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Art 380
Marbles

Marbles is an ancient game that has been rooted back thousands of years all over the world including ancient Egypt and Rome. Marbles has been noticeable aspect in American culture, however its popularity has dwindled today. My grandmother, Shirley E. Bell, remembers her days of playing marbles and has supplied her recollection of a version of the game as it was played in America. Provided below is a complete description and evaluation of the the game.

Culture:

On the school house playground or maybe down on the street corner, marbles has been and is still played by children of all ages. Although today you wouldn't find the average school kid playing marbles today, the game and a sack of marbles use to be a staple among young children in America. Even with its loss of popularity, children still learn this old fashion game and seasoned players still reminisce in occasional play.

Play:

Two or more players are arranged around a circle, usually a fairly large circle (10ft diameter suggested), usually drawn on the sidewalk or even a circular ditch can be dug in the ground. Except for an arm for shooting, players are not permitted to enter the circle during play. Games are played for ownership (or "for keeps") of the marbles in play, both yours and your opponent(s). This potential for a player to loose their marbles (potentially rare or valuable) can cause heated competitions, and can provoke rivalries. However it is not completely uncommon for players to agree before a game starts to keep their own marbles and play strictly for fun.

Rules:

Rules for marbles are mutable and any rule or even game itself can be change on the spot by mere suggestion and agreed on by all the players. Rules given here are some of the more standard and widely accepted rules in America, however there are thousands of variations and any measurements given should be considered as suggestions rather than necessary rules.

Equipment:

As stated before a circle needs to be made in the area of play; it should be around 10ft in diameter and can be made from chalk, a rope, or even a ditch. Each player needs a set of marbles. A set should consist a minimum of, the amount of marbles agreed to play for the game and at least one "shooter".

These marbles can be any size and no consistency is needed among players, unless one is adopted and agreed upon by all the players.

How to Play:

1. First, players need to determine who goes first. This is accomplished by players drawing two parallel lines that are the diameter of the circle apart. Then players take turns standing behind one line and dropping/shooting their "shooter" at the other line. The player who is closest to the other line with out going over it is the winner and is the first person to start the game.
2. After the circle has been made and players have chosen the amount of marbles to play with, the specific marbles they will use, and the player who will go first, then all of the player's marbles should be arranged in the circle. This arrangement can be random (dropping all the marbles in the

center) or an agreed upon pattern, such as a cross or circle.

3. The player who goes first should step up to the edge of the ring and use the "knuckles down" technique to shoot and attempt to knock out a marble from the circle. If the player manages to knock out a marble, then that player gets to retrieve and keep that marble and receives another turn. The player must take that turn by "knuckling down" where the "shooter" stopped in the circle. If the "shooter" stopped outside of the circle, then the player can shoot from anywhere on the edge of the ring.

4. When the player is unsuccessful in knocking out another marble on his or her shot, then their turn has ended and it is the next player's turn, the player must leave his or her "shooter" in circle if it did not roll out on their last shot.

5. The other player now has a turn to shoot and must start "knuckling down" on the outside of the ring like the player before him. The player should follow the same rules as the first player did for his turn and receive the same turn and marble reward. However unlike the player before him this player possibly has the option of attempting to knock out the other player's shooter if it is still inside the circle. If this player is successful in knocking out the other player's "shooter" then they are considered the winner of the game and receives all the marbles left in the circle and other player's "shooter"

6. Players should rotate in turns until either all the marbles are removed from the circle, or someone's "shooter" is knocked out of the circle.

Players keep the marbles that they have captured in the game and this can cause determining a winner a difficult task.

Definitions:

"for Keeps"

– playing for possession or for 'keeping' the marbles that win in play

Shooter

– a special marble used to shoot at the other marbles; usually quite big and possibly your biggest marble in a player's set.

"Knuckling down"

– a technique to shooting marbles; same hand position as flipping a coin, but your knuckle must be touching the ground before you shoot.

Penalties:

If a player enters the circle during game play, unless he is knuckling down inside the ring during his turn, then they will receive a one marble penalty that must be taken from the player's set and put in play in the ring.

The same penalty is applied if a player shoots his shooter before his knuckle touches the ground while he is knuckling down. It is the other player's duty to watch for this violation.

Critique:

Strategy

Players can be strategic in choosing which marbles they choose to play for the given situation. Bigger marbles are usually more difficult to be knocked out however they are usually more valuable, but strategy could include using only big marbles for play if your opponent has a small shooter.

Players should try to align their shots in such an order to knock out a marble and bounce your shooter in a strategic position towards the middle of the ring.

Players should be very defensive with their shooters. If a shot is risky and has the possibility of leaving your shooter next to the edge of the ring, then a safe shot intentionally outside of the ring might be the best strategy for the situation.

Meaning:

This game is very meaningful for the people that used to play daily on the playground. Collecting marbles was and still is very popular in America, and playing marbles is an excellent way to grow and expand your collection, or loose it all in one fail swoop. There are individuals that have spent years to gather their collections and to many of them it is one of their most prized possessions. For decades people have enjoyed the game and competition of marbles and this game will continued to be played for decades to come