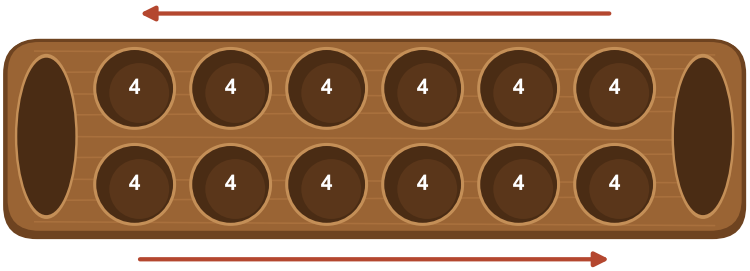
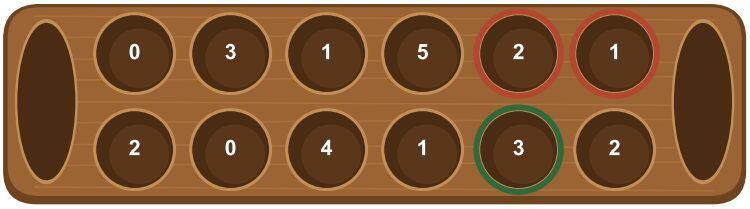
Oware: How to Play

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.