

Backgammon

There are at least three known race games which predated Backgammon and quite possibly influenced its development: *Senat*, from Egypt; *Nardshir*, from Arabic nations; *Tabula*, from Rome. There are also an assortment of theories as to the origin of the game's modern name, Backgammon. It was, and is to this day, common to see double-sided boards, with a checkerboard on one side and backgammon on the underside, that it is believed the term may simply come from the Olde English phrase for "back game." It also may derived from the Welsh term for little battle.



The modern game was popularized by Russian Prince Alexis Obolensky, who organized the first international Backgammon tournament on Grand Bahama Island in 1964. It drew 48 players and more than a few rich and famous spectators. His enthusiasm for this "ancient and exciting game" also led him to co-author *Backgammon: The Action Game* with Ted James, one of many helpful texts for those looking to improve their play.

Bridge

Bridge is a card game based on the eighteenth-century British game called Whist, a card game which split four people into two pairs. The cards are distributed thirteen apiece, and the last card (which should be given to the dealer) is overturned to decide the trump suit. If ever the four-person requirement is not met, the players would simply work with three hands and a dummy, or an exposed hand. This practice would affect the later rules of Bridge Whist.



A variation of Whist called Khedive, or Biritch, was played in Constantinople and along the French Riviera. By 1900, this popular game had developed into Bridge Whist. This was one of three incarnations of Bridge; chronologically, they are Bridge Whist, Auction Bridge, and Contract Bridge. Harold S. Vanderbilt, an American railroad tycoon, was an avid player of Auction Bridge in the 1920s, and is credited with creating the new scoring method which resulted in Contract Bridge, which remains the most popular form of the game today.

The World Bridge Federation was founded in 1958 by an international conference of representatives in Norway, and since 2002 has housed its headquarters in Lausanne, Switzerland. The goal of the WBF is to support National Bridge Organizations in order to spread bridge education and promote play worldwide. While Jose Damiani presided over the WBF, it was officially acknowledged in 1999 as an International Sport Federation by the International Olympic Committee. The game is still enjoyed by enthusiastic players in over 120 countries.

Checkers

Historians disagree about the exact origins of the checkers game we play today. Evidence indicates it could be related to early games of Greece, Rome, or Egypt. Checkers is among many games named for its pieces, according to the Latin tradition. In France it is now referred to as *Jeu de Dames*, and players in Spain call it *Juego de Damas*. Both of these games refer to the pieces as dames, ladies, or queens. Most often, France is given credit for the birth of modern checkers.

A game called *Fierge* was popular among twelfth-century French gamers. In *Fierge*, twelve pieces called ferses were assigned to each player, and these were allowed to either hop the opponent's ferses or to advance to the other side of the board, where they would transform into a more powerful dame (lady). Checkers is also known as draughts in England.

There are, indeed, similarities between pawn promotions in chess and checker promotions, which might indicate a connection, but historian W.S. Branch suggests that perhaps both chess and *Alquerque* were influences—chess lent to checkers its board and *Alquerque* gave its rules of movement. *Alquerque* is the Spanish translation of an Arab game that dates back as far as 1400 B.C.E..

Up until 1535, the capturing of an opponent's ferses was optional. But that year a rule was introduced which mandated capturing of an opponent's ferses. *Fierge* was now transformed into *Jeu Force*, which means “obligatory game.” It is by these rules that we play checkers today.

In 1897 the English Draughts Association and the American Checker Federation had been established, but it was not until the creation of the *Fédération Internationale du Jeu des Dames* in 1947 that universal regulations were established. It is now the *Fédération Mondiale du Jeu des Dames*, or World Draughts Federation, and continues to support national Checkers organizations and foster opportunities for international matches.



Chess

Chess has captivated the world since its beginnings in India over 1400 years ago. From Sanskrit texts we are able to identify the earliest known form of chess, *chaturanga*. This translates to ‘divided into four,’ and is a term used to describe both the board game and the structure of the Indian military upon which historians believe the game was based. These four images—the elephant, chariots, cavalry/horses, and footsoldiers—were therefore set to battle on the game board. The board, with 64 squares in an 8 x 8 grid, was likely borrowed from *Ashtapada*, which had a 64-square game board.



From India, *chaturanga* spread east, where variations like the Japanese *Shogi* were developed, and also west through Islamic regions, where it was given an aesthetic overhaul. For the most part, it seems as though Islamic-style sets kept true to the traditional Indian red and green pieces. Because Islam discourages figural representation in artwork, the shapes of the chessmen became abstracted. This resulted in lovely geometric patterns and intricate floral designs. This re-interpretation of the pieces certainly did not slow the popularity or progress of the game, quite the opposite. *Shatranj*, as it was called in this region, thrived, and many powerful players developed their skills in Baghdad during the eighth and ninth centuries.

As chess moved towards Europe, it underwent further aesthetic changes. The original elephant from the Indian army was changed to the bishop, clearly showing the influence that Christian traditions began to have on the game. In India, the piece that was positioned at the king's side was his advisor or vizier, but he too was transformed by the move westward and became the queen. In these two changes, the game pieces shift from strong forces on the battlefield to an entourage of political powers serving the king.

Through the Middle Ages, intellectual study of the game gave way to the simple appreciation of the basic images of the chess board and their symbolism, producing a variety of references to the game in artwork and literature from this era. However, the Renaissance brought a huge resurgence of interest in gameplay. Scholars once again flocked to the board, and during the fifteenth century some pieces were given their increased mobility. The queen, formerly quite weak, was now capable of moving any number of squares in any direction, thereby possessing the powers of both the rook (which moves forward, backwards and sideways, at right angles to its initial square) and the bishop (which moves only diagonally from its initial square, limiting it to a single color for the entire game). This upgrade to the queen's movement is the reason that many by the 1490s were calling this new chess "queen's chess." While both Spanish and French records clearly show a name change at this time, it is not yet known if queen's chess was developed first in France, Italy, or Spain. The pawn, by this time, had also been granted the right to move forward two squares on its initial move. The option of en passant was also introduced, providing an alternative to the pawn's usual capturing method, which until then only applied to pieces on adjacent diagonal squares.

Howard Staunton is an indelible figure in the history of chess. In 1851, he was the first to officially organize an international chess tournament held in London. With so many aesthetic variations on the pieces, international play brought with it quite a bit of confusion and discord as to the pieces' roles. Nathaniel Cooke realized the need for a redesign to give the game a much-needed universal language for play. Staunton placed his name on the set to promote its use and spread the word that a solution had been created. To this day, Staunton style sets are the standard for international tournaments hosted by the World Chess Federation (*Fédération Internationale des Échecs*, known as FIDE from its French acronym).

Chinese Checkers

Chinese Checkers, despite its name, has no roots in China, or any part of Asia. Based on the ideas of a British game called Hoppity, Dr. George Howard Monks invented a game he called *Halma* with the help of his father-in-law, Dr. Thomas Hill, who gave the game its name. They had the sets manufactured by New York company E.I. Horsman in 1885.

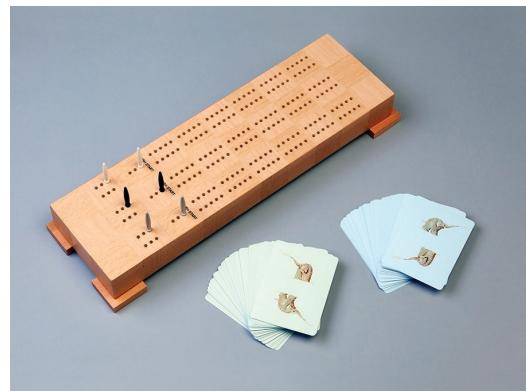
Halma is a Greek term for “hop,” and this was indeed a jumping game, related in its movements to checkers, but not connected to it by lineage. In 1892, the German company Ravensburger made their version called Stern-Halma, which translates as “star-Halma.” In 1928, no doubt aware of the public’s fascination with the foreign and exotic, J. Pressman & Co. named their version of the game Hop Ching Checker Game, which was identical to Stern-Halma. They were also responsible for the name Chinese Checkers, and for this same reason, it has remained unchanged for nearly a century.



Cribbage

Cribbage is a descendant of the English game Noddy. While the rules to this game have been mostly lost, Noddy was played with a scoreboard, as in cribbage, and by the 17th century Cribbage appears in literature.

Cribbage is played with a pegged board for scoring and a deck of 52 cards. Typically, two players are dealt in, but it is not uncommon to see a four-hand variation played in larger groups. Each player at first has six cards dealt into his hand, two of which he will discard into the crib. The four cards in the crib will be credited to the dealer's score at the end of each round, so the pone, or non-dealer player, tries to lay down cards with the least potential for points. After dealing, the pone cuts the deck, and the starter card is pulled from the center and placed face-up on the deck. From here, the game enters two portions: Play and Showing.



The Play involves the two players alternately laying down cards whose values are kept in a running count. The goal is to reach a count of 31 or get as close to it as possible without going over. The player who lays his card down last, or nearest 31, gets one point pegged for a total under 31 or two points pegged if the last card brings the total to exactly 31. This score is called Go, after which counting will start over at zero, repeating until all cards have been played from both hands. During these counts, there are also sequences or patterns of cards which can score points for the player who lays down the final card of the sequence. Sequences honored include pairs, runs, combinations that add up to 15, and three- and four-of-a-kind.

The following stage is Showing. Starting with the pone, the remaining four cards in each hand are added to the starter card to determine points and further progress on the scoreboard. At the end of each round, the dealer and pone switch roles, alternating until one of them wins by scoring either 61 or 121 points (one or two laps of the pegs around the scoreboard).

The game is so popular in the United States and Great Britain that it draws the participation of millions of enthusiastic players.

Dominoes

Domino is a term which refers to black hoods and masks that were commonly worn at masquerades and by clergy. One variation of these hoods features white accents or a white lining, so the traditional black and white patterns on the game tiles lent them to comparison with the popular clothing.

The dots on dominoes are usually referred to as pips. Pip can also refer to the spots on dice and describe the number of suit symbols on playing cards. Today, groups of pips of varying numbers are also often differentiated by color, eliminating the need to count the pips.



Marble Solitaire

The earliest known relative of the Solitaire Puzzle was the Viking game of *Tafl*, which translates to “table” in Old Norse. Games of the *Tafl* family date back to at least the fourth century C.E. and they spread throughout Europe until a version referred to as Fox and Geese appeared around the 14th century. This hunting game took place on a board with 33 holes in a cross pattern and pitted one player’s flock of “geese” against their opponent’s “fox,” represented by colored marbles or pegs. The round Fox and Geese board was adapted for many games, including the modern Solitaire.



The most common version of play is called the center-hole game. Of the 33 holes, only 32 are filled with marbles or pegs, leaving the central hole empty. The goal is to remove marbles by hopping over them and eventually end with the last marble in this central hole. The Solitaire puzzle gained popularity in Victorian-era parlors and continues to fascinate players worldwide.

Monopoly

Elizabeth Magie designed and patented Landlord's Game in 1904, to illustrate financial concepts and to warn against money-hungry landlords. Her game, which included abstract roads such as Easy Street and Lonely Lane, was at first turned down by Parker Brothers. They later agreed to manufacture a handful of boards for her, and she conceded the rights to the game.



In the 1930s, Charles Darrow created Monopoly, which featured small household objects as tokens for the players and, for the first time, properties based on real streets in Atlantic City, New Jersey. Darrow also introduced property groupings, which allowed for monopolies or strongholds over a portion of the market. Darrow was rejected by Parker Brothers when he approached them in 1934. After he sold a surprising 500 copies to local stores by himself, Parker Brothers reconsidered the marketing potential of his game and purchased the rights. Half a million Monopoly games were sold within a year. According to historian Phil Orbanes, the potential to own property, even if only in a board game, was the reason that Monopoly gained popularity quite rapidly in the middle of the Great Depression. To this day, versions are manufactured with the Atlantic City properties replaced by local streets and landmarks. St. Louis-Opoly, for instance, features hot spots like the Delmar Loop and the Central West End, as well as local favorites like the Clydesdales and the Saint Louis Zoo.

Economics professor Ralph Anspach revisited Magie's original intent for the game when he created Anti-Monopoly in 1974. As the name suggests, his version of the game is a reaction to and a warning against the potential corruption of big industry monopolies. His game and writings caused controversy, but the subsequent lawsuit filed by Parker Brothers was settled out of court, and Anspach is still legally able to produce his game.

Monopoly continues to provide lessons in capitalist finance, and the game is played enthusiastically both casually and competitively.

Playing Cards

Asia, India, and Europe developed distinct traditions of playing cards, which they maintained for hundreds of years before their styles began to influence each other through travel and trade in the 16th century.

China boasts the earliest set, the Turfan Card from the 11th century. These cards were the foundation for the *chiu-p'ai*, which feature a literary quotation and an illustration of said text, with directions for drinking. Japan also used literature as inspiration for their card designs, and most included images from poetry. India is home



to three main types of cards: the *Ganjifa*, *Dasavatara*, and *Ramayana* packs. *Ganjifa* translates from the Persian as “playing cards” and dates to the 16th century. These sets have 96 cards that are broken down into eight suits based on government positions. Each of these suits contains two court members, the king and minister, and ten numbered cards. The *Dasavatara* cards feature ten suits which depict ten incarnations (*avatara*) of the Hindu god Vishnu. Again, within each suit there are two face cards and ten number cards. The *Ramayana* deck holds 144 cards filled with images of the Indian epic poem, the *Ramayana*. Cards are organized in the same manner as the other Indian decks, just with twelve suits. The face cards feature the image of the Hindu god Rama enthroned and in different scenes from the poem.

The first mention of European playing cards occurs in 1377. Packs of four suits developed in three styles: Italian/Spanish, German, and French. Modern deck designs are derived from the French packs. It is important to note that the queen has always been present in the French canon. But in his text *Playing Cards: History of the Pack and Explanation of its Many Secrets*, historian William Gurney Benham declares the French decision to color two of the suits red and two of the suits black a sheer “stroke of genius” because it helps players to even more quickly distinguish their cards. Another marvelous innovation was the use of pips on the cards. These small simplified symbols allowed for much more efficient printing and rapid identification of card values.

The Portuguese brought their decks to Japan in the 16th century, and the tradition of the Flower Cards sprang from this union of ideas. They introduced the 48-card deck as well as the idea of suits. In the Flower Cards, “the 12 suits of the game correspond to the 12 months. Each suit has four values which are marked with motifs—such as flower or bird—corresponding to the particular month.” Korea is home to another version of this deck called *Hwatu*, in which twelve distinct flowers are illustrated.

Poker

The German game of *Pochen* or *Pochspiel* dates from the fifteenth century. *Pochspiel* translates as a knocking or betting (*poch*) game (*spiel*). This eventually developed into the French *Poque*, which was quite popular during the sixteenth century. Each of these games is played in three phases, and American Poker is likely a derivative of the second phase that involves wagering.



In *A History of Poker*, David Parlett classifies Poker as a vying game, one in which “instead of playing their cards out, the players bet as to who holds the best card combination by progressively raising the stakes.” A huge part of Poker’s appeal and intrigue is the ability to keep card values hidden from competitors and even ‘bluff’ about the hidden hand.

A modified version of the French *Poque* was being played at the beginning of the nineteenth century in and around New Orleans, which prior to 1803 was a French territory. On land and along the Mississippi, gamblers were turning *Poque* into Poker. The last e in *Poque* is meant to be pronounced briefly and subtly, but Americans likely over-emphasized this until it became an additional syllable, forming Poker.

There are three main styles of Poker play: Draw, Stud, and Texas Hold'em. Draw borrows from Brag, a betting game that began in the eighteenth century and remains quite popular in Britain to this day. Brag allows the opportunity for players to 'draw' from the deck after cards are dealt. If they feel their hand needs bettering, players may discard one of the cards originally dealt to them and replace it with the newly-drawn card. Stud developed by the 1860s as a Midwestern variation of Poker. Each player is dealt one card to keep face-down and one to lay face-up, and then a round of betting commences. This repeats until each hand contains four cards showing and one face-down. The winning player is the one whose five card hand values the highest. Texas Hold'em style-games were introduced around 1926. Instead of a supplemental draw card, a communal card is dealt face-up so that its value may be incorporated into each player's hand.

Poker in all its forms spread quickly throughout the nation and is now essential to American casinos. The World Series of Poker has awarded over \$1.5 billion in prizes since it was first held in 1970.

Roulette

There are two types of wheels used in the modern version of Roulette—the French or European wheels have 36 numbered sections that alternate red and black, and one section designated the zero (giving it the name single-zero Roulette). American wheels also feature 36 black and red spaces, but there are two green zero spaces; therefore, it is also referred to as double-zero Roulette. In both versions, the green zero spaces are set aside for the house's bet, so if the ball lands in that space, the hosting casino automatically wins. There is also a betting mat that accompanies the wheel, which features a diagram the players use to name their bets. Each player has chips to place on the mat. Chip values are based on the individual player's buy-in, or how much they have bet divided by the number of chips.



The Greeks and Romans played a similar betting game with their shields and chariot wheels. This practice seems to have evolved into the game called *Hoca*, a relative of the modern Roulette. *Hoca* was placed in French casinos in the seventeenth century by Cardinal Mazarin, who then added the house winnings to the Treasury. While the Greeks and Romans used an arrow to mark the winning space of their wheels, the French design was a more sophisticated circular table with a ball that landed in the winning section.

A comparable wheel was used by Blaise Pascal, a French mathematician, at the end of the seventeenth century to study perpetual motion. By the eighteenth century, numerous texts refer to the modern Roulette and the rules of the game have remained basically the same for the past two hundred years. French brothers Francois and Luis Blanc brought the game to Germany, but were forced to move to Monte Carlo when the German government outlawed gambling in the 1860s. Today, Monte Carlo flourishes as the gambling capital of the world, and Roulette continues to be one of the more popular games in European casinos.

Scrabble

Alfred Mosher Butts lost his job as a draftsman in 1931 and was forced, like many during the Great Depression, to pursue other endeavors, which included freelance writing, watercolor painting, and game design. Writing for American National Biography, Dennis Wepman says that Butts “classified table games into three types: number games, like bingo; board games, like chess; and word games, like anagrams.” From here he set out to create a board game with both numbers and words. Butts decided on the letter values and tile distribution by analyzing the frequency of all twenty-six letters in popular periodicals. These original numbers have stayed consistent throughout the history of the game.



Stratego

Stratego, a game in which players command armies in combat, finds its origins in an early twentieth-century French game titled *L'Attaque*. Created by Hermance Eden, this “battle game with mobile pieces” featured attacking pieces wearing contemporary military uniforms battling for victory. In 1947, Dutchman Jacques Johan Mogendorff trademarked the name Stratego for a game of military strategy, and the game’s setting changed from contemporary times to that of the Napoleonic Wars (1803–1815), in which the French Emperor Napoleon battled against a coalition of European powers. By Mogendorff’s death in 1961, the game’s popularity had skyrocketed, not only in Europe, but also in the United States, where it was purchased by Milton Bradley. Today the International Stratego Federation hosts annual tournaments, drawing lovers of the game from around the world.



The gameplay pits two players against each other, challenging them to either capture the opponent’s flag or capture enough pieces to prevent their enemy from moving. Each of the pieces has a rank, based upon military units and weapons, including generals, scouts, spies, and bombs. Though the players can see the ranks of their own pieces, they cannot see those of their opponents, interjecting elements of chance and bluffing into play. The success of the game has inspired Milton Bradley to create new versions, some allowing three to four players, another based upon the American Civil War, and an online variant.

Yahtzee

Yahtzee is relatively young in the history of table games. The Yacht Game was created in the 1950s by a Canadian couple looking for entertainment while yachting with their friends. It is a simple game that requires five dice and scorecards for the players. Each player rolls two dice a maximum of three times to score in one of the categories on the card. These include, like many card games, straights (four or five consecutive numbers as indicated by the pips on the dice), three- and four-of-a-kind, full house (two of one number and three of another), and Yahtzee (five-of-a-kind). The game ends when every player has filled up the score card and the player with the highest score is declared the winner.

The couple presented their dice game to manufacturer Edwin S. Lowe, who helped them make multiple sets for gifts. Lowe bought the rights to the game and decided to market it as Yahtzee. After a slow start on the game market, Yahtzee-themed parties quickly boosted sales and it continues in many households to be a beloved family game.

