

# African Sowing Game Rules



The following pages contain 9 sets of rules for playing sowing games from countries in Africa using the same game boards created in the “*One Africa, Many Countries - Ayo*” activity from the **KIDS Afterschool** curriculum at [BeyondTheChalkboard.com](http://BeyondTheChalkboard.com).

Try all 10 ways of playing (including “Ayo”)!  
Which way is your favorite?  
Do you have another way to play?



# OWARE - Ghana



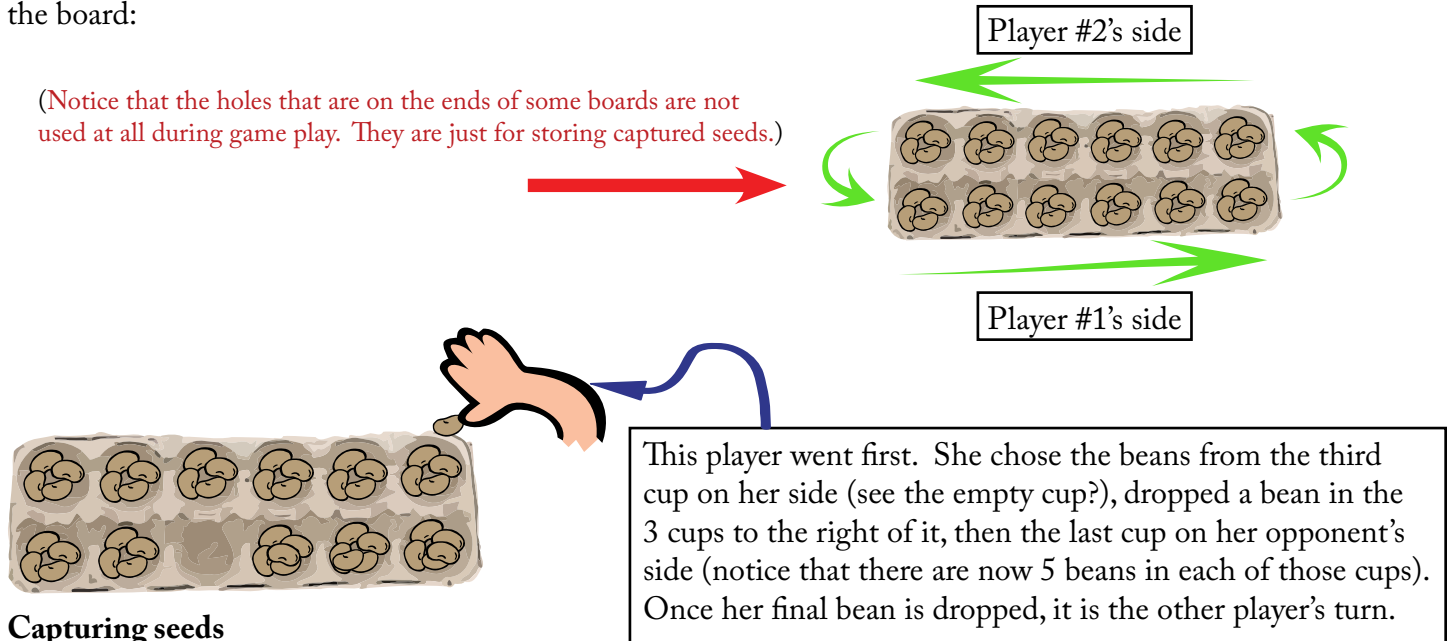
**Object of the game:** The object of the game is to capture more seeds than your opponent.

**Starting:** One player should place a seed in either of their closed fists and ask the other player to guess which hand it is in. If the guesser is correct, they begin the game. If they guess incorrectly, the other player starts.

**Setup:** Four seeds are placed in each house (each hole of the game board). Each row of 6 cups is the territory of the player sitting nearest to them.

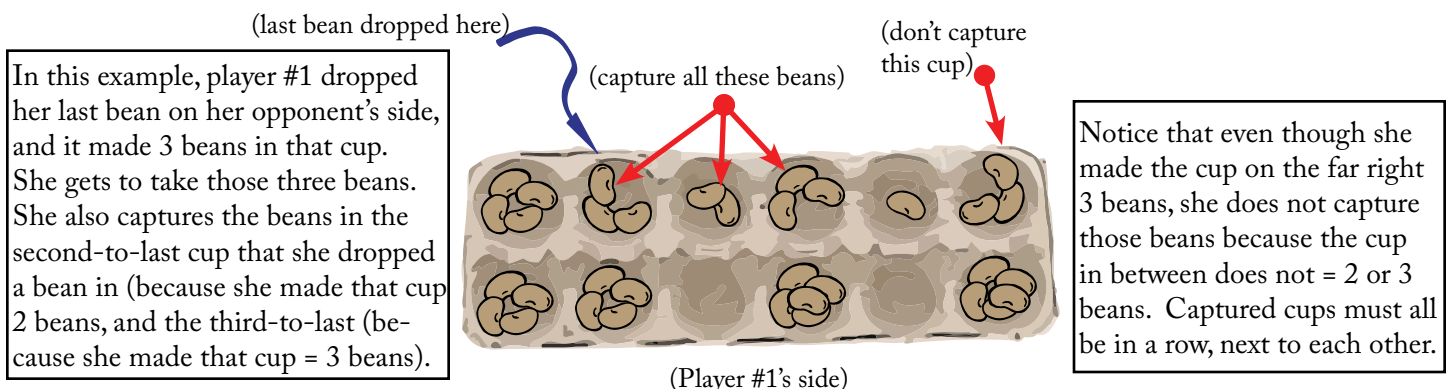
**Sowing seeds:** The player who goes first chooses a hole or cup from their side of the board, scoops up all four seeds, and “sows” the seeds by dropping one in each cup after the starting cup, moving counterclockwise (left to right on their side of the board, then right to left when they are dropping seeds in cups on their opponent’s side of the board). Once those seeds are dropped, **THEIR TURN IS OVER**. The next player then chooses a cup on their own side and sows the seeds. This makes the game different from the Mancala game that many children have played, in which turns last a long time. Players can only begin their turn by selecting from a cup on their side of the board. Seeds are “sown” in a counterclockwise direction, placing 1 seed in each successive cup around the board:

(Notice that the holes that are on the ends of some boards are not used at all during game play. They are just for storing captured seeds.)



## Capturing seeds

Players can only capture seeds from their opponent’s side (the opposite side of the board). If the last seed that a player drops lands in one of their opponent’s houses with only one or two seeds already in it (making it two or three seeds in total), they then collect all of the seeds from that cup and keep them. If the previous-to-last seed that was dropped also brought an opponent’s house to two or three, these seeds are captured as well, and so on.



## **End of game**

The game usually ends when a player has captured 25 or more seeds and both players agree to stop. Each player takes any remaining seeds in his or her cups. The game can also end in a tie if both players have captured 24 seeds; a game can end if one player's side has no seeds and his or her opponent is unable to sow any seeds onto the opposite side; and a game can end when neither player can capture any more seeds, as when two or three pieces are endlessly chasing each other around the board. Both players must agree to stop play, and split the remaining seeds evenly, with the player having the most seeds on his or her side keeping the odd one.

## **Other Rules**

- If a player sows enough seeds to get back around to the original cup (this happens when 12 or more seeds are picked up from a cup), they skip over the empty cup that they started with and continue to sow seeds in the next cups until they have distributed all the seeds in their hand.
- If at any point in the game a player does not have any seeds on their side of the board, then the other player must sow seeds from a cup that would provide the opponent with seeds to continue playing. If this isn't possible then the game ends, with the remaining seeds going to the player who still has seeds on their side.
- If a move is made that would leave all of the opponent cups empty without seeds, no seeds are captured. This includes a "grand slam", where a player captures all of the seeds on their opponent's side in one turn. If a player finds that this move has happened, they capture no seeds that turn.

# OURI - Cape Verde



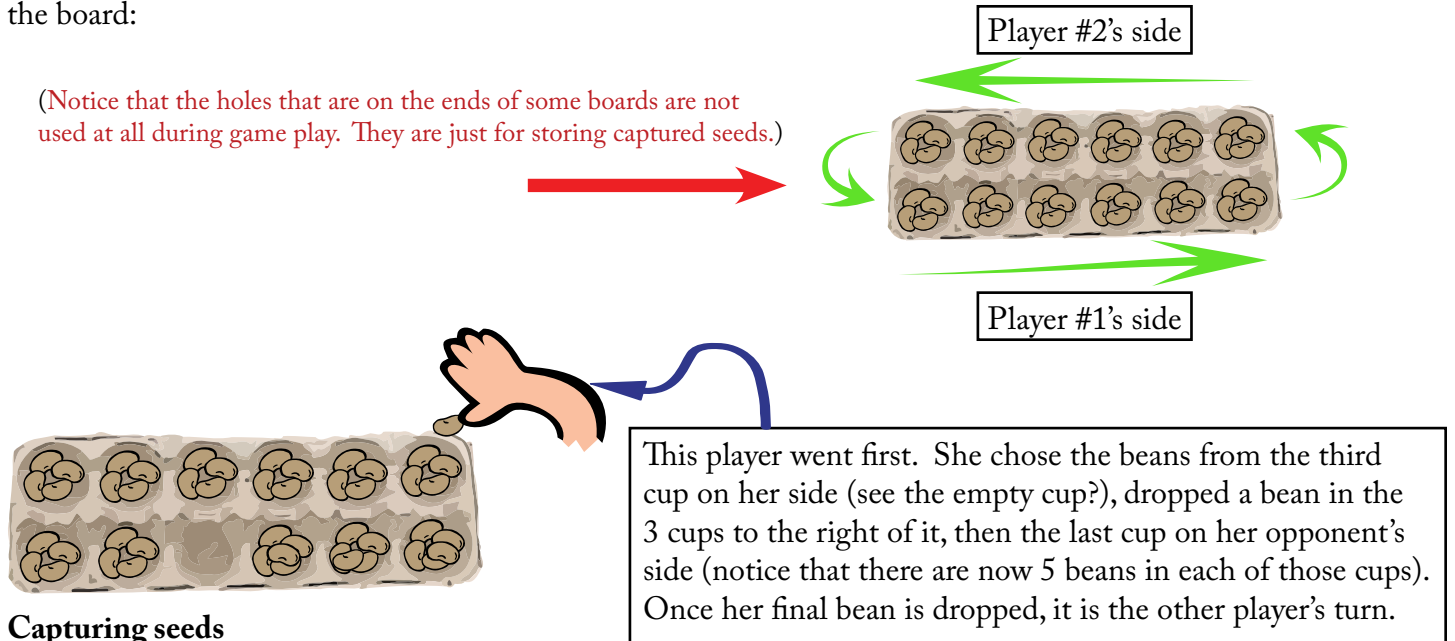
**Object of the game:** The object of the game is to capture more seeds than your opponent.

**Starting:** One player should place a seed in either of their closed fists and ask the other player to guess which hand it is in. If the guesser is correct, they begin the game. If they guess incorrectly, the other player starts.

**Setup:** Four seeds are placed in each house (each hole of the game board). Each row of 6 cups is the territory of the player sitting nearest to them.

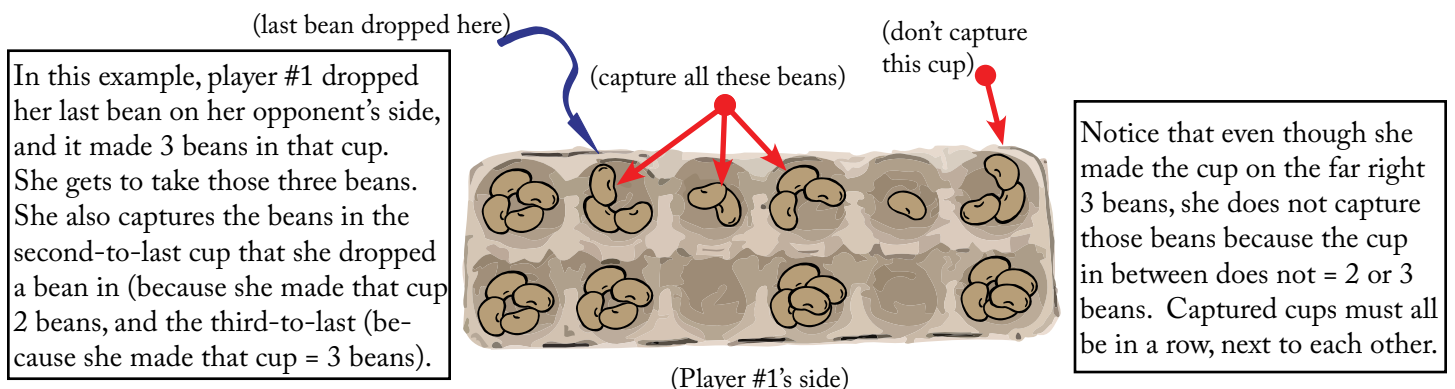
**Sowing seeds:** The player who goes first chooses a hole or cup from their side of the board, scoops up all four seeds, and “sows” the seeds by dropping one in each cup after the starting cup, moving counterclockwise (left to right on their side of the board, then right to left when they are dropping seeds in cups on their opponent’s side of the board). Once those seeds are dropped, **THEIR TURN IS OVER**. The next player then chooses a cup on their own side and sows the seeds. This makes the game different from the Mancala game that many children have played, in which turns last a long time. Players can only begin their turn by selecting from a cup on their side of the board. Seeds are “sown” in a counterclockwise direction, placing 1 seed in each successive cup around the board:

(Notice that the holes that are on the ends of some boards are not used at all during game play. They are just for storing captured seeds.)



## Capturing seeds

Players can only capture seeds from their opponent’s side (the opposite side of the board). If the last seed that a player drops lands in one of their opponent’s houses with only one or two seeds already in it (making it two or three seeds in total), they then collect all of the seeds from that cup and keep them. If the previous-to-last seed that was dropped also brought an opponent’s house to two or three, these seeds are captured as well, and so on.



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## **Other Rules**

- Single seeds or beans cannot be moved, unless a player only has single seeds in the holes on her side.
- If a player sows enough seeds to get back around to the original cup (this happens when 12 or more seeds are picked up from a cup), they skip over the empty cup that they started with and continue to sow seeds in the next cups until they have distributed all the seeds in their hand.
- If at any point in the game a player does not have any seeds on their side of the board, then the other player must sow seeds from a cup that would provide the opponent with seeds to continue playing. If this isn't possible then the game ends, with the remaining seeds going to the player who still has seeds on their side.
- "Grand slams" are allowed—these are turns where a player captures all of the seeds on their opponent's side in one turn. After a grand slam, that player moves again and must make a play so that their opponent can make a move on their next turn.

# KPO - Liberia



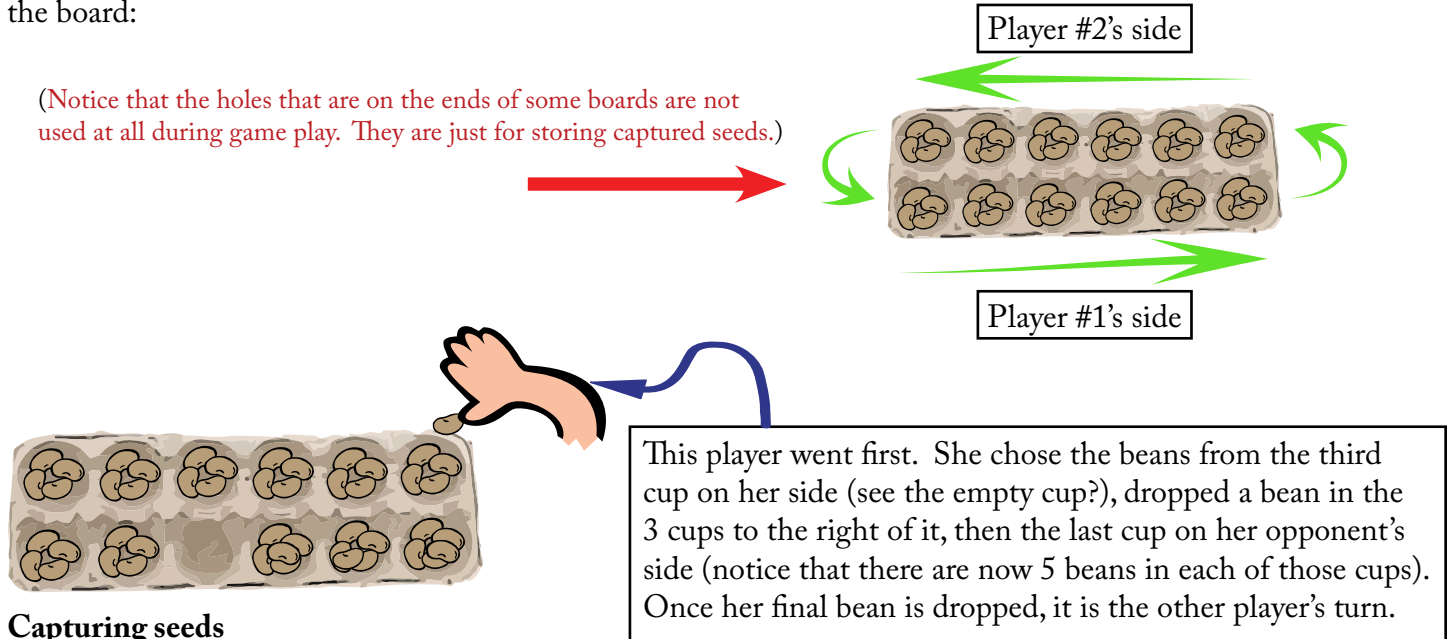
**Object of the game:** The object of the game is to capture more seeds than your opponent.

**Starting:** One player should place a seed in either of their closed fists and ask the other player to guess which hand it is in. If the guesser is correct, they begin the game. If they guess incorrectly, the other player starts.

**Setup:** Four seeds are placed in each house (each hole of the game board). Each row of 6 cups is the territory of the player sitting nearest to them.

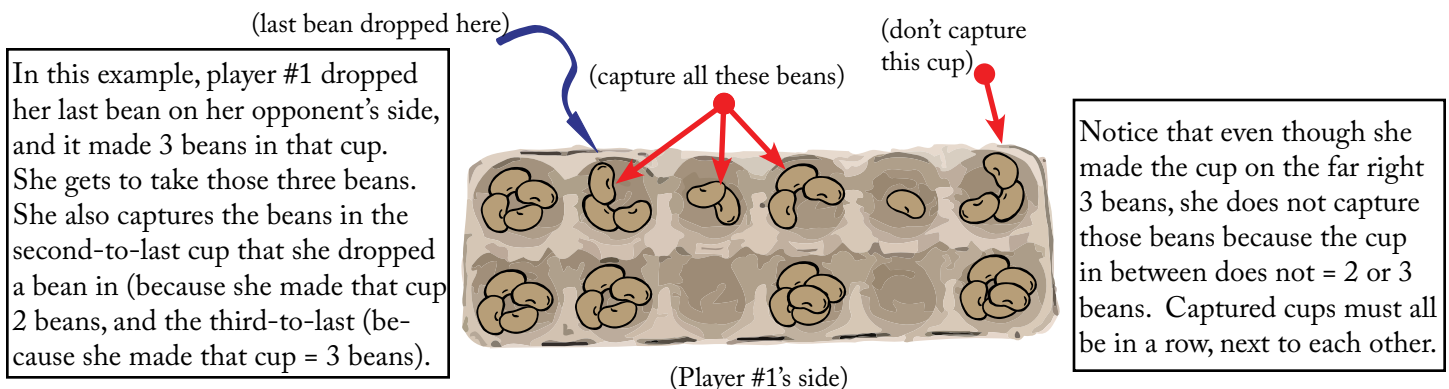
**Sowing seeds:** The player who goes first chooses a hole or cup from their side of the board, scoops up all four seeds, and “sows” the seeds by dropping one in each cup after the starting cup, moving counterclockwise (left to right on their side of the board, then right to left when they are dropping seeds in cups on their opponent’s side of the board). Once those seeds are dropped, **THEIR TURN IS OVER**. The next player then chooses a cup on their own side and sows the seeds. This makes the game different from the Mancala game that many children have played, in which turns last a long time. Players can only begin their turn by selecting from a cup on their side of the board. Seeds are “sown” in a counterclockwise direction, placing 1 seed in each successive cup around the board:

(Notice that the holes that are on the ends of some boards are not used at all during game play. They are just for storing captured seeds.)



## **Capturing seeds**

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## **Other Rules**

- If a player sows enough seeds to get back around to the original cup (this happens when 12 or more seeds are picked up from a cup), they skip over the empty cup that they started with and continue to sow seeds in the next cups until they have distributed all the seeds in their hand.
- If at any point in the game a player does not have any seeds on their side of the board, then the other player must sow seeds from a cup that would provide the opponent with seeds to continue playing. If this isn't possible then the game ends, with the remaining seeds going to the player who still has seeds on their side.
- If a move is made that would leave all of the opponent cups empty without seeds, no seeds are captured. This includes a "grand slam", where a player captures all of the seeds on their opponent's side in one turn. If a player finds that this move has happened, they capture no seeds that turn.

# Tampoduo - Ghana



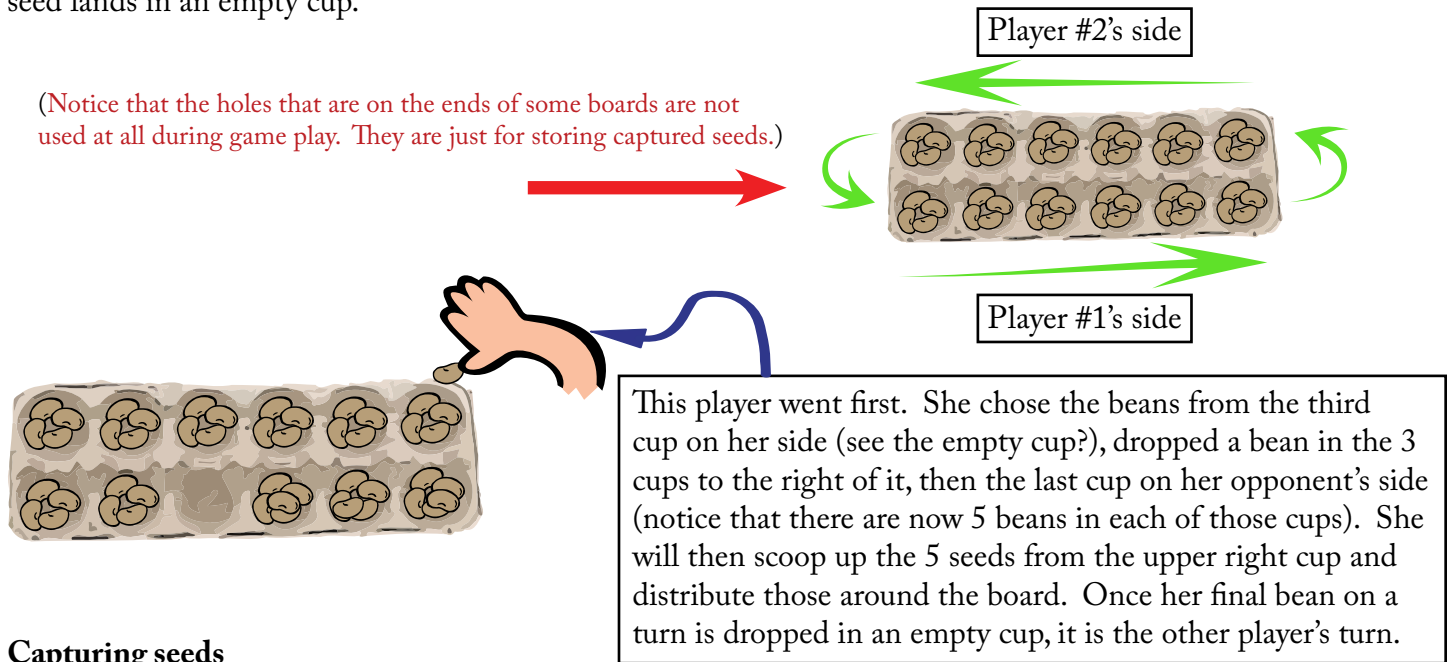
**Object of the game:** The object of the game is to capture more seeds than your opponent.

**Starting:** One player should place a seed in either of their closed fists and ask the other player to guess which hand it is in. If the guesser is correct, they begin the game. If they guess incorrectly, the other player starts.

**Setup:** Four seeds are placed in each house (each hole of the game board). Each row of 6 holes is the territory of the player sitting nearest to them.

**Sowing seeds:** The player who goes first selects a house (hole or cup) from their own territory (their side of the board), from which all the seeds are scooped. Players can only begin their turn by selecting from a cup on their side of the board. Seeds are “sown” in a counterclockwise direction, placing 1 seed in each successive cup around the board (if the board you are playing on also has single holes at the end, do not drop seeds into these holes). If the last seed drops in a cup with seeds already in it, all of these seeds are scooped up and then sown until the last seed lands in an empty cup.

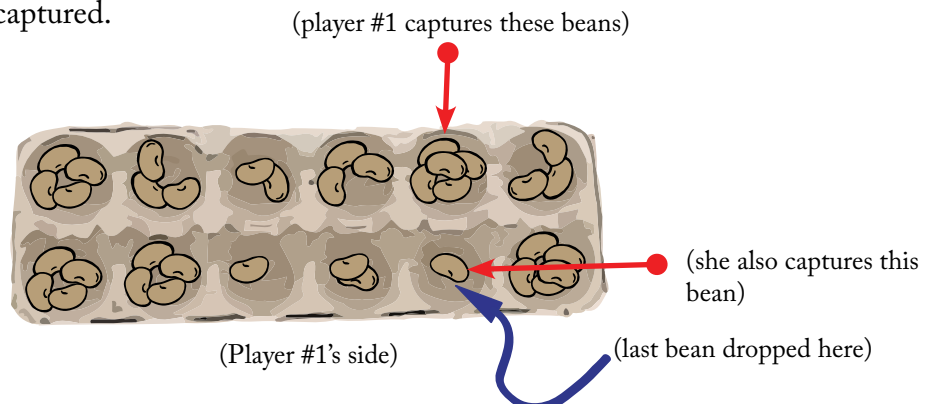
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## Capturing seeds

Seeds are captured when the last seed that a player drops lands in an empty cup on their own side of the board. If the cup on the opposite side of the board (their opponent's side) contains seeds, these are captured along with the last seed that they had dropped into the empty cup. If there are no seeds in the opposite house nothing is captured. If a player's last seed lands in an empty cup on the opponent's side and the opposite house on their own side has seeds in it, no seeds are captured.

In this example, player #1 dropped her last bean on her own side of the board, into an empty cup. She gets to pick up, or “capture” the 5 beans in the cup facing that empty cup. She also captures the last bean that she dropped in the empty cup on her side. All captured beans should be put to the side.





**End of game:** The game ends when there are only 2 seeds left, 1 on each side of the board, or when there are too few seeds for any meaningful game to continue, or when 1 player has captured 25 seeds or more.

### **Other Rules**

If at any point in the game a player does not have any seeds on their side of the board, then the other player must sow seeds from a cup that would provide the opponent with seeds to continue playing the game. If this isn't possible then the game ends, with the remaining seeds going to the player who has still has seeds on their side.

# Ayoayo - Nigeria



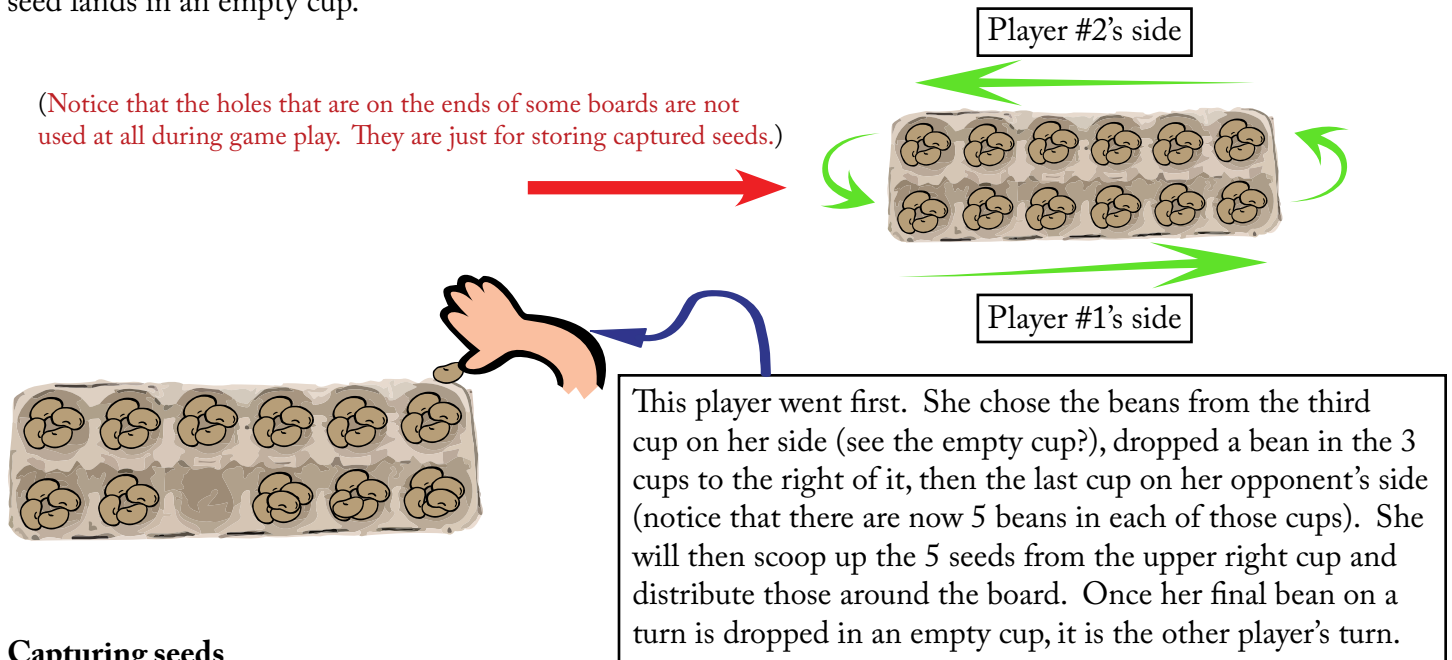
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**Setup:** Four seeds are placed in each house (each hole of the game board). Each row of 6 holes is the territory of the player sitting nearest to them.

**Sowing seeds:** The player who goes first selects a house (hole or cup) from their own territory (their side of the board), from which all the seeds are scooped. Players can only begin their turn by selecting from a cup on their side of the board. Seeds are “sown” in a counterclockwise direction, placing 1 seed in each successive cup around the board (if the board you are playing on also has single holes at the end, do not drop seeds into these holes). If the last seed drops in a cup with seeds already in it, all of these seeds are scooped up and then sown until the last seed lands in an empty cup.

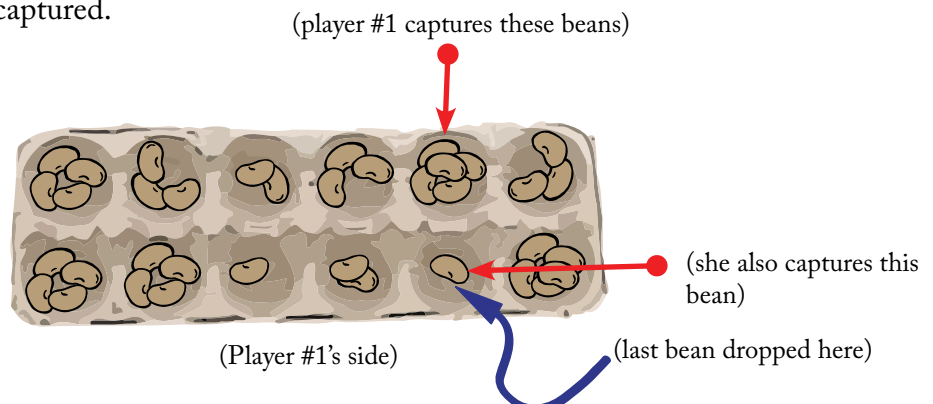
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- If a player sows enough seeds to get back around to the original cup (this happens when 12 or more seeds are picked up from a cup), they skip over the empty cup that they started with and continue to sow seeds in the next cups until they have distributed all the seeds in their hand.

# Obridjie - Nigeria



**Object of the game:** The object of the game is to capture more seeds than your opponent.

**Starting:** One player should place a seed in either of their closed fists and ask the other player to guess which hand it is in. If the guesser is correct, they begin the game. If they guess incorrectly, the other player starts.

**Setup:** Four seeds are placed in each house (each hole of the game board). Each row of 6 holes is the territory of the player sitting nearest to them.

**Sowing seeds:** The player who goes first selects a house (hole or cup) from their own territory (their side of the board), from which all the seeds are scooped. Players can only begin their turn by selecting from a cup on their side of the board. Seeds are “sown” in a counterclockwise direction, placing 1 seed in each successive cup around the board (if the board you are playing on also has single holes at the ends, do not drop seeds into these holes). If the last seed drops in a cup with seeds already in it, all of these seeds are scooped up and then sown until the last seed lands in an empty cup or the last seed lands in a cup with 3 seeds already in it, with the last seed making 4.

(Notice that the holes that are on the ends of some boards are not used at all during game play. They are just for storing captured seeds.)

Player #2's side

Player #1's side

This player went first. She chose the beans from the third cup on her side (see the empty cup?), dropped a bean in the 3 cups to the right of it, then the last cup on her opponent's side (notice that there are now 5 beans in each of those cups). She will then scoop up the 5 seeds from the upper right cup and distribute those around the board. Once her final bean on a turn is dropped in an empty cup or if her last bean makes a 4-seed cup, it is the other player's turn.

## Capturing seeds

Seeds are captured at ANY TIME when ANY CUP has 4 seeds in it. This occurs during turns, while a player is dropping seeds around the board, so the game can go pretty quickly. It is not just the player who distributes the seeds who captures them—but the player whose side the cup with 4 seeds in it belongs to. The only time that a player who is dropping the seeds can capture seeds from their opponent's side is if the last seed or bean dropped creates a cup with 4 seeds or beans in it. The dropping player captures those seeds no matter whose side it is on.

In this example it is player #1's turn. His last bean is about to drop on his opponent's side to make 4, so he can capture those beans. Player #2 captures the beans in the upper right cup.

(player #1 captures these beans, since it is the last bean he is dropping and it makes 4 beans in the hole. This is the only way he can capture beans on player #2's side of the board.)

(Player #2's side)

(Player #1's side)

(player #2 should pick these beans up right away)

(player #1 also captures these beans—he should pick them up right away, even though it is still his turn)

**End of game:** The game ends when the last seed is dropped into an empty hole, into a hole to make 4, or if there are less than 4 seeds left. If there are only a few seeds left and players are simply taking turns going around and around, they can agree to end the game. The game is won by the player who captured the most seeds.

# Rio Kadalis - Somalia

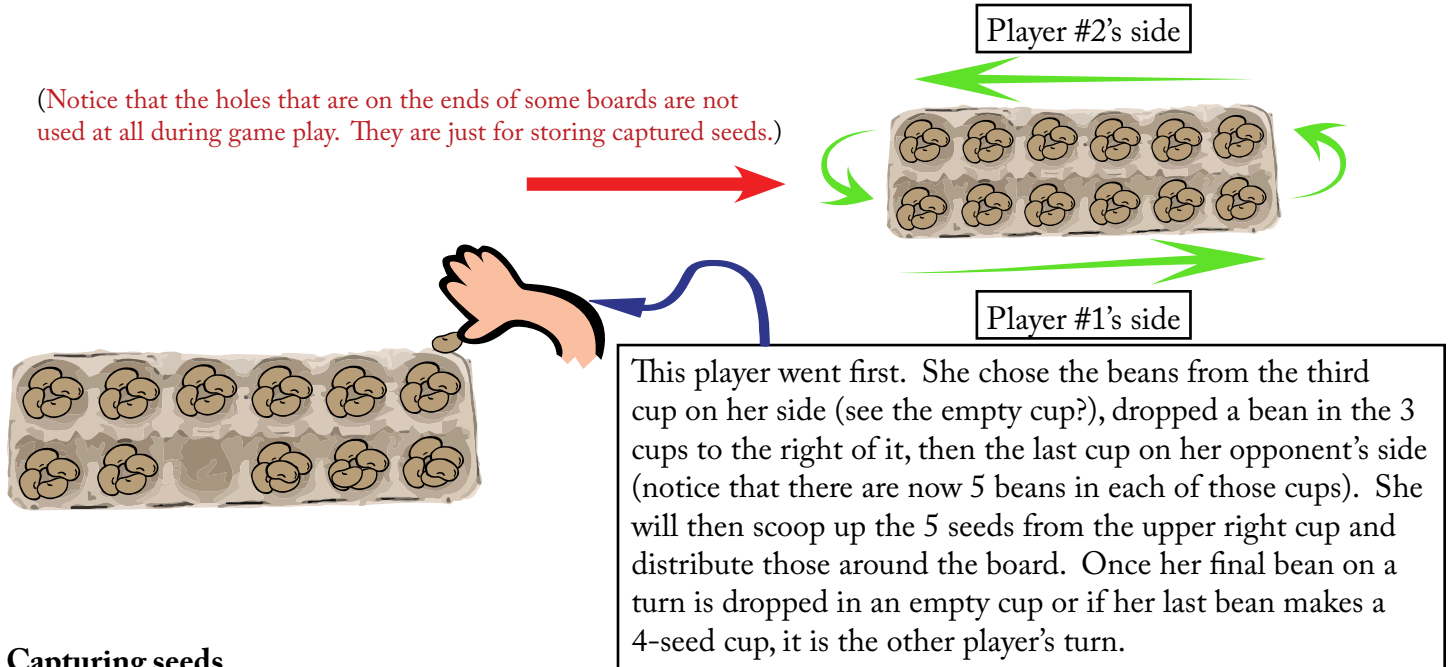


**Object of the game:** The object of the game is to capture more seeds than your opponent.

**Starting:** One player should place a seed in either of their closed fists and ask the other player to guess which hand it is in. If the guesser is correct, they begin the game. If they guess incorrectly, the other player starts.

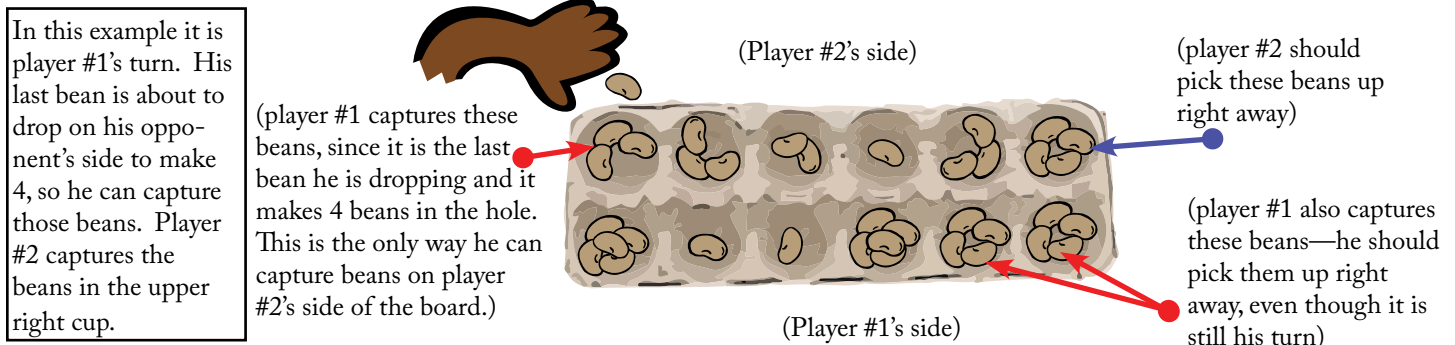
**Setup:** Four seeds are placed in each house (each hole of the game board). Each row of 6 holes is the territory of the player sitting nearest to them.

**Sowing seeds:** The player who goes first selects a house (hole or cup) from their own territory (their side of the board), from which all the seeds are scooped. Players can only begin their turn by selecting from a cup on their side of the board. Seeds are “sown” in a counterclockwise direction, placing 1 seed in each successive cup around the board (if the board you are playing on also has single holes at the ends, do not drop seeds into these holes). If the last seed drops in a cup with seeds already in it, all of these seeds are scooped up and then sown until the last seed lands in an empty cup or the last seed lands in a cup with 3 seeds already in it, with the last seed making 4.



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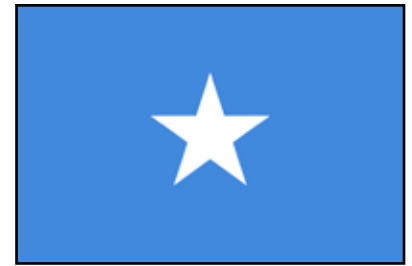


**End of game:** The game ends when a player can't make a move. The seeds that remain are captured by the player whose side they are on. The round is won by the player who captured the most seeds.

### **Other Rules**

- Rio Kadalis is played in rounds. After the first round, players refill the holes on their side of the game board with the seeds they captured from the previous round, again placing four seeds or beans in each hole. The player who won the first round likely has seeds left over—those seeds stay in their “captured” pile. The player with fewer seeds fills as many holes as she can with 4 seeds each, then “closes off” the holes that are empty. In Somalia, those holes are filled with sand. These holes are not used in the new round, but they can be reopened in future rounds if that player captures enough seeds to refill them. The first player to win 4 rounds wins the game.

# Layli Goobalay - Somalia

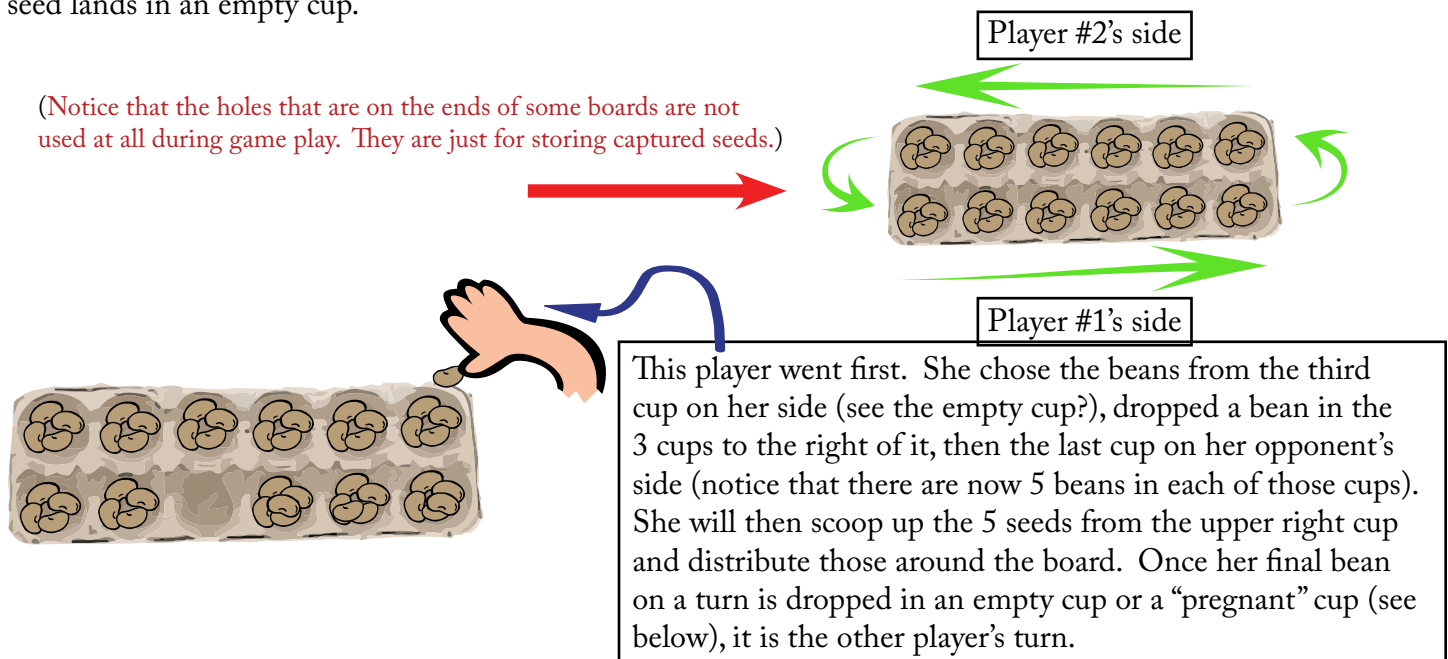


**Object of the game:** The object of the game is to capture more seeds than your opponent.

**Starting:** One player should place a seed in either of their closed fists and ask the other player to guess which hand it is in. If the guesser is correct, they begin the game. If they guess incorrectly, the other player starts.

**Setup:** Four seeds are placed in each house (each hole of the game board). Each row of 6 holes is the territory of the player sitting nearest to them.

**Sowing seeds:** The player who goes first selects a house (hole or cup) from their own territory (their side of the board), from which all the seeds are scooped. Players can only begin their turn by selecting from a cup on their side of the board. Seeds are “sown” in a counterclockwise direction, placing 1 seed in each successive cup around the board (if the board you are playing on also has single holes at the end, do not drop seeds into these holes). If the last seed drops in a cup with seeds already in it, all of these seeds are scooped up and then sown until the last seed lands in an empty cup.



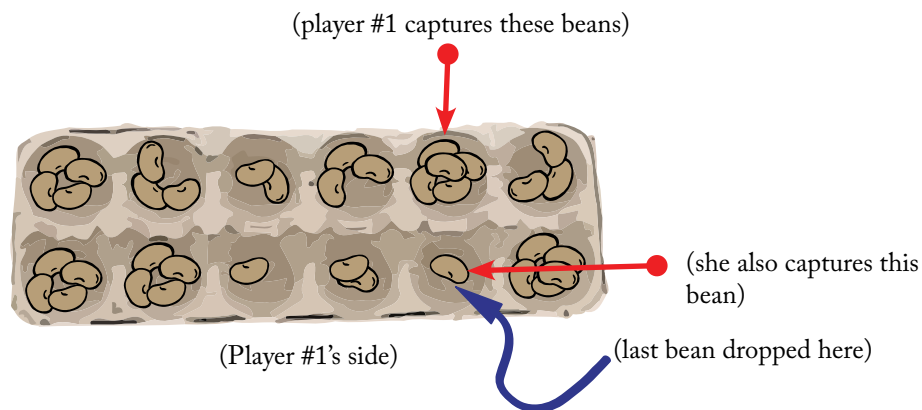
## “Pregnant” cups

If a player's last seed drops into an empty hole **ON THEIR SIDE OF THE BOARD**, and the hole opposite contains three seeds, the player should move one of those three seeds to the last hole they dropped a seed in. There will then be two seeds in each hole, and each of those holes is now “pregnant” (or “uur”). The player who created those pregnant holes now “owns” those holes, and any seeds dropped into those holes belong to them. A turn **MAY NOT** start by picking up seeds from a pregnant hole.

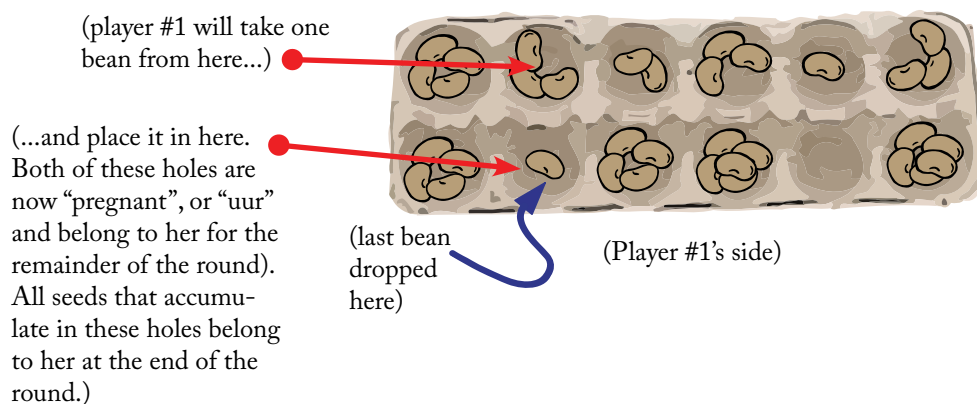
## Capturing seeds

Seeds are captured when the last seed that a player drops lands in an empty cup on their own side of the board. If the cup on the opposite side of the board (their opponent's side) contains 1, 2, 4 or more seeds, these are captured along with the last seed that they dropped into the empty cup. If the hole opposite to the empty hole contains 3 seeds, that hole becomes “pregnant” or “uur”. See above for what to do with those holes. If there are no seeds in the opposite house nothing is captured. If a player's last seed lands in an empty cup on the opponent's side and the opposite house on their own side has seeds in it, no seeds are captured.

In this example, player #1 dropped her last bean on her own side of the board, into an empty cup. She gets to pick up, or “capture” the 5 beans in the cup facing that empty cup. She also captures the last bean that she dropped in the empty cup on her side. All captured beans should be put to the side.



In this example, player #1 dropped her last bean on her own side of the board, into an empty cup. The opposite cup has three beans in it, so she should take one of those beans and place it in the cup on her side that she dropped her last bean in. Both cups are now pregnant, or “uur”, and belong to her.



**End of game:** The game ends when a player cannot move because they have no pieces on their side of the board, not including the pregnant holes (which they cannot start a move with). When this happens, players should collect the contents of their pregnant holes (remember that these are on both sides of the board for each player) as well as any other seeds left on their side of the board.

### Other Rules

- o Layli Goobalay is typically played in rounds. The game described above would be the first round. The next round is played by having the player with fewer seeds distribute all of their seeds into the holes on their side of the board, one at a time. The other player then places the same number of seeds in the holes on their side of the board, and keeps the extra seeds in their “captured” pile. Continue to play extra rounds this way until one player captures 43 or more seeds.

# Mangala - Egypt



**Object of the game:** The object of the game is to capture more seeds than your opponent.

**Starting:** One player should place a seed in either of their closed fists and ask the other player to guess which hand it is in. If the guesser is correct, they begin the game. If they guess incorrectly, the other player starts.

**Setup:** This game is played with 70 seeds or beans. At the beginning of the game, one player should distribute the seeds in the four central holes, while the eight holes at both ends are left empty. The other player then decides if she is satisfied with the position. If she is, they start playing. If she isn't, the board is turned around and the first player begins.



(example of an opening board)

**Sowing seeds:** At their first turn each player picks up the seeds of the rightmost filled hole in their row and distributes them into the succeeding holes, one by one, in a CLOCKWISE direction. If the last seed falls into an occupied hole, its contents are distributed in another lap until the last seed is dropped into an empty hole. In the opening turn nothing can be captured.

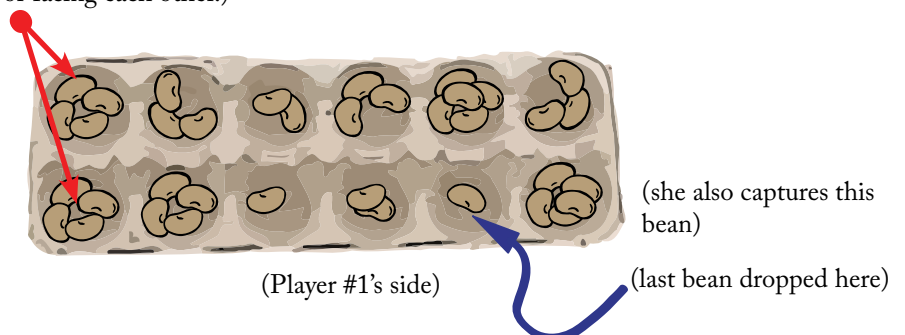
After both players have had one turn at sowing, they begin their next moves at any hole on their own side. The sowing now only continues if the last seed falls into a hole in which it makes an EVEN NUMBER (2, 4, 6, etc.). It is now also possible to capture seeds.

## Capturing seeds

When a player has dropped his last seed, if there are any EVEN NUMBER of seeds in opposite holes on the two sides of the board, the player captures those seeds. Both holes facing each other must have an even number of seeds in them. If the last seed dropped makes an even number and the hole across from it has an even number of seeds, that player captures those seeds, plus any even pairs across the board—then their turn is over. If the last seed dropped did not make a pair of “even” holes, the player captures any other even groups of seeds, then their turn continues using the seeds dropped in the last hole (those are not captured because they were not part of a pair of “even” cups).

(player #1 captures these beans because they are both even numbers (4 seeds) and they are opposite or facing each other.)

In this example, player #1 dropped her last bean on her own side of the board, into an empty cup. This makes an odd number in that cup (1 seed), so she captures any even cups facing each other, then continues sowing with the seeds from the last cup.



**End of game:** The game ends when one of the players has no seeds on his side of the board after his opponent stopped playing. The winner is the player who has captured or “eaten” the greatest number of seeds.