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Mancala [Grades K-3]

Regents' Center for Early Developmental Education

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Notes Concerning *Mancala*

Level: Intermediate/advanced

Recommended # of players: 2

Materials: 48 stones; *Mancala* game board

Relationships: one-to-one correspondence; counting; strategies (planning moves ahead)

Notes:

Mancala is an ancient game, originating in Africa over three thousand years ago. Evidence exists that the game was played in Egypt before the year 1400 BC. Many variations of the rules of *Mancala* exist.

The game was probably originally played with pebbles, seeds, or shells on a board consisting of depressions made in the dirt or sand. Today, the game can be played with any small objects such as dried beans, acorns, buttons, etc., although the commercial versions of the game usually use glass stones of various colors. These glass stones are very satisfying to handle, and often serve as the initial attraction to the game.

Wooden gameboards are widely available from toy stores, but a simple *Mancala* gameboard can be made with an egg carton and two small containers to serve as the players' mancalas. For ease of play, especially for young players or players who are just learning, teachers might consider marking the bins with blue or red marks and adding green arrows to mark the direction players should move around the board (similar to the diagram on the rules page). However, numbering the bins (as in the diagram) is not necessary, and may even serve to confuse some children.

This game is simple enough for even kindergarteners to play, yet complex enough that adults find it challenging and enjoyable.

As players gain experience, they begin to develop strategies for winning that include both offensive and defensive strategies. For example, players usually learn very quickly that on their first move, they should choose the 4th bin from their mancala (Player A's bin 3 from the diagram on the rules page) so that they get a second turn. Gradually, they learn how to prevent having stones in bins opposite an empty bin on the other player's side, so that those stones do not get captured.

Some rules of *Mancala* state that players are not allowed to touch the stones in the bins in order to count them, but this rule seems unnecessarily restrictive for young children.

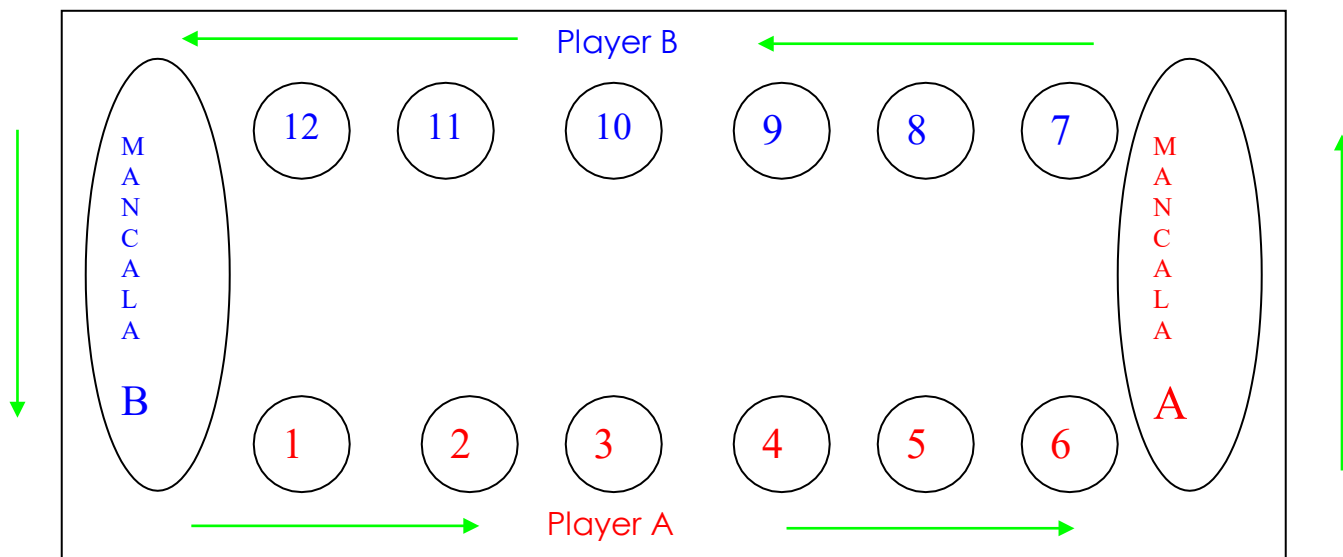
Printing Notes: The game board should be printed on legal size (8 ½ x 14") paper

Mancala for 2

(2 players)

Materials: 48 stones, one Mancala board (see diagram, below)

Objective: Collect as many stones in your Mancala as possible.



To play:

1. Players place 4 stones in each of the numbered bins (1-12). In the diagram above, Player A's bins are the red numbers 1-6. Player B's bins are the blue numbers 7-12.
2. Players decide who goes first.
3. Players take turns moving their stones. On their turn, players pick up all of the stones in one of the bins on their side of the board. Players then place one stone at a time in each bin, moving counter-clockwise around the board. Players place a stone in their own Mancala, but not in the other player's Mancala. Players skip the other player's Mancala and place the stones in the next numbered bin.
4. If the last stone is placed in the player's Mancala, then the player may take another turn (return to step 3).
5. If the last stone is placed in an empty bin on the player's side of the board, then the player takes all the stones in the other player's bin directly opposite, as well as the one stone in his or her bin, and places them in his or her Mancala. (For example, if Player A places the last stone in bin 3, and bin 3 was empty, he or she takes that stone, plus the stones in bin 10 and places them all in his or her Mancala.)
6. The game ends when one player's six bins are empty. The other player then places the remaining stones on his or her side into his or her Mancala. The player with the most stones in his or her Mancala is the winner.