

# Playing Medieval Board Games



This piece of chalk has the layout of a game called Nine-Man's Morris carved into it. It is one of two medieval board games (the other being Fox and Geese) that were carved by prisoners when Norwich Castle Museum was a prison.

They are both on display in the Castle Keep.

We do not know what the prisoners used for counters. They probably used small pieces of stone or the stones from pieces of fruit.

We have provided you with the layout for these two games along with the rules of how they were played.

Use them to create your own medieval board games. Don't forget to make the counters as well. Perhaps you could use painted pebbles or even dried fruit stones.

## Fox and Geese

It's now believed that this game originally came from Iceland because it was first mentioned there in about 1300 but it became very popular in fifteenth century Europe.

### The Rules of the Game

One player has one counter (the fox) and the other player has thirteen counters (the geese).

Arrange the geese as shown in the diagram below. The fox can go on any vacant spot.

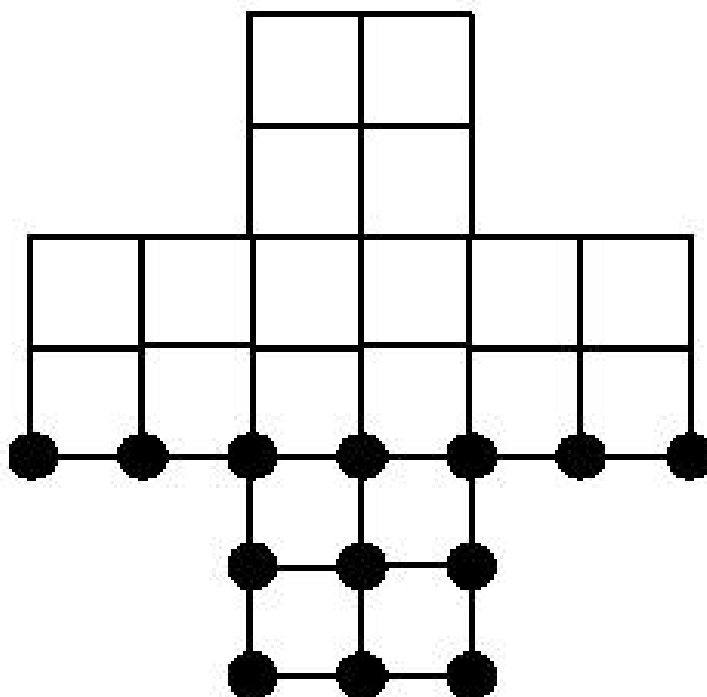
The fox and geese can move along a line in any direction but can only move to the next free place.

The fox can take a goose by jumping over a goose on to a vacant point (just like in draughts or checkers). Two or more geese can be removed in a series of short leaps (again like draughts or checkers).

The geese cannot jump over the fox.

The player moving the geese will win if he/she can prevent the fox from moving.

The player moving the fox wins when he/she reduces the number of geese by so much that it is impossible to stop the fox from moving.



## Nine-Man's Morris

There is evidence that this game was played in Ancient Egypt over 3000 years ago. However, it became a popular game in Europe by 1400. It had many names depending on which country it came from. In Germany it was called 'Mill' and in England it was called either 'Merels' or 'Nine-Man's Morris'.

### The Rules of the Game

One player has nine counters in one colour and the other player has nine counters in another colour. Players take it in turns to place their counters on the dots on the board.

Each time a player forms a 'mill' or row of three pieces along a line he/she removes one of his/her opponent's pieces from the board, but not one which is in a mill.

When all the pieces have been put on the board the players now take it in turns to move a piece along a line to the next empty spot. You have to try and make a mill so that you can take away an enemy piece.

You have won when your enemy has only two pieces left or they cannot move.

