Make & Play: Mancala

Mancala is an ancient game from Africa. Originally played by digging shallow holes in the ground, today it is played around the world using wooden boards. You’ll use an egg carton to make yours, but check out our online collection to be inspired!

MATERIALS: Egg carton, Scissors, Glue, 48 game pieces (you can use any small objects, such as marbles, sea shells, buttons, dried beans, beads, pebbles, etc.), Markers or acrylic paint to decorate your game board.

HOW TO BUILD YOUR MANCALA BOARD

1. Cut the lid off of an egg carton. A dozen carton works best, but feel free to improvise – we are!

2. Cut the lid in half. Glue or tape the two ends to the bottom of the egg carton bottom. This creates a larger receptacle at both ends of the egg carton.

3. Decorate your mancala game board – you can use acrylic paint or markers. Make sure the game board is dry before you start playing.

4. You are ready to play! Follow the directions below to challenge a friend or family member!
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OBJECT OF THE GAME
Capture the most pieces, or counters, from your opponent(s) to end game.

GAME SET UP
1. Sit opposite of one another with long side of board facing you
2. The long side of the board closest to you is your side of the board
3. Place 4 counters (stones, beads, dried beans, candy – whatever you have) in all 12 cups (small holes) on board.

HOW TO PLAY
1. Select a player to go first
2. Pick up all counters from one (1) cup on your side of the board
3. Drop one piece into each cup in a counter-clockwise motion
4. If you have enough pieces include a counter in YOUR mancala
5. If enough, continue to drop counters in your opponent’s side of board
   a. DO NOT drop counter into your opponent’s mancala (large cup)

THE LAST STONE
1. If your last counter ends up in your mancala, you get another turn
2. If your last counter lands in an empty cup on YOUR SIDE of the board, you get that last stone plus all the stones in the opposite cup
3. If your last counter lands in an empty cup on your OPPONENT’S side, it is the next players turn

HOW TO WIN
As soon as all of the small cups on one side of the board have been emptied, the game is over. Any stones leftover on the opposite side are added to that player’s mancala. The player with the most pieces in their mancala wins the game!

For 2 players

Mancala (Player A)

Mancala (Player B)

CUPS

Penn Museum