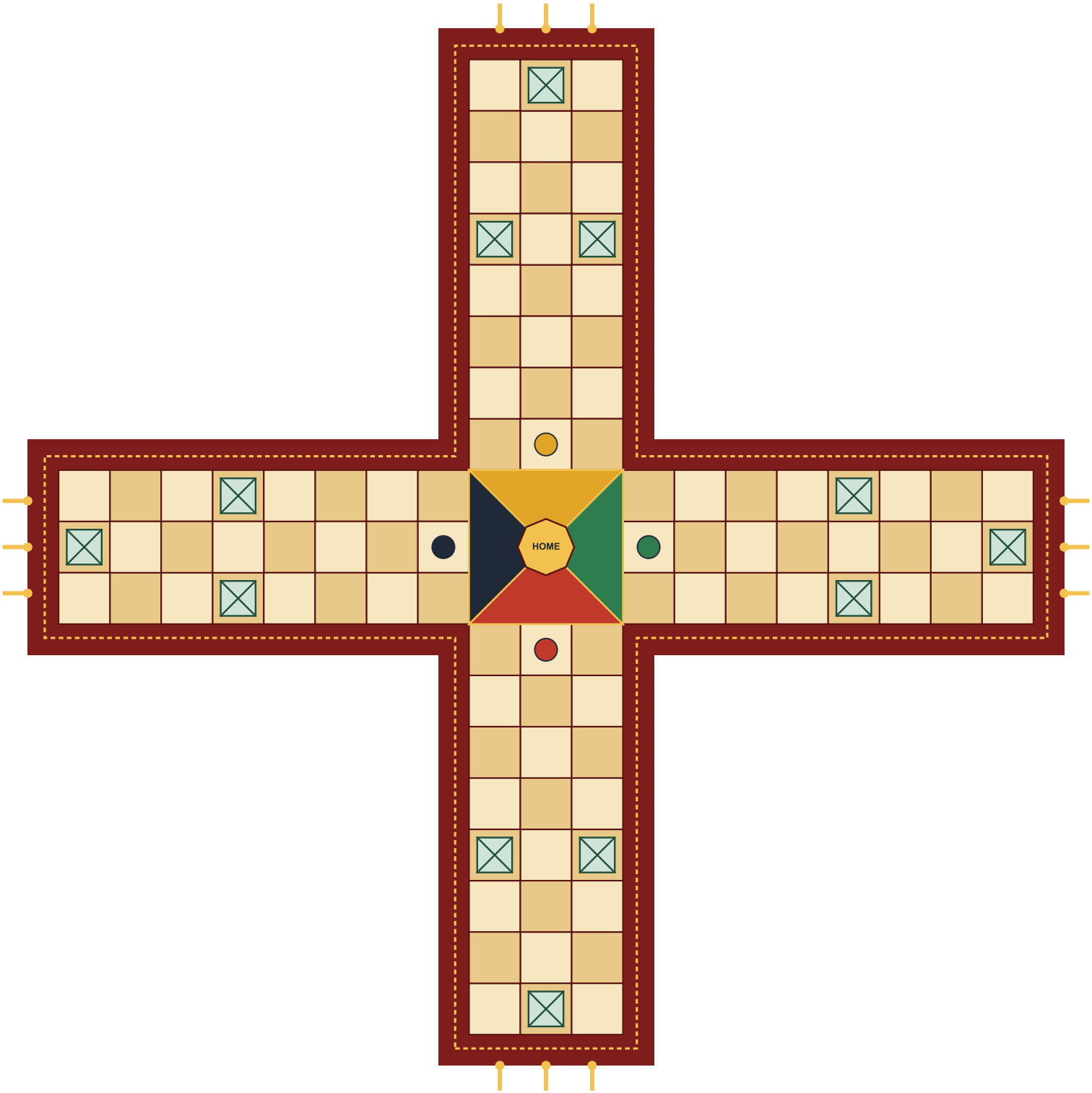
Pachisi

Game board · India · 2 or 4 players



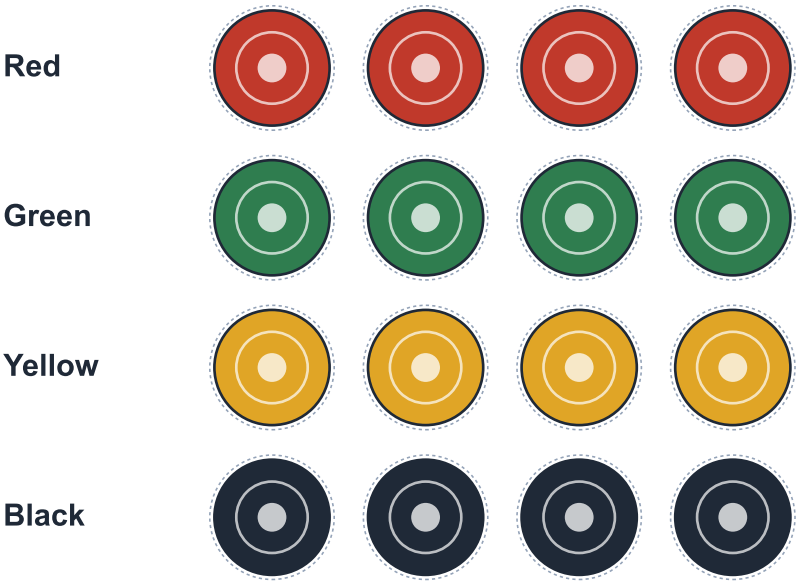
Castle: a piece here is safe

Each color's first square

Red sits at the bottom, then Green, Yellow and Black going around counterclockwise. The rules are on the "How to Play" page.

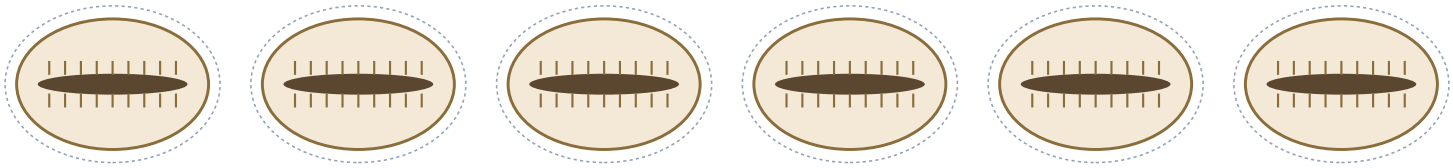
Pachisi: Pieces and Shells

Cut out 4 pieces in each color and 6 cowrie shells.



Cowrie shells (make 6)

Print on card stock if you can. The printed side is the shell's mouth. The back is blank.



How to count a throw: count the mouths facing up

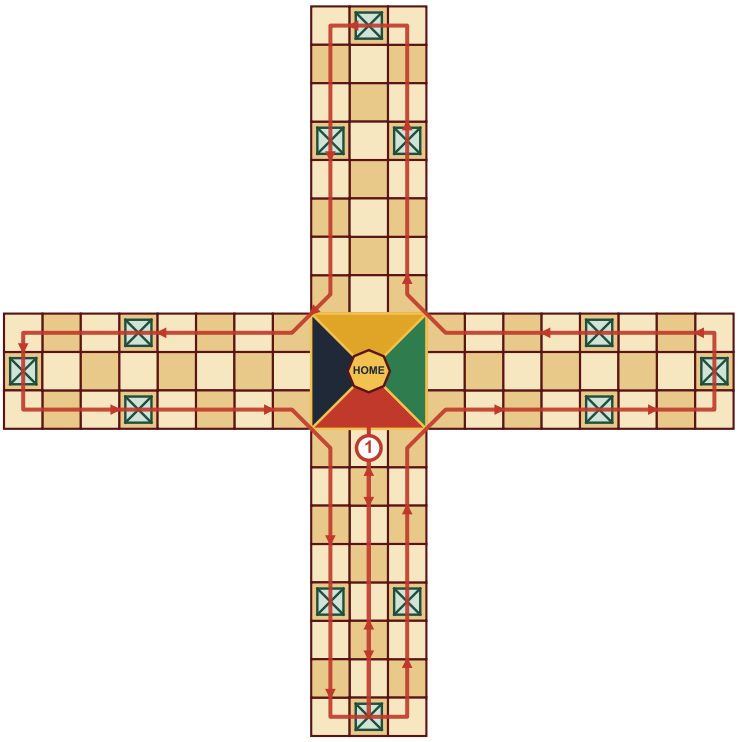
Mouths up	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
Move	**25**	**10**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**

Shaded throws (25, 10 and 6) let you throw again after you move.

No shells? Flip 6 coins and count the heads as mouths up.

Pachisi: How to Play

2 or 4 players · about 45-90 minutes (2 pieces each: about 30) · ages 8 and up



Red's path

Red sits at the bottom. A red piece comes out of the center onto square 1, goes down the middle of the bottom arm, then turns right and travels around the outside of all four arms, counter-clockwise.

Back at the bottom arm it goes up the middle and into the center: home. That is 83 squares, plus 1 more to get home.

Every color does the same from its own arm.

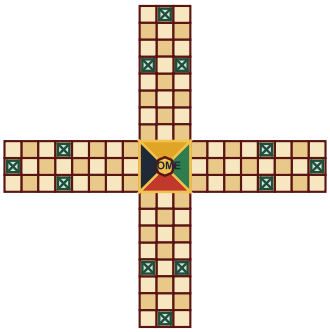
1. **Set up**
   Play with 2 players (sit opposite) or 4 players in 2 teams (partners sit opposite: Red with Yellow, Green with Black). Each player has 4 pieces in the center (use 2 each for a shorter game). Everyone throws: the biggest move goes first (25 is biggest; tie: throw again), then turns go to the right.
2. **Throw**
   Throw the 6 shells and count the mouths facing up. No shells? Use 6 coins: heads up counts as a mouth. 0 up is 25, 1 up is 10, 2 to 6 up is 2 to 6. After a 25, 10 or 6, throw again.
3. **Move**
   Move one piece that many squares (leaving the center, a 2 puts it on square 2). Every piece starts by coming down the middle of its own arm, goes all the way around the outside of the board, then back up the middle and into the center. If you can move, you must.
4. **Capture**
   Land on an opponent's piece on a plain square and it goes back to the center to start again. Then you throw again. You never capture your partner. Your own pieces, and your partner's, may share a square.
5. **Castles**
   Castle squares (with an X) are safe: you may not land on a castle that has an opponent's piece.
6. **Home**
   You need the exact number to reach the center, except from the last square: any throw takes it home. If a throw is too big for every piece, your turn is over, even after a 25, 10 or 6.
7. **Win**
   The first player, or team, with all their pieces home wins.

About these rules: Pachisi has been played in India for hundreds of years, with many family rules. These are a simple version of the rules most often written down, with 6 shells instead of 7.

Pachisi

Name _____

Read about "the game of twenty-five," a race game from India.



A Pachisi board. Real boards are cloth, embroidered by hand.

Pachisi is a race game from India. Its name comes from the Hindi word for twenty-five, the biggest number you can throw. Nobody knows exactly how old the game is. The oldest clear records of it come from the 1500s, when the Mughal emperors ruled much of India.

The board is usually a cloth shaped like a cross, sewn or embroidered in bright colors, so it can be folded up and carried anywhere. Instead of dice, players throw six or seven cowrie shells, small shiny seashells, and count how many land with their opening facing up.

The Mughal emperor Akbar loved the game. At his palace city of Fatehpur Sikri, built in the 1570s, a giant board was laid out in the courtyard with red and white stone squares. Stories say Akbar and his friends played on it with real people standing on the squares as the pieces.

Travelers took the game to other countries, and new versions spread around the world. In England it became Ludo, and in the United States a version called Parcheesi has been sold since the 1800s. Many families play a game that comes from Pachisi without knowing it.

Questions

1. What does the name Pachisi mean?

2. What do Pachisi players throw instead of dice?

3. What was special about the board at Fatehpur Sikri?

4. Name a game played today that comes from Pachisi.