

## Marbles

### **Setting:**

A game for two or more people (though six is usually the most that will fit around a circle of the size given below).

Marbles is played inside a circle approximately a foot and a half across, drawn in (slightly packed) dirt or with string on a rug. The friction-heavy terrain is necessary to discourage frequent roll-outs.

It was played by kids in rural areas who have a number of marbles or odd objects that can be substituted for marbles. My grandma used to play this in southern Virginia on her farm when she was young (shes still a sharp player).

### **Arrangement:**

The small marbles are placed in a cluster in the middle of the circle.

Each player is arranged proportionally around the circle. So two players would sit opposite each other, three people would sit at every one third interval around the circle, etc.

### **Equipment:**

There is one large marble per player, and approximately twenty small marbles to be placed inside the circle. The circle itself can be drawn in or on whatever grounds are used, hard/soft dirt, pavement (in this case chalk is needed), kitchen floor, etc. The circle must be drawn on flat level ground.

### **Definitions:**

**“shooting”** is where the player (whose turn it is) curls his/her pointer finger, with the thumb cocked behind it, and placing a large marble in the pointer finger crevice. The act of shooting occurs when the player launches the marble using their cocked thumb, in an attempt to hit one or more marbles out of the circle.

**“rolling out”** is when the shot (large) marble goes out of the circle, whether or not it hits a marble. If this happens the turn is invalidated and the small marbles knocked out are placed in the center.

**“double”** is when two marbles are knocked out of the circle, three points are awarded (the 2 marbles plus a bonus.) and the player gets to shoot again.

**“all out”** is if one player (usually the starting player) knocks all of the marbles out of the circle before anyone else has a turn.

### **Rules:**

- The starting player is either the winner of the previous game, or through alternate means decided by the group (rock paper scissors, closest to a number picked by external party, etc).
- The shooting player must retrieve their large marble after shooting, regardless of what happens, it is not part of the “board”.
- Players take their turns going to the right.
- A player must shoot their marble from their given place at the circle. The kids playing will want to shift around to find the best spot, they must not be allowed to do this!
- Large marbles cannot go out of the circle once launched in (they must be removed after each shot, but they cannot roll out of the circle).
- A point is awarded for each marble knocked out of the circle.
- If a shot misses all of the marbles in the circle, then a point is deducted from that player

(usually in marble form, where its placed back in the middle of the circle)... or at least this is what my grandma tells me. Maybe thats why she almost always won.

- Winning happens when the last of the small marbles are knocked out of the circle.
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**Common Boundary Rules:** Players will be inclined to shoot from inside the circle, as in put their hand over the line to get closer to their target marble. This is not allowed at all.

**Strategies:**

- 1) Since the marbles are initially clustered in the middle of the circle, shooting high (from off the ground) and aiming at the edge marbles proves the highest chance of getting a point.
- 2) Loose ground is preferred for play because it inhibits the movement of the shot marble, reducing the chance of it “rolling out”.
- 3) Knock a marble close to the edge of the circle of the person opposite of you to block them. This usually gets them pissed off enough that they “miss” their shot as well. Double bonus!

**Miscellaneous:**

Apparently this was a family favorite. My grandma would play this with her older brothers out on the dirt yard or on a rug in the living room. Sometimes her parents would play too. It was their equivalent of a card game on a late night or mid day.

Members of my family have a tenancy to make up rules that suit a predicament (it probably happens elsewhere too) and sometimes entire games would be canceled over feuds started this way. At any given time, with more than two people (or at least one spectator) the amount of energy invested in a game can be tremendous, with tempers and victory dances going off at almost any time.