

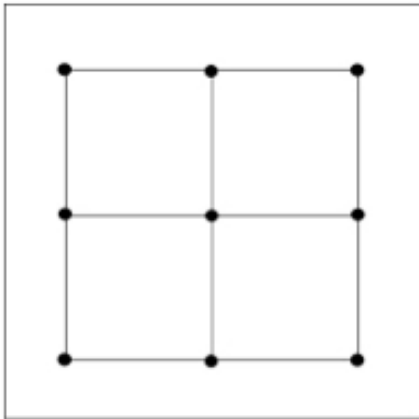
## Three men's morris

A game for two players

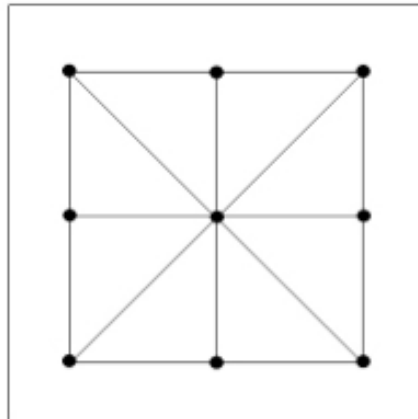
**Equipment:** 3 counters (black and white) for each player, 1 game board.

The game board consists of a square, crossed by four intersecting lines vertically, horizontally and diagonally. This design results in nine points to place the counters upon.

**A**



**B**



### Game Setup

On the screen, you can see the board from above. At the left, the three white counters are ready for you. The black counters on the right are for your opponent or the computer.

### Objective of the game

The objective is to be the first player to make a row of three own counters. There are eight possibilities to arrange three pieces in a row.

### Game play

1. Players alternately place one of their counters on a vacant point (= the cross sections of the lines) on the board.
2. With all six counters being placed on the board, players take turns sliding one of their counters along the lines to an adjacent point. Players must move a counter on their turn.
3. Counters cannot pass a point on the way to another point nor leap over another counter. And two counters cannot occupy the same point.

## **End of the game**

Play proceeds with players moving one of their counters per turn. The player, who aligns his three counters in a straight line, is the winner.

## **Our proposals for the rules**

The rules of Three men's morris are well known. They were already described by King Alfonso X<sup>th</sup> of Spain in his "Book of Games" ("Libro de los juegos") of 1284. The Roman poet Ovid mentions it briefly in two of his works (Art of Love, III 365-66, and Tristia, II 480-81): he writes that on a small game board with two times three counters the player who connects his counters has won. Unfortunately, he does not mention the Latin name of the game, nor does he explain the rules of the game exactly. Carved into floors of ancient Roman cities designs as the one described here, but also two variants can be found: one without the two diagonals, another without the diagonals, too, but with cross connections between the centres of the four sides.

## **Further reading**

- Ulrich Schädler / Ricardo Calvo, *Alfonso X. "der Weise", Das Buch der Spiele*, Wien/Berlin 2009, p. 295-96, 306.
- Véronique Dasen (éd.), *Ludique. Jouer dans l'Antiquité*, catalogue de l'exposition, Lugdunum, musée et théâtres romains, 20 juin-1er décembre 2019, Gent, 2019.

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