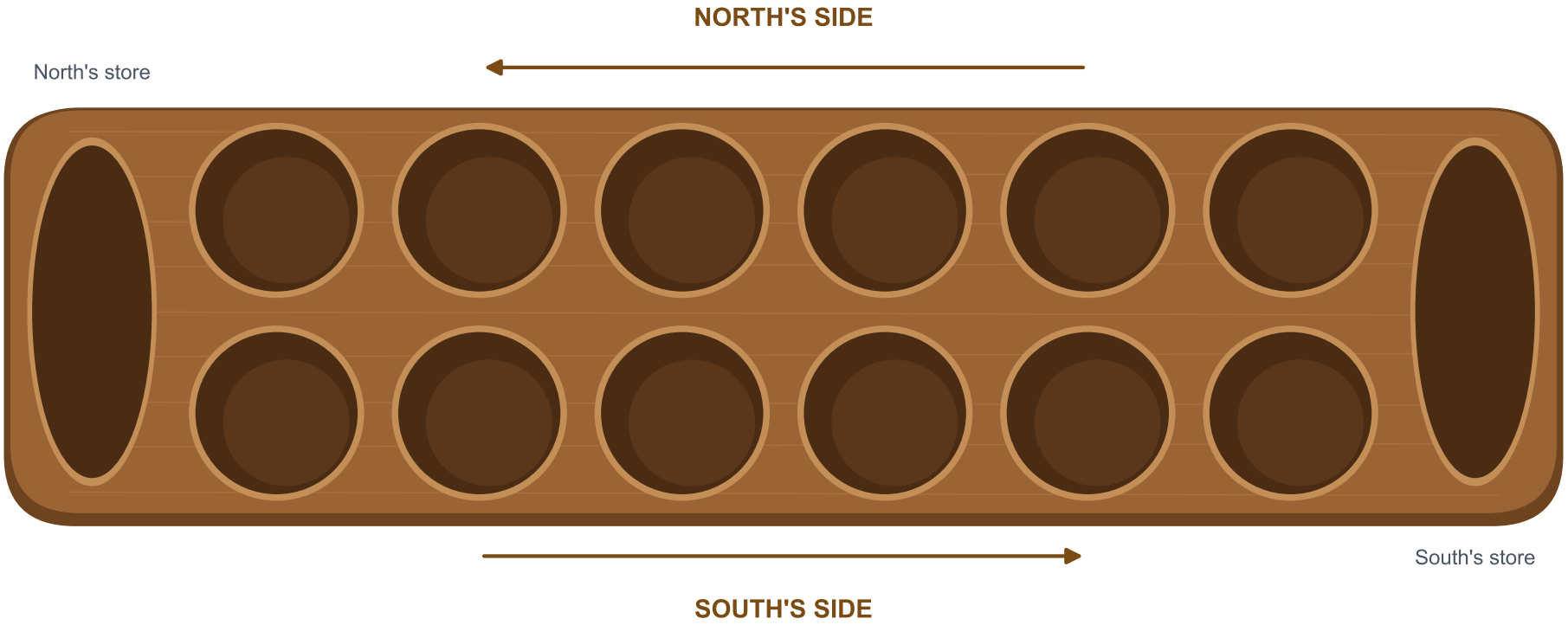
Oware

Game board · West Africa · 2 players · you need 48 beans, buttons or pebbles

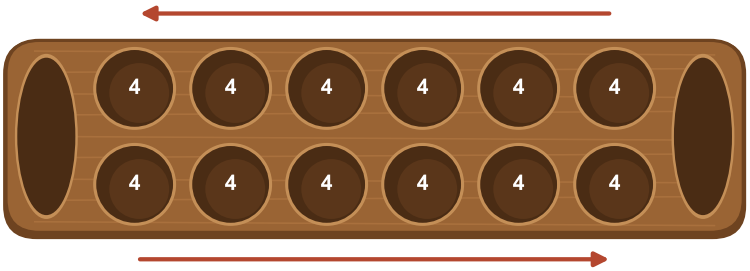


Start with 4 seeds in every pit. Seeds always travel counterclockwise (follow the arrows). Captured seeds go in your store.

The rules are on the "How to Play" page.

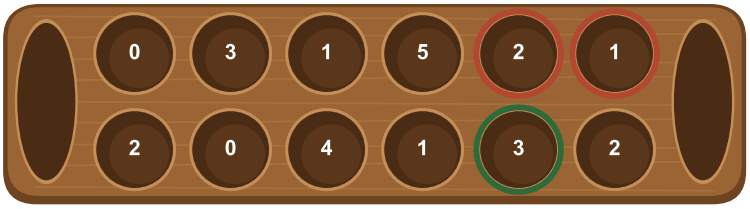
Oware: How to Play

2 players · about 20-40 minutes · ages 8 and up



Start

4 seeds in every pit. North owns the top row, South the bottom row. Seeds are always sown counterclockwise, following the red arrows.



A capture (shown before the move)

South sows the 3 seeds in the green pit, one into each of the next 3 pits. North's 1 becomes 2 and 2 becomes 3, so South captures 2 + 3 = 5 seeds (red pits).

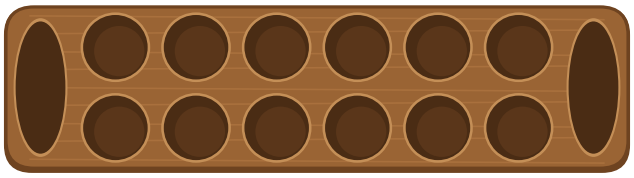
1. **Set up**
   Put 4 seeds in each of the 12 pits (48 in all). Each player owns the 6 pits on their side, plus the store on their right. Flip a coin to see who goes first.
2. **Sow**
   On your turn, pick up ALL the seeds from one pit on your side. Going counterclockwise, drop one seed in each pit after it: along your side, then onto your opponent's side. Never drop seeds in a store.
3. **Big pits**
   If a pit holds 12 or more seeds, you go all the way around the board. Skip the pit you emptied: it stays empty.
4. **Capture**
   If your LAST seed lands in a pit on your opponent's side and makes it 2 or 3, take those seeds into your store. Then check the pit you dropped a seed in just before that one: if it is on their side and has 2 or 3, take it too. Keep going back until a pit is not 2 or 3.
5. **Too greedy**
   If a move would capture every seed on your opponent's side, you may make it, but you capture nothing that turn.
6. **Feed**
   If your opponent has no seeds on their side, you must make a move that gives them some. If no move can, the game ends and you keep the seeds left on your side.
7. **Win**
   The first player to capture 25 seeds wins. 24 each is a tie. If the game ends early, or nobody can capture any more (a few seeds just go round), each player adds the seeds on their side to their store. Most seeds wins.

About these rules: Oware is played with slightly different rules in different places. These are the "abapa" rules used in Ghana and at oware tournaments today.

Oware

Name _____

Read about the seed-sowing game of West Africa.



An oware board: two rows of six pits, with a store at each end.

Oware is a seed-sowing game from West Africa. It is played most of all in Ghana, where the Akan people have played it for hundreds of years. It belongs to the mancala family, a group of hundreds of games played across Africa and beyond. The word mancala comes from an Arabic word that means "to move."

An Akan story explains the name. A man and a woman loved playing oware so much that they could not stop, so they got married and kept on playing. In the Twi language, oware is often said to mean "he (or she) marries."

An oware board is usually carved from a single piece of wood, with two rows of six pits. Players use 48 seeds, pebbles or shells. Mancala boards cut into rock have also been found at sites across Africa, but they are very hard to date, so nobody knows exactly how old these games are.

Oware also traveled across the Atlantic Ocean. In Antigua and Barbuda it is called warri, and it is the national game. Today people play oware all over the world, and there are clubs and tournaments for the best players.

Questions

1. Which family of games does oware belong to?

2. What does the word mancala come from?

3. What does the Akan story say about the name oware?

4. What is oware called in Antigua and Barbuda?