

Medieval Games and Recreation

Games Played in the Middle Ages

(Outdoor entertainment during the middle ages centered around the Village Green.)

Games of Amusement

Hide n Seek

Hide and Seek was played the same as today. Using whatever hiding places are available and the restrictions or limits agreed on by the players, play this ancient child's game. Someone is designated as "it." Everyone hides. "It" looks for them. Usually, the first one found is "it" the next round although there are many variations.

Tag

Tag is another game played the same. Tapestry's, murals, and other drawings and pictures show kids chasing each other in what appears to be tag. Set up the game your favorite way, or ask the kids for their favorite version. There are literally hundreds of versions of tag. Nevertheless, at its essence, whoever is designated as "it" chases the other players until they successfully "tag" another player. That player is then "it" for the next round. Many versions have a safe place where runners can rest and untaggable—"base".

Ring Around the Rosie

The words to the "Ring Around the Rosy" have their origin in English history. The historical period dates back to the Great Plague of London in 1665 (bubonic plague) or even before when the first outbreak of the Plague hit England in the 1300's. The symptoms of the plague included a rosy red rash in the shape of a ring on the skin (Ring around the rosy). Pockets and pouches were filled with sweet smelling herbs (or posies) which were carried due to the belief that the disease was transmitted by bad smells. The term "ashes, ashes" refers to the cremation of the dead bodies! The death rate was over 60% and the Great Fire of London only halted the plague in 1666, which killed the rats, which carried the disease, which was transmitting, via water sources. The English version of "Ring around the rosy" replaces Ashes with (A-tishoo, A-tishoo) as violent sneezing was another symptom of the disease.

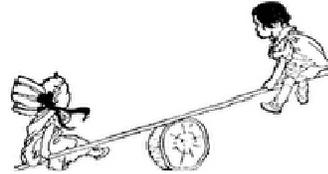
Players hold hands in the shape of a circle. While they walk in a circle, they sing or chant....

*Ring around the rosy
A pocketful of posies
"Ashes, Ashes"
We all fall down!*



See Saw

See saw is essentially two people going up and down on opposite ends of a board with a fixed object in the middle allowing one side to be up while the other is down. The two players are seated and use their legs to propel themselves back up while the other player goes back down. It can be as simple of a version as a board over a barrel or tree log.



Walking on Stilts

In medieval times, many of the games children played mimicked what they saw at festivals or what they observed in battle training. Games helped them practice accuracy, agility, balance, and strategy. Walking on stilts would have been something they observed acrobats and other performers doing at Medieval Faires.

Swimming

Children of every time period enjoy swimming. Not only was it a way to cool down in a time without air conditioning, but also a fun and relaxing way to clean up the day's work.

Fishing

Fishing can be fun and relaxing. It might also produce a tasty dish for supper.

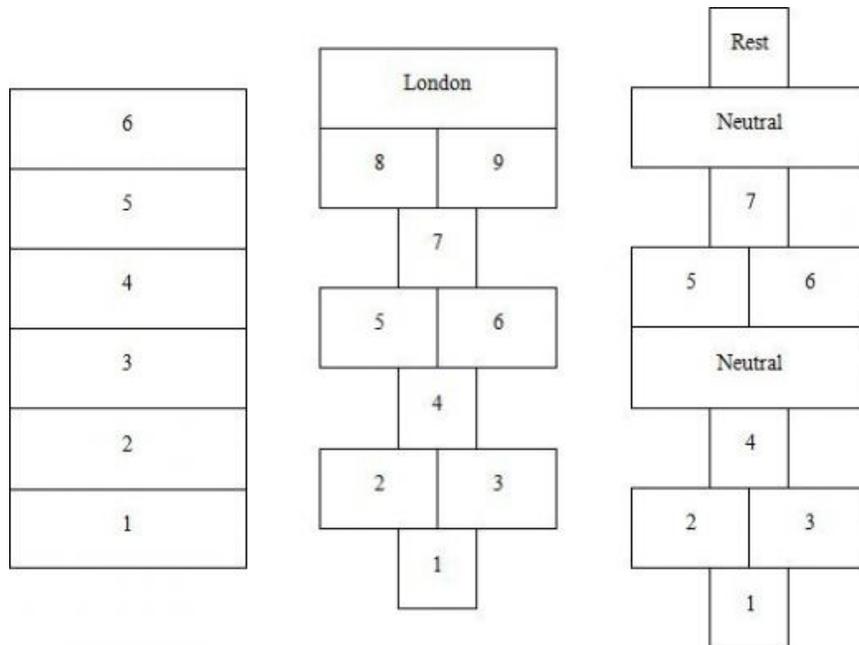
Prisoner's Base

This English game of chase and tag that was banned in the 1300s by King Edward III. Before the twentieth century, the game was known as "Chevy Chase" or "Chivy."

- Object of the Game: The team with the most prisoners at the end of the time limit wins.
- You will need: A minimum of ten players A stick or chalk Large playing area
- How to play: The group needs divided in half and a line of chalk was placed down the middle between the two teams. About 20-30 feet behind each team a large square (prison) was drawn on the ground using chalk. Each team picked one person to be the prisoner of the other team (usually someone who could run fast). Then each team would try to free their prisoner by sending a team member to the prison through the opposing team to bring him/her back without being captured by a member of the opposing team. If the person attempting to rescue their own prisoner made in to the prison through the opposing team without being caught, he/she was safe while in the prison and could pick their own time to run with the prisoner back to their own side of the line. If the team member was caught by the opposing team, they also became a prisoner needing rescue. So each team was busy both trying to rescue their own prisoners and protect the prisoner(s) from the opposite side from being rescued. At the end of time, the team with the most prisoners won.

hopscotch

Hopscotch dates back to the Roman occupation of Britain. The first thing to be done is to draw a course, several common court styles are seen below.



Each player then chooses a marker, usually a stone. Play begins with the first player tossing his stone into the first space. If the stone lands completely within the designated square, the player proceeds to hop through the course. A player can only have one foot in any given square, so single squares must be balanced and double squares (side by side) are straddled. While hopping, the player should alternate the foot he lands on for each square. Any space not marked with a number, i.e. London, Home, etc., are considered rest squares and can be landed in any fashion.

When the player reaches the top of the court, he then turns around and comes back, collecting his marker along the way. Play then continues with the player tossing his marker into the second square and so on.

If a player fails to toss his marker into the correct square or if it touches a line the players turn ends. The same is true if the player steps on a line, misses a square, or loses his balance and falls. The first player to complete the course for each numbered square wins.

how many miles to London?

This game begins with "It" being blindfolded. The other players then stand in a line and ask "It" for directions. "It" tells them how many steps to take forward backward, left, or right they must go. Then "It" is led to the starting point and must follow his own directions. When "It" has reached the final destination, he must try to touch another player. The other players may duck or sway to avoid being touched, but they cannot move their feet. If a player is tagged, then he is the next "It" otherwise "It" must try again.

Hoodsman's Blind (Blind Man's Bluff)

Hoodsman's Blind is known today as Blind Man's Bluff. The person who is "It" is blindfolded or hooded and must try to catch any player that ventures too close. The other players see how close they can get to "It" without being caught. The last person caught is "It" for the next game.



Jingling

Jingling is the reverse of Hoodsman's Blind. All of the players are blindfolded except "It". "It" is given a string of bells and the players must try to catch him. The person who catches "It" is "It" for the next game.

Barley Break

The game starts by marking an area on the ground by drawing a circle or other shape. "It" cannot leave this area. The players must try to run through the area without getting tagged. If a player is tagged, they must join hands with "It" and help to catch the other players. As more players get tagged, they join onto the end of the line. Only those at the ends of the line can tag a player. Those in the middle can however help to "net" the player as they try to run through. The last person caught is "It" for the next game.

Games of Skill & Strength

Archery

Archery contests were popular during the medieval era, especially in countries such as England where even the lowest peasants were given plenty of opportunity to train as archers. Participants in an archery contest are given bows and a selection of arrows, and must attempt to hit a target some distance away from them; the closer to the bull's eye of the target the arrow lands, the more points the archer scores. Participants should be carefully supervised by an expert to prevent anyone injuring themselves.

Marbles

We don't know the rules. But probably they played the same basic games of marbles that we know today: one version where you take turns tossing the marbles at a goal (another marble, a hole, or a wall), and another version where you take turns shooting the marbles within a circle drawn in the dirt, trying to get them out of the circle. One version has a series of arches for you to get the marbles through. The medieval marbles were clay, but modern marbles can be substituted. Draw your circle and have fun!



Quoits (Ring Toss)

The equipment for Quoits consists of eight hemp rope quoits and a single wooden pin on a base.

Using rope rings tossed at stakes, ring toss was played by the Ladies as well as the children. Set two stakes at 10 paces, and then toss rope rings at the two stakes. Can be played by two players or teams of two players. Single players must walk from stake to stake; teams have one player at each stake. Number of rings tossed per round is determined by the number of rings and teams. It is recommended you indicate by 'favors' or colored scraps of material the players or teams rings. Each ring that catches a stake gets three points. Any leaning against the stake or touching it gets two points. Otherwise, the closest ring gets 1 point for that person or team. Rounds are as many as agreed on prior to beginning the game.



Hammer Throwing

Sportsmen in medieval times threw real hammers around their heads in an archaic version of the Olympic sport. A medieval-themed fair should use a foam hammer for the purpose of the game to avoid unpleasant head injuries. Otherwise, the game is played in the same way as its medieval inspiration: players attempt to throw a hammer farther than their competitors.

Queek

This game is played by using a large, checkered cloth and spread on a hard, smooth surface, or on a chessboard, then the children would toss pebbles on the board, calling out in advance whether the pebble would land on a light color or dark color board.



Wrestling

Typical horseplay games and wrestling have always been popular with children, but during medieval times wrestling continued into adulthood as entertainment for village feasts.

Stick Combat

At village feasts not only wrestling matches took place, but also combats with sticks or birch boughs. Two men, blindfolded, each armed with a stick, and holding in his hand a rope fastened to a stake, entered the arena, and went round and round trying to strike at a fat goose or a pig, which was also let loose with them. Nothing amused our ancestors more than these blind encounters, and even kings took part at these burlesque representations.

Stone Throwing

This done by throwing small stones for a distance or at a target on the ground for accuracy.

Horseshoes

A medieval pastime that is still popular in the 21st century, this game involves throwing horseshoes at a particular target, often a nail. The closer a player gets to the target, the more points she scores, while extra points are sometimes awarded if the player can get the horseshoe wrapped around the target.



Tug o War

This was a traditional game played in medieval times by adults, kids and mixed teams of both. All you need to play this game is two teams and a length of stout rope (and an admiring audience helps!) Competitors should wear gloves while they play this game. Traditionally the game was played with a hazard such as a wall, a hedge, a mud puddle, or a stream. On the signal, each team starts to try to pull the other team off balance and across or into the hazard. The winner is the team who either pulls the other team into the hazard or if the other team gives up due to exhaustion.

Games of Chance

Teetotum (Put & Take)

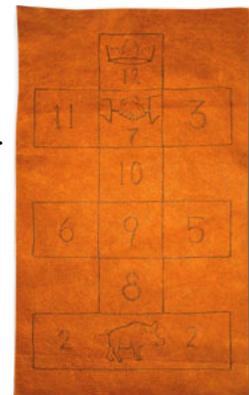
Commonly used to play the game Put and Take the four-sided teetotum or spinning top displays a number when it stops spinning. Each player places a coin in the pot and then takes turns spinning the teetotum following the instructions when the teetotum stops spinning. When the whole pot has been won, the round is over and the players start again.



1 Take a coin from the pot. 2 Do nothing. 3 Put in a coin in the pot. 4 Win the whole pot.

Gluckhaus (Lucky Pig)

“Gluckshaus” is High German for ‘house of fortune’ and is a simple gambling game. Money is lost and won on the roll of two dice. Coins are placed on a grid of ten numbered squares. Rolling the number of the square wins you the coin on the square but if the square is empty, you lose a coin by placing one there. The game was normally played with Jettons. The King, The Wedding, The Lucky Pig all make life interesting, as does the mysterious number 4 (there isn’t one!).



Knucklebones

Knucklebones are the vertebrae (the backbone) of medium-sized animals like sheep or goats, and the games you play with them are like jacks (In fact you can still find jacks shaped like knucklebones some places).



Knucklebones was played during medieval times, though it actually originated in the days of ancient Greece, with records of the game dating as far back as 330 B.C. The game features four bones, each taken from the ankle of a sheep, with each bone possessing four sides, each of a different shape. Each long side --- convex, sinuous, flat and concave, respectively --- is given a different value, typically 1, 3, 4 and 6. Players roll the bones like dice, and add together their score for the round based on which side of each bone lands facing upwards.

Pick-up Sticks

Pick-up sticks is a game of physical and mental skill. One root of the name "pick-up sticks" may be the line of a children's nursery rhyme, "...five, six, pick-up sticks!" This is a game for two or more players. The object of the game is to pick up the most sticks.



To begin the game, a bundle of 'sticks,' approximately 6-8 inches long, are held upright in a loose bunch and released on a tabletop, falling in random disarray. Each player, in turn, must remove a stick from the pile without disturbing the remaining ones.

The first player attempts to remove a single stick, without moving any other stick. If any other stick moves during the player's attempt, his or her turn ends immediately. Players who successfully pick up a stick can then have another turn; the player keeps removing sticks until he or she causes a secondary stick to move.

The game is over when the last stick is removed. The winner is the player with the highest number of sticks picked up.

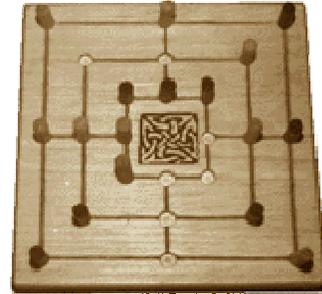
Nursery Rhyme

*One, two, buckle my shoe.
Three, four, shut the door.
Five, six, pick up sticks.
Seven, eight, lay them straight.
Nine, ten, a big fat hen.
Eleven, twelve, dig and delve.
Thirteen, fourteen, maids a-courting.
Fifteen, sixteen, maids in the kitchen.
Seventeen, eighteen, maids a-waiting.
Nineteen, twenty, my stomach's empty.
(some versions: my platter's empty)*

Games of Strategy

Nine Men's Morris

The game Nine Men's Morris is known to have been popular in medieval England and France and probably shares a common origin with ancient versions of tic-tac-toe. The term Morris evolves from the Latin merellus, meaning "token, coin, or counter". Hence, the name "nine men's Morris" refers to the fact that each opponent begins play with nine counters of a distinctive color or marking.



The object of play is to capture the opponent's army of nine tokens before he or she captures yours or to deny the opponent's ability to make a move. Play begins with a vacant board and with both players having nine counters. Each player in turn places a counter on one of the positions (line intersections) on the board. After all nine counters are placed on the board, play continues by moving the tokens one at a time along any of the lines to the next adjacent open point. If, either during initial placement or subsequent movement, a player places three tokens in a line of the board, creating an arrangement called a "mill," he or she is allowed to remove one of the opponent's tokens from the board, as long as it is not an element of a mill belonging to the opponent. Once a mill is established, the player may "open" it by moving a token off the common line, then on the next turn "close" it by moving the token back, thus forming a new mill and allowing the removal of another opposing piece.

Tic Tac Toe

Choose which player will be represented by X and which by O. Let player X go first. He or she may put an X in any of the nine sections of the grid. Have player O go next. Alternate until either there are three X's or three O's in a row horizontally, vertically, or diagonally. If the grid is full but there are not three in a row, the game is a tie ("cat"). Let the winner be X next time.



Nim

The game involves setting up five lines of men decreasing in number from 5 to 1. The two players alternately remove a line or part of a line. The winner or the loser is the last player to remove a man, this being decided before play. This deceptively simple game has a wealth of mathematical theory written about it and numerous versions of it exist.



Alquerque (An ancestor to Checkers)

The game of Alquerque originated in the Middle East around 1400 B.C. The object of this game is to take as many of your opponent's game pieces as you can and is quite similar to checkers. To learn this ancient board game, follow these steps.

Setting up the Game

- Purchase an Alquerque game board. You can also draw one with a black magic marker on a piece of cardboard, paper or wood, or on the sidewalk with sidewalk caulk.
- Draw five horizontal lines equal in length and equally spaced.
- Draw five vertical lines equal in length crossing the horizontal lines equally spaced.
- Draw a square perimeter around the grid you have made so that both ends of each line touch the square.
- Draw three diagonal lines going down and to the right across the rows and three diagonal lines going down and to the left across the rows.
- Make 24 game pieces, 12 of one color and 12 of another. You can also use checker pieces, buttons or poker chips.
- Place one player's 12 game pieces along the first two rows on the points where the lines connect and on the two points furthest to the right of the middle row. Place the other player's 12 pieces along the bottom two rows and on the two points furthest to the left of the middle row.

Playing the Game

- Take turns moving your pieces one space at a time along the lines on the board.
- Capture your opponent's piece by jumping over his piece. This may only be done when an opponent's piece is next to your piece and just beyond it is a vacant point. You may do double and triple jumps as well if you are able to.
- Win the game by taking all your opponent's pieces or trap your opponent so she cannot make another move.

Draughts (Checkers)

Draughts is a group of abstract strategy board games between two players which involve diagonal moves of uniform pieces and mandatory captures by jumping over the enemy's pieces. Draughts developed from alquerque. The name derives from the verb to draw or to move. The most popular forms are international draughts, played on a 10x10 board, followed by English draughts, also called American checkers, played on an 8x8 checkerboard, but there are many other variants including 12x12 which is gaining popularity.



Chess

It has been said: Chess takes five minutes to learn, but a lifetime to master!

Chess was widely popular and often a source of gambling entertainment; both in the traditional format and in a simpler version played with dice. Dice were easy to carry and were played in all ranks of society, even among the clergy.

Chess is a game of mental skill - and it is enough to see a chessboard to figure out how medieval people lived. Of course, the Europeans introduced all the medieval-like chess pieces of the board, and that is why there is so much resemblance between a game of chess and warfare per se. A game of chess can be easily resembled to a medieval battle. A lot about medieval life can be learnt by simply examining a chessboard because it contains much information about how our ancestors lived 1,000 years ago.



Chess Pieces and Their Meanings:

- **Pawns:** are the peasants or the serfs. They are the most numerous pieces in the game and they are in front of the major pieces in order to protect them. Something very interesting about pawns is their availability to become a queen (or any other piece) when the other end of the board is reached - this is possibly because pawns did have an almost non-existent possibility to become a knight or achieve other high and relevant positions. Even though almost non-existent, it was still possible. A pawn may also move two squares to the front in his first move; the reason as to why this is historically allowed is debated today.
- **Bishops:** represent the church. They come from the Persian word pīl, which means "elephant." Since Europeans knew nothing about elephants at all, they instead changed this piece altogether and made it represent the church by the bishop. Elephants for Indians were adored, and in terms of chess, it was considered one of the most powerful pieces. The medieval Europeans took advantage of this and incorporated the bishop in order for the church to look more appealing and powerful.
- **Knights:** When Knighthood began in Europe, the horse was changed from being simply a horse into a knight. For this reason, the horse has such a unique way of movement and 'jumping' on the board - this is believed to be because of a knight's agility and having his own style. Because no other chess piece can move equally to the horse, this is evident.
- **Rooks:** The Tower, sometimes referred to as "rook", is a symbol of medieval fortresses. Medieval castles were especially important and thus; they couldn't be avoided for such a popular game. Their position begins in the four corners of the chessboard - likely representing the fact that castles were a means of defense and not attack contrary to, for example, the horse. Their movement is in a straight line

as far as the chessboard will allow. Castles were not able to "move" but they could nevertheless control a vast amount of land.

- Queen: The Queen is the only female piece in the game. She, however, is the most powerful piece of them all and can move like any other piece except for the horse. This represents the enormous role of women during the Dark Ages. The queen was the most important and she would frequently aid the king in most of his affairs as a ruler. Of course, the queen could rule as well, but it was much more frequent for her to help the king, which can be translated into chess easily - the queen is next to the king protecting him.
- King: Finally, the King is the most valuable piece of them all. He must be protected by all means and if he is trapped, the game is lost. The term checkmate comes from the Persian *shāh māt*, which literally means, "The king is finished."

It should be additionally noted that the hierarchy of chess also plays an immense role in how medieval life is perceived. Pawns are short and seemingly weak while the king is the tallest piece in the game.

Backgammon

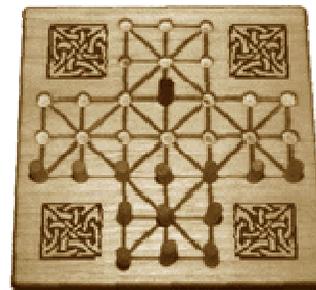
Backgammon is one of the oldest board games for two players. The playing pieces are moved according to the roll of dice, and players win by removing all of their pieces from the board. There are many variants of backgammon, most of which share common traits. Backgammon is a member of the tables family, one of the oldest classes of board games in the world.



Although luck is involved and factors into the outcome, strategy plays a more important role in the long run. With each roll of the dice, players must choose from numerous options for moving their checkers and anticipate possible counter-moves by the opponent. Players may raise the stakes during the game. There is an established repertoire of common tactics and occurrences.

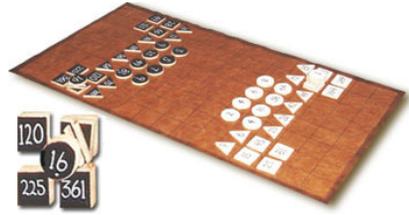
Fox and Geese

Fox and Geese seems to have originated in northern Europe some time during the Viking Age. The game is a contest between 1 Fox and 13 Geese. Play begins with the pieces in the positions shown. Players may move a piece to any vacant adjacent spot on the board, either vertically, horizontally or diagonally along the marked lines. Only the Fox may jump another piece. When a piece is jumped, it is removed from the board. The object for the Geese is to capture the Fox by surrounding him so he cannot move or jump. The Fox must try to remove all the Geese or at least enough of them so that there are not enough left for a capture.



The Philosopher's Game (Rithmomachia)

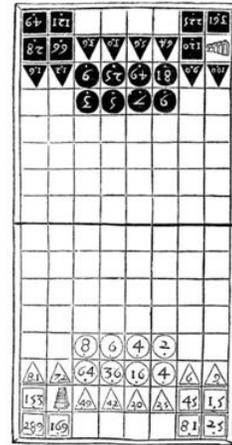
The Philosophers' Game is not a game for the faint-hearted. Probably invented in one of the monastery schools in southern Germany in the 11th C it spread to Britain by the 12th C reaching a peak in the 14th C after which it gave way to chess and was forgotten by the 18th C. Rithmomachia means battle of numbers and is played



between two players on a 8 x 16 chequered or undifferentiated board with square, triangular and circular pieces each with a numerical value. There is more than one documentary source detailing the rules, each of which vary in minor details. Playing requires an ability to apply simple math, and winning requires an understanding of arithmetic, geometric and harmonic number progressions, or at least an ability to remember them. This is a complex game based on a more than common grasp of number theory, however, do not be put off, it is a wonderful game and a good one for getting inside the mind of the medieval mathematician.

The game is much like chess, except most methods of capture depends on the numbers inscribed on each piece.

The game was played on a board resembling the one used for chess or checkers, with eight squares on the shorter side, but with sixteen on the longer side. The forms used for the pieces were triangles, squares, rounds, and pyramids. The game was noteworthy in that the black and white forces were not symmetrical. Although each side had the same array of pieces, the numbers on them differed, allowing different possible captures and winning configurations to the two players.



In the medieval period Arabic numerals were, in some cases, rather different in style from those used today. Rithmomachia counters from the mid 13th to the mid 15th centuries would have used such numerals. In the 11th C though, when Rithmomachia was invented it would have used roman numerals with each player using a reckoning board to work out the arithmetic!

Shove Groat or Shove ha' Penny

This well known game, translated down the years into shove ha' penny and now sadly into shove 50p, originated as a game known as Shoven Board where small metal disks were slid down the length of a 30-foot table. Since such large table tops were only owned by the very few, the more common form of the game is much smaller and relies on the game's concept more than any strict rules to be enjoyed. It is likely that the scoring system varied as much as the width and length of the board and none of this would have been strictly recorded. The rules presented here are mere suggestions and players will have just as much fun inventing their own games.



Shovelboard (an ancestor to Shuffleboard)

The original English ancestor of most of the games involving shoving discs of some sort on a table was called Shove-board and later Shovelboard. Popular in Tudor times, Shovelboard was played by the English upper classes on enormous narrow tables as long as 30 feet. Players shoved metal weights down the tables, attempting to get them as near to the other end of the table without falling off. Presumably, the game is a formalized version of a pastime played on the long dining tables of the upper classes after dinner. One of the earliest references is from the Royal Privy Expenses of 1532, which show that Henry VIII lost £9 to Lord William at Shovelboard. Meanwhile, the subjects of this great King were banned from playing this and most other recreational games – an even earlier reference purportedly of 1522 says, “None of the society shall play at the game called Shoffe boorde or Slypgrote”.

Card Games

Niddy Noddy (an early version of cribbage)

Niddy Noddy is a fun card game for kids. It is based on a game called Noddy, which originated in England during the late 1500s. Noddy means fool or simple-minded person. If you can say Niddy Noddy, you can play Niddy Noddy.

- Shuffle the cards and deal them all. Some players may have more cards than others.
- Start the game if you are left of dealer. Find the highest pair you have in your hand (aces are low). Put down one of the cards in your pair and say, “Here’s a good card for thee.” If you don’t have a pair, pass to the person on your left.
- Put down a card of the same suit face up on the table if you go after a player who has laid down one of their pairs. It must be a higher card than the one on the table, and you must pass if you don’t have a higher card. As you lay your card down say, “Here’s another as good as he.”
- Lay down a card if you have a higher card of the same suit or pass to the person on your left. As you lay down a higher card say, “And here’s the best of all three.”
- Place another higher card on the table, provided you have one, when it becomes your turn. If you are the fourth person to lay down a card in a round, you say, “And here’s old Niddy Noddy.”
- Go around the table until the highest card is played. The person who laid down this card is the winner of the round and will start a new round with a new card.
- Win the game by getting rid of all your cards first.

All Fours (also known as Seven Up)

Although All Fours is basically a two-player game, it is also good for three or four and can be played by even more. Four can play individually or in two fixed partnerships, sitting crosswise. The rules have been formulated to cover all cases. Except for the way in which the trump suit is determined, the game is identical to Pitch. Seven Up is All Fours played to a target score of 7 points.

After dealing, the dealer turns the next card on the stock face up to determine the trump suit. Instead of immediately leading to the first trick, eldest hand has the option of begging, to which the dealer responds either by granting each opposing party 1-point, or by running the cards. To run the cards, the dealer deals three more cards to each player and turns up a new card for trumps. Should the new card be of the same suit as the previous one, the dealer again deals three cards to each player and turns up a new card. This is repeated as often as necessary. If the cards were run, the respective number of tricks is played. If the dealer turns up a Jack that determines trumps, the dealer is immediately awarded 1 point for Jack. In a game with two parties, a maximum of 6 points can accrue in one deal if the dealer turns up a Jack and runs the cards.

Ruff, Honours, Triomphe, Whisk, & Swabbers

(all ancestors to Bridge and other trick taking games)

In the game of Ruff, a pack of 52 cards was used and 12 cards dealt to each player, with the first of the remaining four cards turned over to determine the trump suit. In Honours, 48 cards were used with the last of the cards dealt to the player on the dealers left turned over to determine trumps.

- Four players in two opposing pairs, the partners sitting opposite each other.
- The 52-card deck is used and the dealer deals to every player 12 cards, 4 at a time.
- The four cards remaining forms "the stock".
- The upcard of the stock is turned and the suit of that card becomes the trump suit.
- The holder of the trump Ace has the privilege of "ruffing" the stock's four cards into his own hand, and discarding four others as he likes. If the upcard is an Ace, the dealer earns the privilege of ruffing.
- After the ruffing, the player to the dealer's left may lead any card to the first trick. The other players have to follow suit if possible, but otherwise may play any card. The trick is taken by the highest card of the suit led or by the highest trump if any are played. The winner of each trick leads to the next.
- The Knave, Queen, King, and Ace of Trump are called "Honours".

Piquet (Cent)

To Play Piquet: Piquet is a game for two players, using 36 cards (sixes through Aces). The dealer is called the younger; the other player is called the elder. Each hand of piquet is divided into five parts: Blanks and discards, ruffs, sequences, sets, and tricks.

The parts are played in that order. Scores are counted in each part of the hand; the first player to score 100 points is the winner. This may take several hands. I recommend using either a score sheet or a cribbage board to keep score.

The players cut for the deal of each hand, and the holder of the low card is the dealer. Each player is dealt 12 cards in increments of 2 to 4 cards. The remaining stock of 12 cards is placed between the players. Playing the parts of Piquet:

- Blanks and discards: Each player may discard up to 8 cards, and draw as many from the stock. The elder discards and draws first, followed by the younger. Both players must discard and draw at least one card. A hand with no face cards is called a blank. If the elder has a blank, she may declare the blank and the number of cards she is going to discard. After declaring, she shows her hand to the other player. The younger discards and draws her new cards if she does not have a blank. Then the elder discards, draws and receives 10 points. However, if the younger also has a blank, she declares and shows it. No points are awarded, and play continues as though neither had a blank. The younger may not declare a blank independently.
- Ruffs: A ruff is the total number of points in a suit. Aces count 11 points, face cards count 10 points, and number cards count their number. The elder declares the number of points in her largest ruff. If the younger has an equal or higher ruff, she declares her points, too. If the ruffs are equal, then neither player scores. If not, the high ruff receives points for all cards in the hand. 1 point is scored for each 10 points in the hand. 1 to 4 points are rounded down, and 5 to 9 points are rounded up. The loser may ask to see the winning ruff.
- Sequences: A sequence is a group of three or more consecutive cards in a suit. The elder declares the number of cards in her longest sequence. If the younger has an equal or higher sequence, she declares it. If the sequence sizes are equal, both declare the largest card in the sequence. If both sequences are of equal length with the same high card, then neither player scores. Otherwise, either the longest sequence, or the sequence containing the largest card receives points for all sequences in the hand. Sets of three and four score 3 and 4 points, respectively. Sets of five and up score 10 points plus the number of cards in the sequence. The loser may ask to see the winning sequence.
- Sets: A set is three or more tens, Jacks, Queens, Kings or Aces. The elder declares the number of cards in her largest set. If the younger has an equal or higher set, she declares it. If the set sizes are equal, the set card is declared. The largest set, or, if both have sets of equal size, the set with the highest card receives points for all sets in the hand. Sets of three score 13 points, and sets of four score 14 points. The loser may ask to see the winning set.
- Tricks: Tricks are played like no-trump tricks in bridge. For the first trick, the elder leads a card, and the younger tries to play another, higher card in the same trick. The highest card in the "lead" suit wins the trick. The winner of the trick leads for the next trick, and so on until all cards are played. Tricks are scored both during and after play. Players receive 1 point for leading a ten or larger, 1 point for winning a trick, 2 points for winning the last trick with a ten or higher, or 1 point for winning the last trick with a nine or lower. After all tricks are played, each player counts the number of tricks they have won. A player with seven

through eleven tricks receives 10 points; a player with all twelve tricks (known as a capet) receives 60 points.

- Repique and Pique: Players may score points for preventing the other player from scoring during a hand. A player gets a pique if she reaches 30 points during the tricks, and the other player has no points. A pique is worth 30 points. A player gets a repique if she reaches 30 points during the first four parts of the hand, and the other player has no points. A repique is worth 60 points. Players must declare that they have a pique or repique, or else they do not receive any points for them.

hazard (an ancestor of craps)

The dice game Hazard is a gambling game that is played by a group of players with each player taking turns being the caster. The caster must match the wagers made by each of the other players and roll the dice attempting to get his goal number. If he rolls that number, he wins all the bets on the table. If he rolls a losing number, he must pay each of the other players at the table what was wagered.

- The minimum number of players needed for Hazard is 3 and the maximum is 8. The ideal number of players for Hazard is either 5 or 6 players.
- Choose a player to be the roller. He is known as the “caster.” The caster then makes a wager of how much he wishes on his ability to roll a winning roll of the dice. Any other player at the table may then call that wager by placing an equal wager to what the caster bet on the table and the caster must match each individual’s wager.
- Roll the dice for the main point. The caster must roll the two dice until he rolls a combined value on the 2 dice of 5, 6, 7, 8, or 9. This becomes the caster’s main point.
- Roll for the secondary point. The caster must now roll the dice, again trying to establish a secondary point. If the caster rolls a combined total of 2 or 3 on the dice when trying to roll a secondary point, he automatically loses and must pay each of the players that wagered. This is also the case if the caster had rolled a main point of 5, 6, 8, or 9 and rolls a 12 when rolling for his secondary point. The caster automatically wins though if he rolls his main point when rolling for a secondary point. He also wins if his main point is a 7 and he rolls an 11. If the caster wins, he collects all the wagers from the other players.
- Determining the secondary point based on the result of the roll. If the caster did not win or lose in Step 4, he now has a secondary point of somewhere between a 4 and a 12. The caster continues to roll the dice until his main point or secondary point shows up as the total of the 2 dice. If the caster rolls his main point first, he wins and collects the wagers from everyone at the table. If the caster rolls his secondary point first, he loses and must pay each of the other wagers.
- Pass the 2 dice to the next player clockwise around the table and he becomes the caster.

Ball Games

Tennis

In France, tennis was a favorite pastime for the nobles. It became also the preferred game amongst the bourgeois in the towns, and tennis-courts were built everywhere. They were so spacious that they were often converted into theatres.

The medieval game of tennis closely resembles modern handball games. While peasants played in open fields, royals built enclosed courts for their private tennis matches. Tennis balls were originally cloth pieces wound tightly into a sphere and stitched together. Players passed the ball to each other by hitting it with open palms. Later, players wore gloves to protect their hands, which were then wrapped with rattan or cording to give the ball more spring. Eventually, rackets made of parchment stretched across a wooden frame were introduced. The parchment was later replaced with catgut strings, which directly influenced our modern tennis racket designs.



Shinty (ancestor to hockey)

Medieval shinty was the ancestor of modern ice hockey. Originally created as a form of sword fighting practice, this game used curved sticks called "camans" and a leather ball. Two goals, called "hails," were set apart on a grassy field, and each was protected by a goalkeeper. This team sport was similar to hockey, as each team passed the ball to each other with the camans in order to hit it into the opposing hail. Tackling, blocking and fouls were part of the original game. Shinty was often played in the winter months, so the transition to playing on ice was natural. The original game of shinty is still played today in England and Scotland.

Skittles (early version of 10-pin bowling)

This game uses skittles much like those found in modern day 10-pin bowling. The skittles are placed at the end of an alley, and players throw wooden balls, typically a little larger than a tennis ball in size, to try to knock as many skittles over during one turn.

Skittles or Nine Pins has long been played in the Inns of England. In general, players take turns to throw wooden balls down a lane at the end of which are several wooden skittles in an attempt to knock them all over. There are a number of skittle games across England and there have been many more in the past. In Germany, in the 3rd or 4th century monks played a game with a kegel which was a club carried for self-defense. In the game, the kegel represented a sin or temptation and the monks would throw stones at it until they knocked it over. The modern German term for skittles is Kegelen.



Joseph Strutt tells us that this picture is from a 14th century "Book of Prayers". There are two 14th century manuscripts



which show a game called club Kayles (from the French "quilles" or skittles) and which depict a skittles game in which one skittle is bigger, differently shaped, and in most cases positioned so as to be the most difficult to knock over. The throwers, in the pictures, are about to launch a long club-like object at the skittles underarm. The large skittle is presumably a king pin as featured in some of the modern versions of skittles. The fact that the thrower is not using a ball is not at all unusual - the Skittles cousins, Aunt Sally, and various games played on a court in Northern Europe still uses a baton shaped stick to chuck at the doll and many modern skittles games throw a object called a "cheese" instead of a ball. A cheese is any "lump" which is used to throw at the skittles and shapes can vary from barrel shaped to, well, cheese shaped, really.

Billiards

In the 14th Century, the game of billiards was in great repute. It resembled the modern one only in name, as it was played on a level piece of ground with wooden balls that were struck with hooked sticks and mallets.

Bowls/Bocce

This game has many names of which I have mentioned three. Each variation has minor adjustments in the rules, but essentially are the same. The equipment required for the game is one small white ball (about 1 - 1 ½" in diameter) and 2-4 balls of about 3" diameter for each player. The field is a flat stretch of ground generally 10' wide by 60' long (the distance can vary depending on the age and skill of the players). Play starts by throwing the small white ball known as a "Jack", "Pallino", or "Cochonnet". The ball must land at least halfway up the designated field to be in play. The players then take turns trying to roll their balls closest to the "Jack". When a player succeeds in getting his ball closest, his turn ends. If a player runs out of balls before getting "Best Ball" then they must wait while the other players attempt to improve their positions.

A player can get "best ball" in several ways. First, they can simply roll their ball closest to the jack. He could also use his ball to hit another player's ball away or one of his own closer. The player can also hit the jack causing it to move away from the other players' balls.

At the end of each round, the player whose balls are closest gets one point for each ball nearer to the jack than any other players'. Games are usually played until a score of 15 is reached.

Gameball, Mob Football, Shrovetide Football

Shrovetide football, or medieval football, dates back to the third century. This highly competitive and dangerous sport was regularly played during Carnival between neighboring towns, villages or guilds. As in modern football, each team passed a leather ball in an effort to reach the opposing team's goal. There was no limit to the number of players allowed on the field and no rules against excessive force. Some variants only allowed passing with the hands while others allowed for the use of a player's entire body.

Archaic forms of football, typically classified as mob football, would be played between neighboring towns and villages, involving an unlimited number of players on opposing teams, who would clash in a heaving mass of people struggling to drag an inflated pig's bladder by any means possible to markers at each end of a town. Sometimes instead of markers, the teams would attempt to kick the bladder into the balcony of the opponents' church. A legend that these games in England evolved from a more ancient and bloody ritual of kicking the "Dane's head" is unlikely to be true. Shrovetide games survive in a number of English towns.



La Soule

Variations of Football, like la Soule or Soulette in France, or Calcio in Italy, were also popular. La Soule was played using a large ball of hay covered over with leather, the possession of which was contested by two opposing teams.

Stoolball (an ancestor to cricket & baseball)

In this game, the pitcher tries to hit a stool or stump with the ball, while the batter tries to defend the target using bare hands or a bat. Stool ball was known for being played by both women and men together and there are indications that it was a sort of springtime ritual, played at Easter time. In many stool ball games, tansy-cakes were the traditional winners' prize. Tansy-cakes were a traditional Easter time food. Unfortunately, no one knows exactly what the rules of the period versions of stool ball were. Since it was a folk game, it was likely to have varying rules at various times and places. From post-period references to the game, we know that in some versions of the game, there was no bat, and bare hands were used instead. Other versions had no base running, just a single stool or stump base that the batter was expected to defend. However, bats and running the bases were included in some versions, too.



Holiday Games

King of the Bean

Medieval Christmas games included "King of the Bean," where a small bean would be baked inside bread or cake, and the one who found it in their portion would be crowned king of the holiday feast. This was done on the 12th night of the celebration.



In France, it became "The King's Cake" and coincided with the Biblical story of the three kings visiting baby Jesus after his birth. A small trinket (typically a small ceramic doll) would be baked into the cake.

The French King's Cake consists of flaky puff pastry layers with a dense center of frangipane.



In America, this tradition has influenced our Southern Coast and coincides with Mardi gras. The most simple, is a ring of twisted bread similar to that used in brioche topped with icing or sugar, usually colored purple, green, and gold (the traditional Mardi Gras colors) with food coloring. Mobile king cakes are traditionally deep-fat-fried as a doughnut would be, and there are many variants, some in more recent years featuring a filling - the most common being cream cheese, praline, cinnamon, or strawberry. A so-called "Zulu King Cake" has chocolate icing with a coconut filing, because the Krewe of Zulu parade's most celebrated throw is a coconut. Usually, the trinket baked inside is a plastic baby Jesus. The winner is king for the day. At parties, the winner also has the honor of supplying the King's Cake during the next year's celebration.



Resources Used:

mastersgames.com
middle-ages.org
hubpages.com
historyforkids.org
Medieval-life.net
Medieval.net
pleacher.com
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Comcast.com
tradgames.org.uk
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