

International Math

Activity 2 - Mancala

The game of Mancala originated in Africa, and was originally played in sand with coloured stones.

For this activity, you will need: a cardboard egg carton (dozen size), two used (washed) tuna cans, craft paint, a paintbrush and 48 marbles, beans or beads.

How to make the game:

1. Paint the egg carton in a colour you like and let dry.
2. Paint the tuna cans on the outside and let them dry. If you paint the inside, the paint will chip off as you play the game.
3. Paint designs on the side of the egg carton and tuna cans if you wish. Let them dry.

Playing Mancala:

Object: Two players compete against each other to collect as many marbles in their mancala as they can before one of the players clears his side of the egg carton of all its marbles.

Setting up the game: Place the egg carton between the two players, lengthwise. The cup closest to you is your side of the board. The Mancala (tuna can) to your right is yours. Place four marbles in each of the cups. Choose a player to go first.



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Playing the game: The first player picks up all the marbles in one of his cups. The player then starts at the first cup to the right and drops one marble in each cup until he runs out of the marbles in his hand. If he reaches the end of his side, he is to drop one marble in his Mancala, then continue around to the other side of the board. He is not, however, to drop a marble in his opponent's Mancala.

If the player places his last marble in his own Mancala, the player gets to play again. Example: If you start the game, a good play may be to choose the cup that is located fourth from the right. You would pick up four marbles, dropping one in each cup and ending in your Mancala. This gives you an extra turn.

If a player drops his last marble on his side of the board in an empty cup, he captures all the marbles in his opponent's cup directly across from that cup. All captured marbles, plus the capturing marble, are then put in the player's Mancala.

Players are not allowed to touch marbles in order to count them. If you touch your marbles, you must play that cup.

Winning the game: The game ends when one player runs out of marbles on his side of the egg carton. When the game ends, the other player gets to take all the stones from his side of the egg carton and place them in his own Mancala. Strategy sets in by determining whether it is wiser to go out or play longer, depending on how many stones are in the opposing player's cups.

Note: The game rules for Mancala vary, so if you would like to find other variations, check with your local librarian who may be able to find you some additional rule books.



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