

# Get Out Your Clams,

# peewees, and Taws!

## It's "game on" for keepsies!

Playing marbles—flicking, or shooting, small colored glass balls on or into a target area—is a very old pastime. Exactly where and when the game of marbles began is not known.

Archaeologists have dug up small clay and stone balls in caves in Europe and in Egyptian tombs. Ancient Romans played using round nuts and called it Nuts! (Well, translated it was "Nuts.")

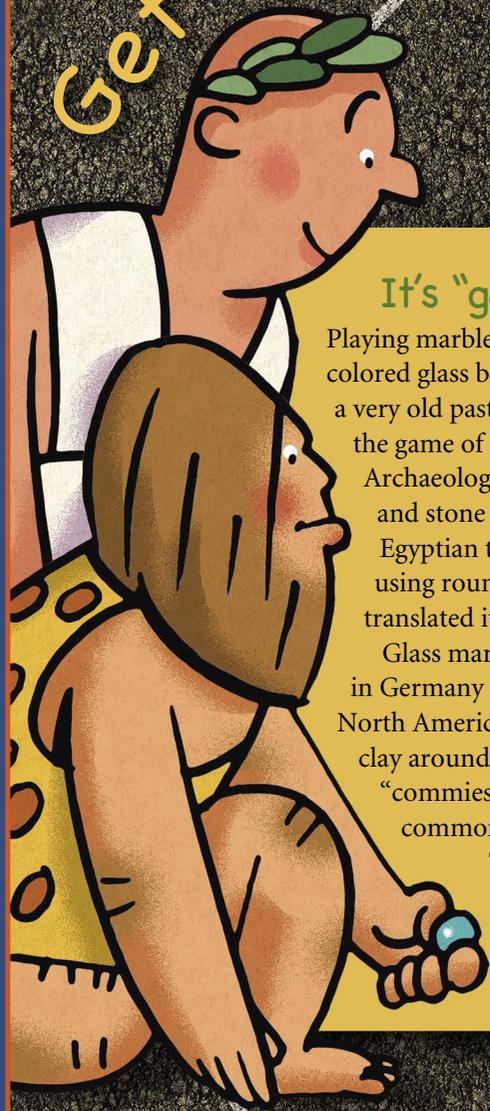
Glass marbles were first manufactured in Germany in the mid-1800s. The first North American marbles were made from clay around 1884. They became known as "commies" because they were the most common kind of marbles.

Today's marbles come in many sizes and colors. Glass marbles often show swirls of different colors.

## How to Shoot

Make a loose fist with the fingers of your dominant hand, except your thumb. Put your shooter—a larger-than-ordinary marble—against the ball of your pointer finger. Put your thumbnail behind it. Flick your thumb to propel the marble forward.

Some games insist on all or a couple of knuckles on the ground when shooting (you have to be on your knees); others allow no knuckles on the ground. Decide with your friends how you want to play.

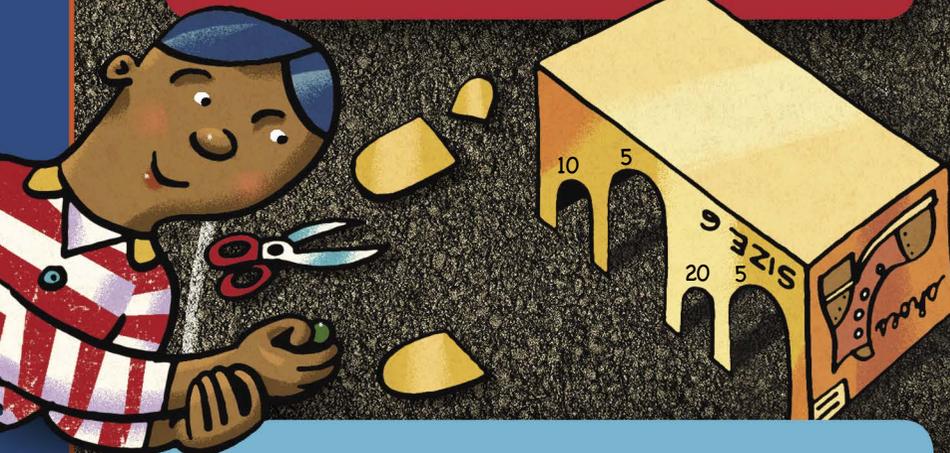


## Games

There are many games and many ways to play marbles, and some games have many different names. Learn these three games, then make up your own.

- **ARCHBOARD:** Players shoot marbles into box cutouts.
- **RINGER:** Players knock marbles out of a circle
- **POTSIE:** Players shoot marbles into a hole.

Before you begin, agree among yourselves on whether you are playing “for fair,” in which all marbles are returned to the owners, or “for keeps” or “keepsies,” in which the winner takes all the marbles. Beginners usually play “for fair.”



## Archboard

You will need a shoebox or tissue box. With scissors, cut arches (curved or square) of different sizes (big enough for marbles to pass through) into the long edge of the box (not the bottom). Above each arch, write a number. (The more difficult shots should have higher numbers.) Place the box upside down on the playing surface.

Decide how many marbles each player will use.

The object is to shoot a marble at the box to get it through an arch. When your marble goes into one of the holes, you score points. The game is over when all of the marbles have been used. The player with the most points wins.



## Ringer

Draw a large circle, 5 to 10 feet across, on the ground. Use chalk on a sidewalk or driveway; if you are playing indoors, use fine string to make a circle on the floor. In the center, place 13 marbles, spaced about 3 inches apart, to form an X.

Each player uses a designated shooter marble. The shooter marbles should all be of the same size and material. Players take turns shooting (or flicking) from anywhere outside the ring, trying to knock a target marble out of it, while keeping their shooter marble inside the ring.

### OUTCOMES

- If the shooter marble misses a target, the player picks up his shooter marble and his turn is over.
- If the shooter marble knocks a target out of the ring but the shooter marble also rolls out of the ring, the player keeps any marbles that rolled out, including his shooter, and his turn is over.
- If the shooter marble knocks a target out of the ring and stays inside the ring, the player shoots again from the spot where his shooter marble came to a stop. The player keeps any marbles that rolled out.

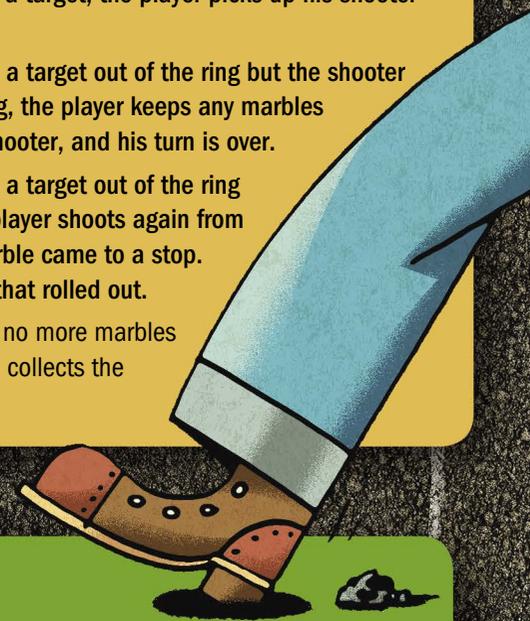
The game ends when there are no more marbles inside the ring. The person who collects the most marbles is the winner.



## Potsie

A hole (also called a “pot”) is dug with the heel of a shoe, a simple utensil, or a shovel. A shallow hole is called a saucer.

Mark off a starting line a few feet away from the hole. Players attempt to shoot a marble into the hole. Whoever gets their marble into the hole wins. (It’s like miniature golf.) If no player gets a marble into the hole during the first round, the players shoot again, starting with the marble farthest from the hole.



## Marvelous Marbles

Marbles can be fancy or plain, different sizes and different materials. Learn these terms and you'll sound like a mibster!

**AGGIE:** a marble made of agate or a glass marble that looks like it is agate

**ALLEY:** a marble made of alabaster

**CLAMS:** marbles

**CLAYEY:** a marble made of clay

**DEAD DUCK:** an easy shot

**DUBS:** knocking two marbles out with one shot

**KEEPSIES:** playing for ownership of players' marbles

**KNUCKLE DOWN:** to put one knuckle of your shooting hand in contact with the ground.

**LAGGING:** choosing who shoots first. Players roll their marbles toward a line in the dirt (the lag line). The player who gets his marble closest to the line starts the game.

**MIBS:** target marbles

**MIBSTER:** marble game player

**PEERIE OR PURIE:** small clear glass marble

**PEEWEE:** a very small marble

**STEELIE:** a steel marble

**TAW:** a shooter marble

**TRIPS:** a shot in play that touches three marbles



## Did You Know?

- Presidents George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, John Quincy Adams, and Abraham Lincoln were known to play marbles. It is said that Lincoln played marbles during the Civil War to relieve stress.
- Today, people of all ages compete in national and world championships. Girls were not allowed to participate in national marble tournaments until 1948.
- Handmade sulphides are clear glass marbles with white or silvery figures (animals, birds, or humans) suspended in the center. One of the most valuable of these, made for a political campaign, contains images of President James Garfield and his vice president, Chester Arthur.
- In Syria and Turkey, people play marbles with the knucklebones of sheep.



## Have You Lost Your Marbles?

Years ago, marbles were highly prized. When a person misplaced something very important or special or did something outrageous, people would ask, "Have you lost your marbles?" meaning "Have you lost your wits or mind?"

