

# the mancala board game history and how to play



**45 mins**



**intellectual**

This ancient count-and-capture board game has hundreds of variations. Mancala is an easy game to learn, but not so easy to master! This program gives you the rules and strategy for how to play Mancala. The game is ideal for ages eight and above, so intergenerational play is encouraged. Most Mancala games take about 15 minutes. Set up tournaments, semi-finals and prizes.

## 1 share the history of mancala

Mancala is an ancient, easy to play game with many variations. Share the long history of this game with residents by using the history information in Appendix A. You may also print out the history and share among residents to initiate a discussion before or after playing a few rounds.

## 2 make a mancala board

To make this program budget-friendly and enhance this program, add a crafting project where residents can create their own mancala boards. Use the instructions in Appendix B to set-up this craft and get residents excited to play.

## 3 play mancala

After creating your mancala boards, pair residents up for play. Ways to enhance this activity include turning each round into a match and eliminate residents down to the last two for a face-off and reward the winner with a prize. Use Appendix C for a complete guide to the rules that you can share with residents, as well as familiarize yourself prior to the activity.

## A the history of mancala

Mancala is a public domain game with roots traced back to between the years 500 and 700. Archaeologists found ancient evidence of Mancala games in Africa, in Ethiopia.

The word mancala comes from an Arabic word naqala, which means "to move." In North Africa and the Middle East, the word "mancala" actually refers to a type of game rather than this particular game.

But, when Mancala arrived in North America with the slave trade, it became popular in Louisiana. There it was called "Warra" and eventually turned into a commercialized version called "Kalah". The Cape Verde version called "Ouril" came through New England by immigrants. Have you ever heard of any of these games?

Many versions are played throughout Africa. They still all have different names like Awari, Oware, Wari, Warri, and Wouri. Although played in the Baltic areas of Europe it didn't spread throughout all of Europe. It did travel following the Arab culture and trading into China, India, Indonesia and Malaysia.

## B make a mancala board

This Mancala game egg carton craft is a lot of fun. While setting up the gameplay (if you choose to purchase a board), or the craft activity to make the boards, explain a bit of the history of the game.

### Supplies:

- An empty egg carton
- (optional) A couple of cups or small bowls
- 48 beans, seeds, pebbles, or anything suitable for game pieces

**Step 1:** Take an empty egg carton and carefully cut off the top.

**Step 2:** Cut each end of the top and two pieces from the middle to the edge.

**Step 3:** To make end pockets, tape each end to the middle pieces.

**Step 4:** Tape end pockets securely to the ends of the bottom of the egg carton, the middle piece faces inward.

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## the basics of playing mancala

[Watch How to Play Mancala](#)

- **Players:** 2
- **Ages 8+:** Makes this Ideal for intergenerational play.
- **Playing Time:** ~ 15 mins per game. Ideal for tournaments.
- **The Object of the Game:** Capture more stones than your opponent.

### Game Play

1. Each Mancala board has 2 rows of 6 or pits.
2. Place 4 game pieces in each of the 12 holes. (48 pieces)
3. On the right of each player is their Mancala or the place they store their captured game pieces.
4. One player begins by picking up all the pieces in any one hole on their side.
5. Counter-clockwise, deposit one piece in each hole.
6. Place a piece into your own Mancala store but skip your opponent's.
7. If the last piece lands in your own mancala, you get another turn.
8. If the last piece lands in an empty hole on your side, capture the piece and the pieces in the hole on the other side of the board, across from it.
9. Place all captured pieces in your Mancala.
10. The game is over when all 6 spaces on either side of the board are empty.
11. When the game ends, the player with pieces on their side of the board captures those pieces.
12. Count the pieces in each Mancala. The winner has the most pieces.

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