your right), place one of the seeds in each cup until you run out of seeds. If you run into your own store, place one seed in it. If you run into your opponent's store, skip it.
6. If the last seed you drop is in your own store, you get another turn. If the last seed you drop is in an empty cup on your side, you capture that seed and any seeds in the cup directly opposite.
7. The game ends when all six cups on one side of the Mancala board are empty. Count all the seeds in each store. The winner is the player with the most seeds.

### Want to go further?

- The word "mancala" actually refers to a family of games, all of which are variations on the game described above, and which may go by different names, such as wari, lontu-holo, or galatjang. Can you learn how to play these variations?
- Try expanding the game to make it work for four players.
- Research how the game has been shared around the world and create a map of the route the game has traveled.