



PACHISI

VARIANT LIBRARY

The ancient Indian race game behind Ludo, Sorry!, and Trouble

3

VARIANTS

2-4

PLAYERS

8+

AGE

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VARIANT LIBRARY

Pachisi is an ancient Indian cross-and-circle race game documented from approximately 500 CE, with precursor forms identified in the Painted Grey Ware period (c. 1100–800 BCE). The name derives from the Hindi word paccīs (twenty-five), the highest score achievable in the standard cowrie shell throw.

The game is the direct public domain ancestor of several major modern commercial titles:

- ♦ Ludo (1896, UK)
- ♦ Sorry! (1929, United States)
- ♦ Trouble (1965, United States)
- ♦ Aggravation (1962, United States)
- ♦ Parcheesi (US commercial edition)

This library documents only the original public domain Pachisi forms. Ludo, Sorry!, Trouble, and their commercial descendants are not included.

This library includes 3 variants.

VARIANTS

- ♦ [Standard Pachisi](#) — 4 players, six cowrie shells, the foundational form
- ♦ [2-Player Pachisi](#) — 2-player adaptation with teams on the standard board
- ♦ [Seven-Shell Pachisi](#) — 7-cowrie variant with named throw values



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PACHISI · VARIANT 1 OF 3

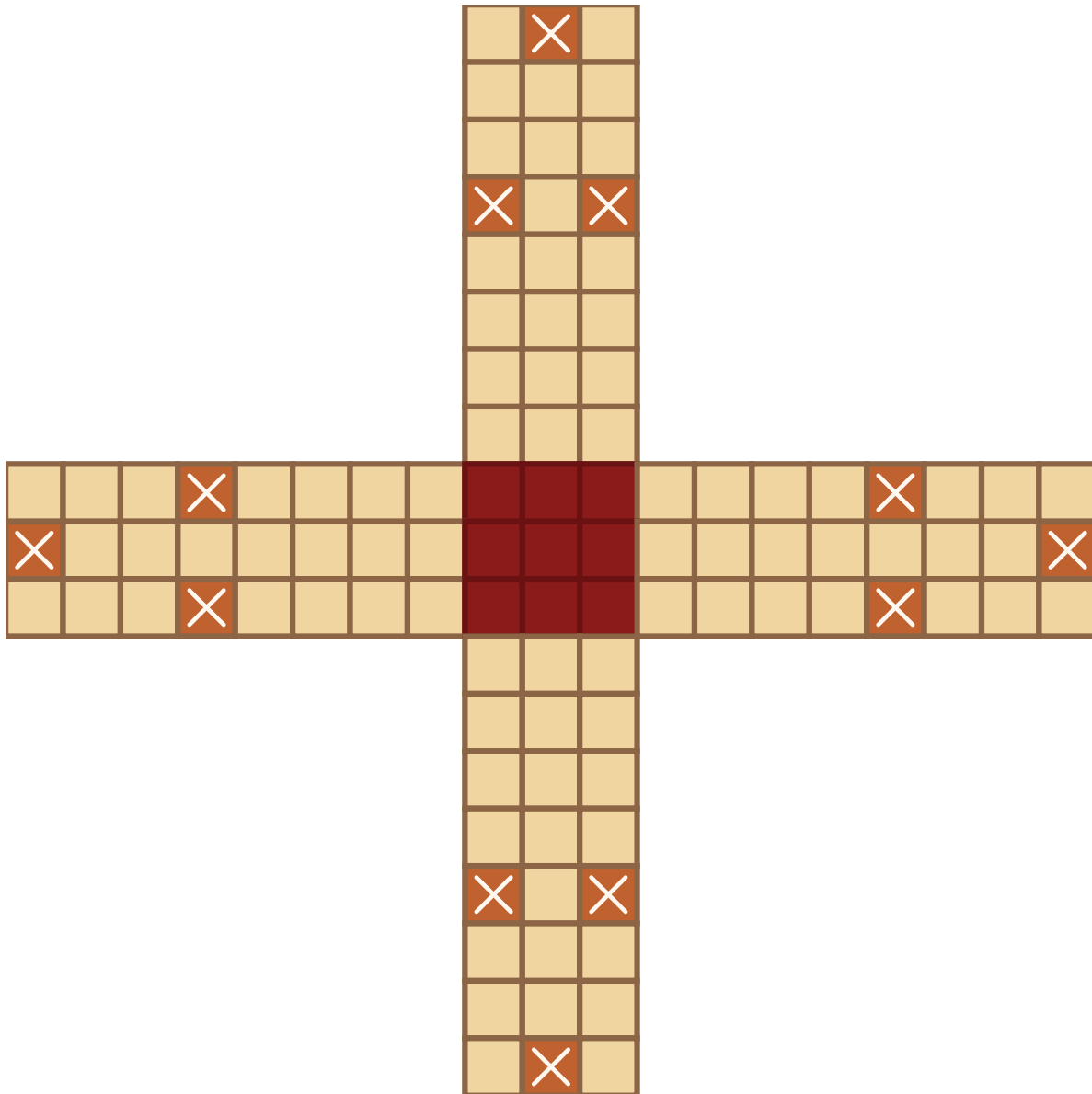
Pachisi (Standard)

Cross-shaped cloth board
BOARD

4
PLAYERS

PACHISI (STANDARD)

The foundational four-player form of Pachisi, played since at least 500 CE and associated with the Mughal court of Emperor Akbar, who is said to have had a life-sized Pachisi court at Fatehpur Sikri where humans served as the playing pieces.



Pachisi — cross-shaped board layout with Charkoni and castle squares

<https://engine.moddable.games/play/?game=pachisi&variant=standard>

EQUIPMENT

ITEM	QUANTITY	NOTES
Board	1	Cross-shaped cloth board; three columns of eight squares per arm; Charkoni (3×3) in centre
Pieces	16	4 per player; traditionally Black, Red, Green, and Yellow
Cowrie shells	6	Thrown together; value determined by mouths (openings) facing up

SETUP

Players: Four players: Black, Red, Green, Yellow (traditional turn order).

Starting position: All four pieces per player begin in the Charkoni (the large central square). One piece per player starts active; the remaining three pieces require a grace roll to enter play.

Turn order: Black moves first, then Red, Green, Yellow, clockwise.

COWRIE SHELL SYSTEM

Six cowrie shells are thrown together at the start of each turn. The number of shells landing with the opening (mouth) facing up determines the move value:

MOUTHS UP	MOVE VALUE	GRACE (EXTRA THROW)?
0	25	Yes
1	10	Yes
2	2	No
3	3	No
4	4	No
5	5	No
6	6	Yes

Grace: On a grace throw (0, 1, or 6 mouths up), the player takes an additional throw after moving.

BOARD LAYOUT

The board is cross-shaped. The Charkoni (centre 3×3 area) is the starting and finishing position for all pieces. Each of the four arms consists of three columns of eight squares, giving 24 squares per arm.

Castle squares (safe squares): Twelve squares are marked with a cross or special pattern. A piece on a castle square cannot be captured:

- ♦ The tip of the middle column in each arm (4 squares total)
- ♦ The 4th square from the tip in each outer column of each arm (8 squares total)

Four of the castle squares are positioned exactly 25 move-values from the Charkoni. A common end-game strategy is to park returning pieces on these squares and wait for a throw of 25 to finish directly. This is the origin of the game's name.

MOVEMENT

Entering play: The first piece per player enters the board immediately (starts active). The remaining three pieces require a grace throw (0, 1, or 6 mouths up) to activate and enter.

Path: Each player's pieces travel down the middle column of their own arm (away from the Charkoni), then counter-clockwise around the outer columns of the other three arms, and finally return up the middle column of their home arm back to the Charkoni.

Returning home: A piece re-enters the Charkoni by an exact throw only. A piece on the final square of its home arm's middle column requires the exact remaining move value to finish; it may not overshoot.

CAPTURE

Landing on a square (other than a castle square) occupied by an opponent's piece or pieces captures all of the opponent's pieces on that square. Captured pieces return to the Charkoni and may only re-enter with a grace throw.

A player who makes a capture earns an additional throw.

Optional rule: In some versions, a player may not return their pieces to the Charkoni to finish unless they have first captured at least one opponent piece.

TEAMS

Pachisi is commonly played in two teams: Yellow and Black form one team, Red and Green the other. The first team to return all eight of their combined pieces to the Charkoni wins.

WINNING

The first player (or team) to return all four pieces to the Charkoni wins.

ATTRIBUTION

Pachisi. Public domain (origin c. 500 CE, precursors to c. 1100 BCE). Sources: Wikipedia (CC-BY-SA); jkc33/senior-project, MIT licence; edm00se/awesome-board-games (public domain listing); labforadvancedstudy/books (historical context).

PACHISI · VARIANT 2 OF 3

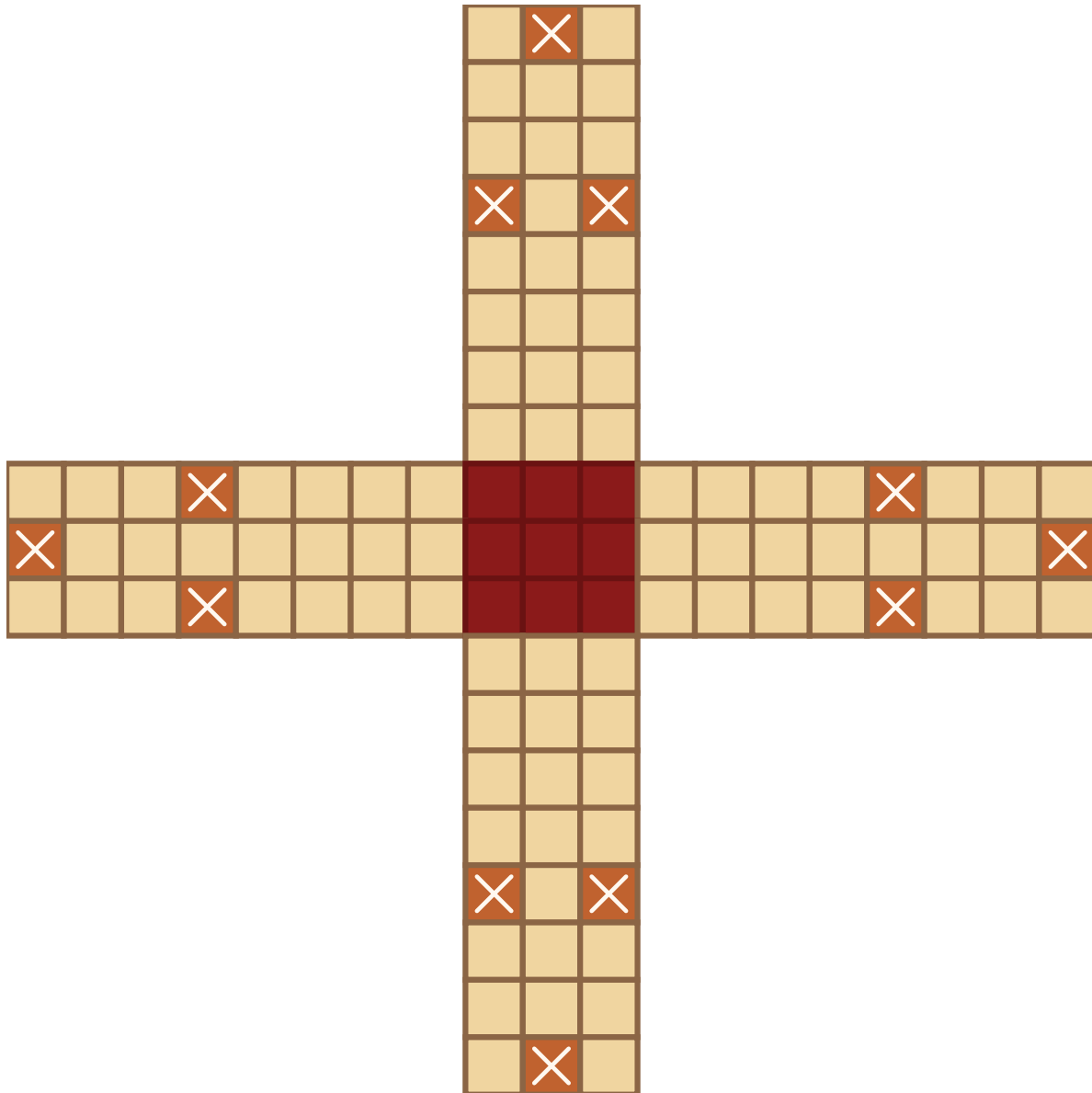
2-Player Pachisi

Cross-shaped cloth board
BOARD

2
PLAYERS

2-PLAYER PACHISI

The two-player form of Pachisi, played with the same board, cowrie shells, and rules as the standard four-player game. Each player controls two sets of pieces, managing the arms on opposite sides of the board.



Pachisi — cross-shaped board layout with Charkoni and castle squares

<https://engine.moddable.games/play/?game=pachisi&variant=two-player>

SETUP

Players: Two players.

Piece allocation: One player controls Yellow and Black pieces; the other controls Red and Green. Each player therefore manages eight pieces in total.

All eight pieces per player begin in the Charkoni. One piece per colour starts active (two active pieces per player at the start); remaining pieces require a grace throw to enter play.

Equipment and cowrie shell system: Identical to [Standard Pachisi](#). See the Standard rules for the full cowrie shell throw table.

MOVEMENT

Each player may move pieces of either of their two colours on each turn. The movement path, castle squares, capture rules, and grace rules are identical to the standard four-player game.

Capture: A player's own pieces of different colours may not capture each other. Only opponent pieces are subject to capture.

WINNING

The first player to return all eight of their pieces (four of each colour) to the Charkoni wins.

ATTRIBUTION

Pachisi. Public domain. Two-player rules from Wikipedia (CC-BY-SA).

PACHISI · VARIANT 3 OF 3

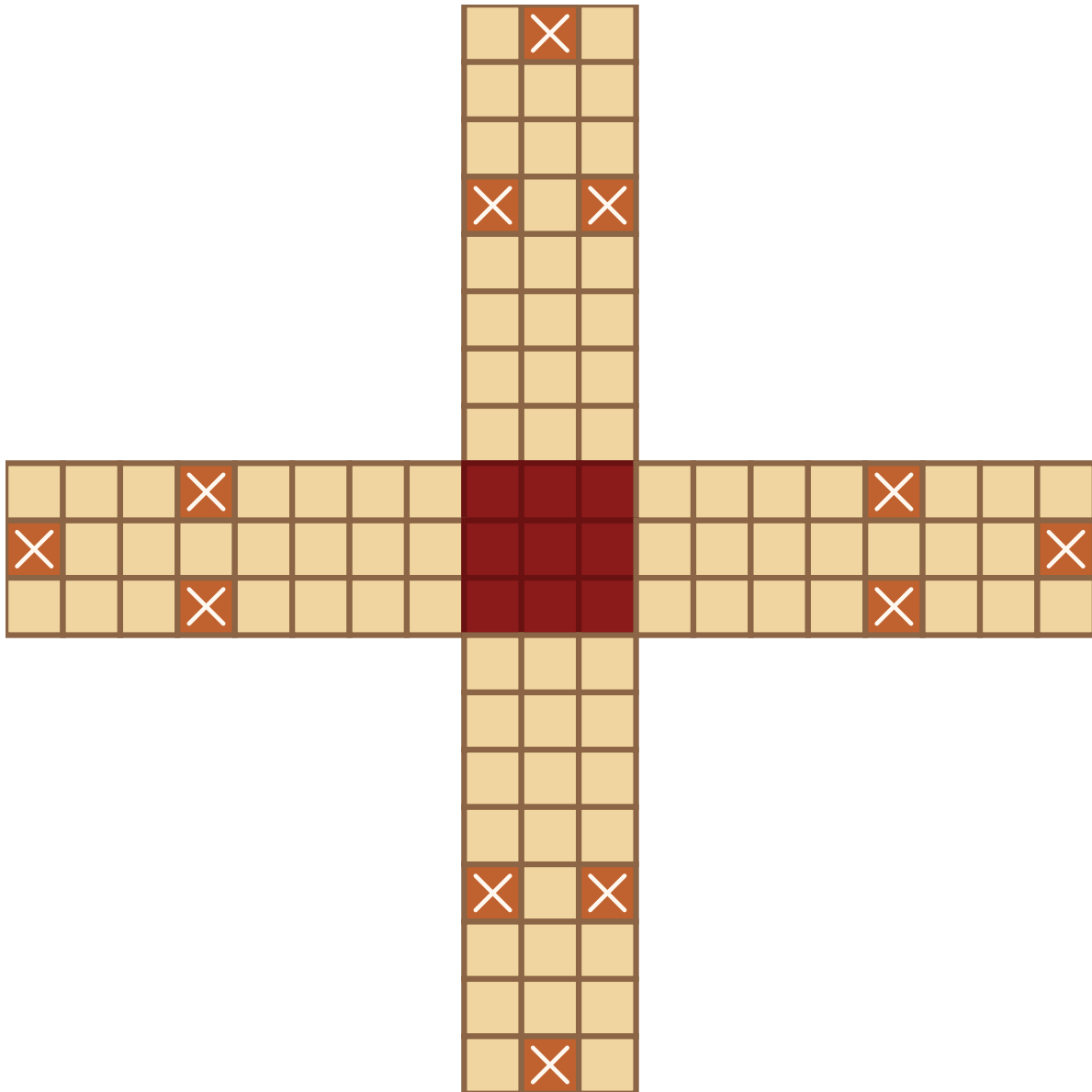
Seven-Shell Pachisi

Cross-shaped cloth board
BOARD

2-4
PLAYERS

SEVEN-SHELL PACHISI

A documented variant of Pachisi played with seven cowrie shells rather than six. Each throw value carries a traditional Hindi name. The seven-shell system produces a different probability distribution and enables higher-scoring throws, with a maximum of 35 (Paintees) compared to 25 in the standard game.



Pachisi — cross-shaped board layout with Charkoni and castle squares

<https://engine.moddable.games/play/?game=pachisi&variant=seven-shell>

SEVEN-SHELL THROW TABLE

Seven cowrie shells are thrown together. The number of shells landing with the mouth (opening) facing up determines the move value:

MOUTHS UP	TRADITIONAL NAME	MOVE VALUE	GRACE (EXTRA THROW)?
0	Sat	7	Yes
1	Dus	10	Yes
2	Dooga	2	No
3	Teeni	3	No
4	Chari	4	No
5	Pachees	25	Yes
6	Paintees	35	Yes
7	Chaudah	14	Yes

Grace: A grace throw is earned on results of 0, 1, 5, 6, or 7 mouths up.

RULES

All other rules are identical to [Standard Pachisi](#): the board layout, castle squares, Charkoni, movement path, capture mechanics, and winning condition are unchanged. Only the randomisation system differs.

ATTRIBUTION

Seven-Shell Pachisi. Public domain. Throw table from Wikipedia (CC-BY-SA), Pachisi article, seven-cowrie variant section.