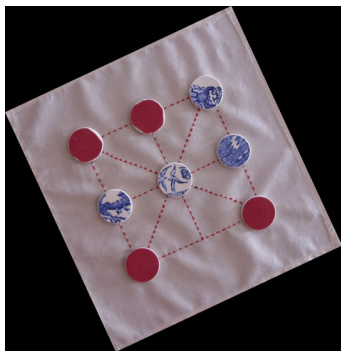


Achi

Two-player African strategy game



Royall House & Slave Quarters
Medford, Massachusetts

Archaeologists on our site unearthed pieces of broken tile and dishes in the Slave Quarters yard that had been shaped by hand into circles and squares, perhaps for use as gaming pieces. We assume enslaved Africans crafted them in the 1700s.

These gaming pieces may have been used in a game like Achi or Three Men's Morris, which was common to colonial America. Both adults and children would have played these games.

How to Play:

The board is empty in the beginning, and players decide who goes first.

Drop phase: Players take turns placing their pieces, one at a time, on any of the 9 spaces on the board where the lines intersect. No pieces may be moved until all 4 of each player's pieces have been dropped.

Move phase: After each player's 4 pieces are on the board, players take turns moving one piece at a time along a line to an adjacent empty space. No jumping allowed!

The game ends when one player wins with 3 pieces in a horizontal, vertical, or diagonal row.

The losing player goes first in the next game.

Variations

Try one of these different ways to play:

- In order to win, the row of 3 *must* include the center space.
- The first player may *not* drop the first piece in the center.
- Only vertical or horizontal rows of 3 win, not diagonal rows.

Variations of this ancient three-in-a-row strategy game are played around the world. In Ghana, Achi players often mark a game board on the ground and use small sticks or stones as game pieces. The game may have originated in Egypt. Roman soldiers played it, and versions were popular in medieval England. Tic-tac-toe is a similar American game. Three Men's Morris uses a game board like the Achi board, while Nine Men's Morris, a similar game using nine pieces and a more complex game board, is mentioned in Shakespeare's play, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.

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Age: 5+ **Number of players:** 2 **Time:** 5 minutes

Equipment: Game board, 4 pieces of the same color for each player

Goal: Be the first player to get 3 pieces in a row horizontally, vertically, or diagonally.

Or try these, using just 3 pieces each:

- Follow the original rules but with only 3 pieces each.
- In order to win, the row of 3 *must* include the center space.
- Use 3 pieces each, but do not move along the diagonal lines. Only vertical or horizontal rows of 3 win, not diagonals.
- Players begin the game with their 3 pieces already on the game board, lined up on the end rows closest to them, known as their "home rows." A row of 3 pieces on the player's own home row does *not* win the game.
- Players begin with their 3 pieces on their home rows, but can only win with a diagonal row of 3.



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