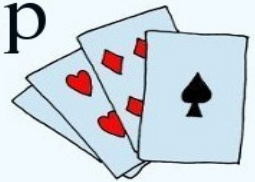
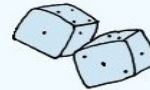


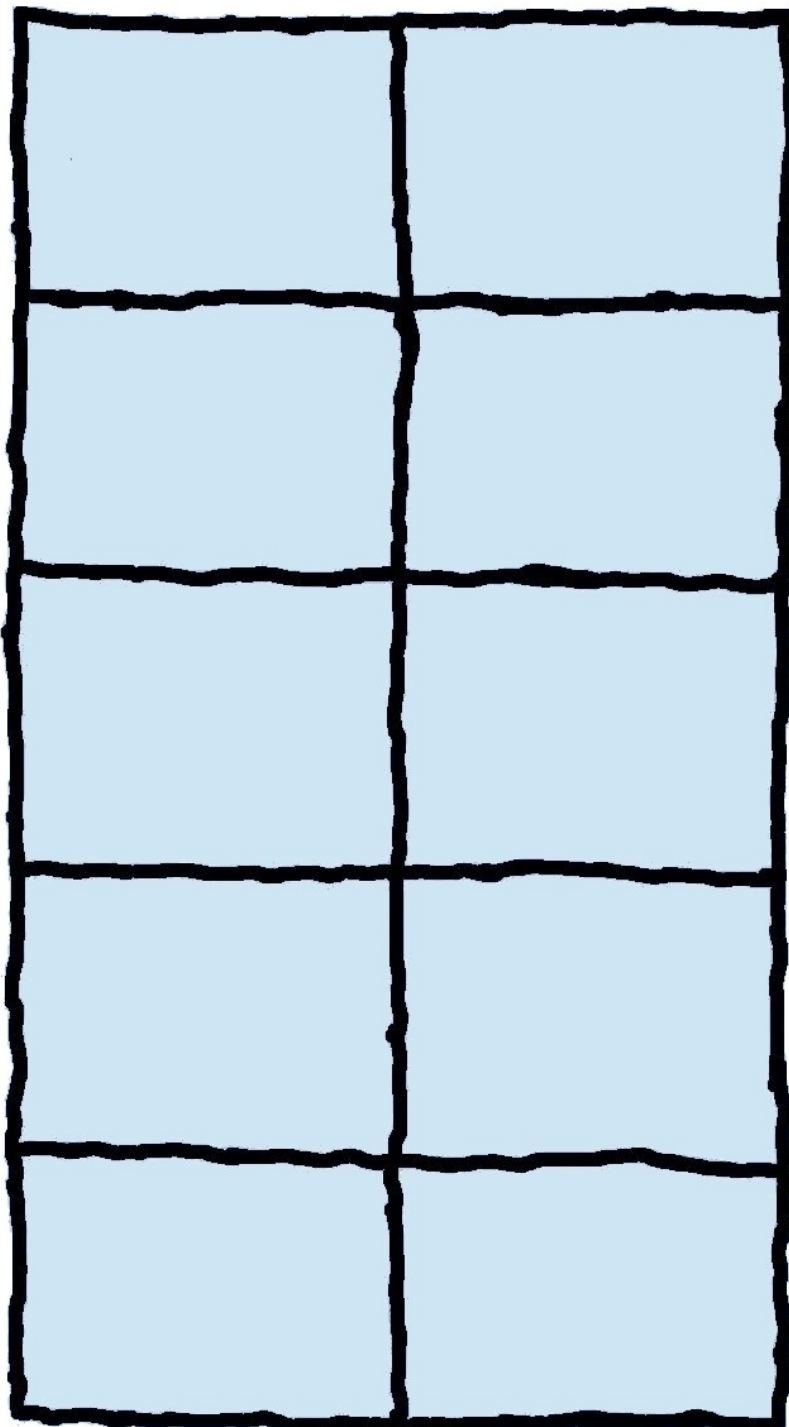
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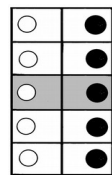
A GAME FOR TWO PLAYERS. PRINT OUT THE PAGE OR DRAW A COPY OF THE BOARD - TAKE A LOOK AT <https://www.thehistoricgameshop.co.uk/the-historic-games-club.html> FOR IDEAS FOR MAKING OR FINDING YOUR OWN GAMES PIECES, AND HOW TO PLAY IF YOU HAVE NO OPPONENT. RULES ARE ON PAGE 2!

No. 4. Five Lines, or Pente Grammai



Our fourth Historic Games Club game was played by the Ancient Greeks and Romans. The Greeks played the game on a board of five parallel lines, but archaeological finds show that the Romans used a board with 10 rectangles, as in our board; and sometimes a “double” board of 22 rectangles. There are many ancient Greek pottery vases with pictures of the mythological heroes Achilles (famous for his heel, among other things) and Ajax (a grandson of Zeus, said to have been a giant) playing a game during the Trojan Wars. In some of the pictures the game looks like Five Lines (or as the Greeks might have called it, Pente Grammai – which means – yes, you’ve guessed it - five lines!). No-one knows what the Ancient Greeks or the Romans called the game, or exactly how they played it, but experts on ancient languages and board games have used evidence from pictures, writings and archaeological finds to make an educated guess!

The game is for two players, and you will need a dice (or, if you prefer, a die – the original singular of dice!); plus five counters each. Start with the pieces in the position shown here:



All pieces move in the same direction (choose clockwise or anticlockwise), and only one piece at a time is allowed to stay in any of the rectangles, EXCEPT the two in the middle, which are shaded on the diagram. The Romans called this the “sacred (or holy) line”; and the aim of the game is to get all five of your pieces on (or in) the sacred line.

Player one rolls the dice, then finds a piece which can move to a sacred line rectangle, counting round the number on the dice in the direction you’ve chosen. Now the other player rolls the dice. This time, depending on the number rolled, there might be a choice of two moves - either to a sacred rectangle, or to the rectangle left empty by player one. Continue taking turns, moving a piece to the sacred line, or to an empty rectangle. You MUST move a piece on each turn, even if your only choice is to move a piece already on the sacred line. The first player to get all five of their pieces on the sacred line is the winner!

This is the simplest version of the game – you can make it more difficult by having the winning position only on half of the sacred line (usually the opposite side from the starting position for each player). Or try making a double board like the Romans (add 6 extra sets of rectangles to the board), with two extra sacred lines at rows three and nine. Then play with two dice, either moving two pieces in one turn, or adding the two numbers together to move one piece.

HAPPY PLAYING!

Let us know how you get on at <https://www.thehistoricgamesshop.co.uk/>