

STUDENT GUIDE 20.1

The Games People Play



Situation/Problem

You and a partner are to select a game that involves math and originated in another country. You are to write a historical background of the game, emphasizing how mathematics is important to the game, obtain or make the game, and teach others how to play it.

Possible Strategies

1. Select a game that you have played that you know was invented in another country.
2. Choose a country or a region of the world in which you are interested, and research a game that originated there.
3. Choose a game from Data Sheet 20.2. Or research and choose another game.

Special Considerations

- Look at Data Sheet 20.2, and carefully go over the list of possible games. Choosing one with which you are familiar will make your research easier.
- Choose board games, card games, or pen-and-pencil games. Avoid games that require physical action.
- Conduct research, using both print and online sources.
- Be aware that many games have several variations. Choose one variation, and record your source.
- During your research, you may find that the country of origin for your game is in dispute. Try to find at least two sources that agree, and use the information they provide. If all of your sources provide different information, choose one. Be sure to record the source.

The Games People Play (Cont'd.)

- As you research, look for the following information:
 - History of the game
 - Object of the game
 - Number of players
 - Types of playing pieces
 - Rules
 - How math is involved in the game
 - Any special evidence of the culture from which the game evolved
- After you have finished your research, write a short historical report about your game. Be sure to include the importance of math.
- Obtain or make a sample of your game. If you make it, create a board (if necessary), playing pieces, spinners, dice, and other parts. Include the object of the game and a copy of written rules.
- To avoid losing pieces, store game pieces in a shoe box, a plastic bag, or similar container.
- Become the expert on your game. With your partner, explain it to some of your classmates and show them how to play.

Games from Around the World

Following are some popular games and the country or region of their origin:

Achi —Ghana	Paiute Walnut Shell Game — Paiute Indians, Nevada
Alquerque —Arabia	Parcheesi —India
Backgammon —Mesopotamia	Patolli —Aztecs (Mexico)
Checkers —Europe	Pipopipette (also known as Boxes) —France
Derrah —Nigeria	Pong Hau K'i —China
Dominoes —Egypt	Seega —Egypt
Draughts —France	Senet —Egypt
Dreidel —Germany (although the game has been a part of Jewish culture)	Sey —West Africa
Go —Central Asia and Japan	Shut the Box —France
Goose Game —France	Sir Tommy —England
Hala tafl (Fox Game) —Scandinavia	Snakes and Ladders —India
Konane —Hawaii	Solitaire —France
Ko-no —China and Korea	Tac Tix —Denmark
Lu lu —Polynesia	Tapatan —Philippines
Magic Squares —China, Egypt, India, Western Europe	Totolospí —Hopi Indians, southwestern United States
Mu Torere —New Zealand	Wari —West Africa
Nim —China	Who Crosses the River First? — China
Nine Men's Morris (also known as Mill, Morelles, and Muhle) —Europe	Yote —West Africa
Ninuki-Renju —Japan	
Nvout —Korea	