



San Diego Museum of Man
Lesson Plan
Play the Game of Senet
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Teacher Lesson Plan

OBJECTIVES	Students will learn how to play the ancient Egyptian game of Senet. Students can also create their own Senet board and playing pieces.
MATERIALS	Provided by Classroom Teacher: Pens or pencils Color markers Rulers Poster board, cardboard, or ply wood Popsicle sticks or craft sticks Provided by Students 5 each of one type of “game piece” (10 total pieces) (see Making Senet Playing Pieces handout for details) Included in this Lesson Plan (make one copy per student): Building a Senet Game Board Making Senet Playing Pieces How to Play the Game of Senet (4 pages)
DIRECTIONS	Tell students that they will learn how to play the ancient Egyptian game of Senet, and will make their own Senet boards and playing pieces. Pass out the Building a Senet Board and Making Senet Playing Pieces handouts to each student. Students will use these handouts to make a Senet game board and the pieces to play the game with. Pass out the four page How to Play the Game of Senet handout to each student. Read through the instructions and make sure students understand the rules for play. Once the class understands the rules, students can play each other.
FURTHER STUDY	Have students research other games that ancient Egyptians may have played. Since many of the rules for Senet have been reconstructed by various archaeologists and game historians, students can also research different rules for how to play the Senet game.
SO WHAT?	Learning the games enjoyed by ancient Egyptians can be an excellent supplement to a unit on ancient Egypt. Students also learn the meaning of some Egyptian hieroglyphic symbols.
EDUCATION STANDARDS	This lesson plan can be used to fulfill state and national education standards in Social Science (World History). This lesson plan fulfills California State Education Content Standards in History—Social Science for grade 6 (6.2).



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Building a Senet Game Board

Senet is an ancient Egyptian board game that has been played for thousands of years. The famous pharaoh Tutankhamun was buried with four Senet boards, similar to the one drawn below.

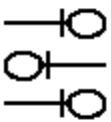
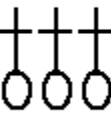




Using this handout, you will create your own example of a Senet game board.

The Game board

The Senet game board is made of three long rows, with each row containing ten spaces called “houses.”

Look at the example of a Senet game board drawn below.

Using poster board, cardboard, or wood, draw a game board with thirty houses similar to the one below. Use a ruler to make the lines straight. Each house should be at least 1-inch on each side.

The Six Special Houses

Look at the Senet game board drawn above. Find the **six** houses that have drawings in them.

Using pencils, pens, or markers, draw pictures similar to these six houses in the same houses on your game board. Be sure to draw the same picture in a matching house on your board.

The pictures on each of these six special houses are hieroglyphs that tell what happens when a playing piece lands on that house. See the **Special Rules for Houses with Pictures** section of the **How to Play the Game of Senet** handout to find out what each of these houses means.



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Making Senet Playing Pieces

In addition to having a unique game board, the game of Senet is played with special playing pieces. Two players each have five game pieces that they move around the board. Four counting sticks called “fingers” are used to tell how many spaces to move.

Using this handout, you will make the pieces that are used to play this ancient and fun game.

The Four Fingers

Instead of dice, the ancient Egyptians used four specially colored sticks called “**fingers**” to determine how many spaces each player could move. These four counting sticks are called fingers because they are shaped just like fingers.

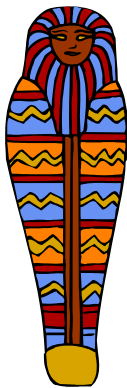
Take four popsicle or craft sticks and color them all one color on one side, and black on the other side. These are your Senet game fingers.

The Ten Game Pieces

Senet is played between **two players**, each of whom has **five game pieces** that they move along the game board. The ancient Egyptians used game pieces of all different shapes and colors.

Each player should have five game pieces that look alike and are of the same color, and each player’s game pieces should be different from their opponent’s pieces.

Students can either each bring five game pieces from home or they can make their own game pieces to use.



Examples of pieces brought from home include coins, checker or chess pieces, other game pieces, or any set of five small shapes.

To make their own game pieces, students can form shapes out of clay (mummy-like ushabti figurines or small pyramids, for example), or cut out and color small designs or figures to use.





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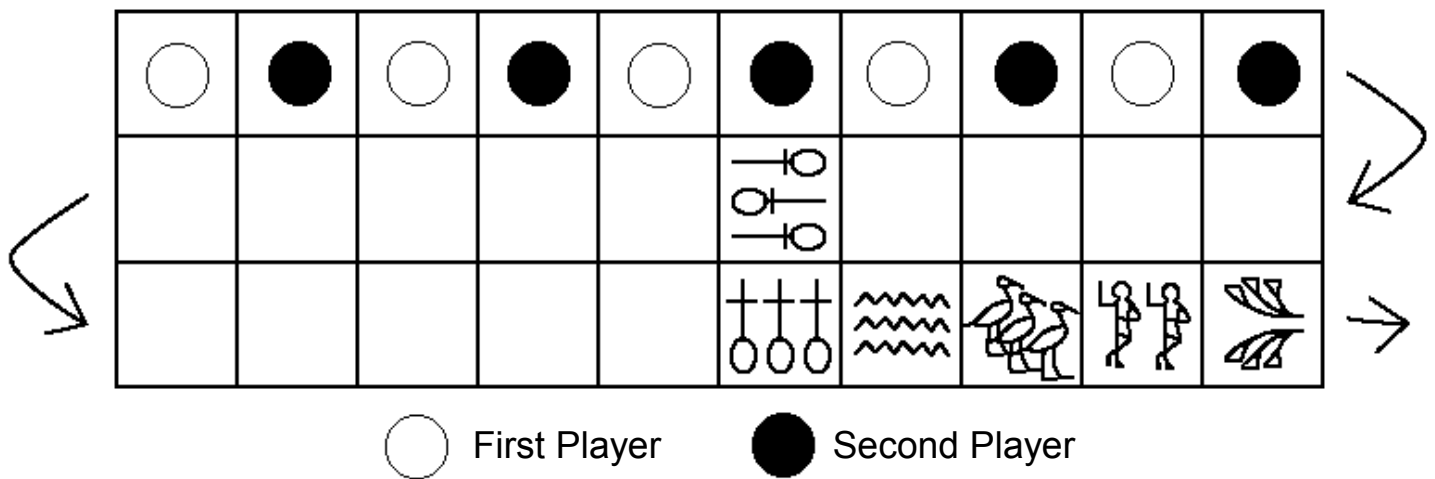
How to Play the Game of Senet

When the ancient Egyptians weren't busy building pyramids, growing crops, or mummifying the dead, they might have enjoyed a game of Senet—an ancient board game that you will learn how to play using these instructions.

Placing Your Game Pieces on the Board

To begin the game, you and another player each take your five game pieces and sit on opposite sides of the board.

If you are the **first player**, place your pieces in the 1st, 3rd, 5th, 7th, and 9th houses of the first row. The **second player** places their pieces in the 2nd, 4th, 6th, 8th, and 10th houses of the first row. The board will look like this:



Basic Rules

Only **one piece** can occupy any one house at a time.

Pieces **move** down towards the end of the first row, turn the corner and move in the opposite direction down the second row, then turn again and move the other way down the third row, and finally off the board. See the arrows on the sides of the above diagram to see how pieces move down the board.

The first player to move all their pieces off the board at the end of the last row **wins**.



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How to Play the Game of Senet (cont.)

How to Move

To begin play, player one take the **fingers** and throws them in the air.

When they land, count the number of color and black sides showing up and move as follows:



One color side up =
Move **1** house and toss again



Two color sides up =
Move **2** houses and lose turn



Three color sides up =
Move **3** houses and lose turn



Four color sides up =
Move **4** houses and toss again



Four black sides up =
Move **5** houses and toss again

Note on Moving Pieces

When moving one of your pieces to complete your move, you can **jump** over pieces in your way.

You must move **one** of your pieces the full number of houses shown by the fingers; otherwise you cannot move at all and lose your turn.

Remember that you cannot end your move on a house already occupied by one of your **own** pieces. This means that you must end each move on houses that are either empty or occupied by the other player's piece, or by moving your piece off the board.

Extra Turns

If you throw a 1, 4, 5, you get to **move** one of your pieces that many spaces and **go again**.

If you throw a 2 or 3, **move** your piece and **lose your turn**. After you've finished moving your piece, hand the fingers to the other player.



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How to Play the Game of Senet (cont.)

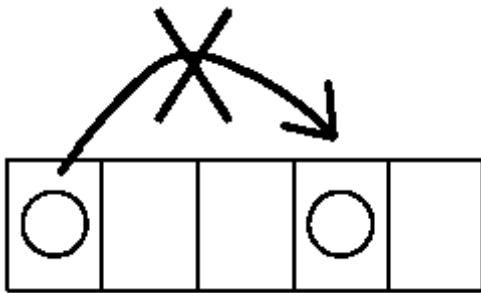
Capturing Pieces

If you end your move on a house occupied by one of your opponent's pieces, you **capture** that piece. Move the captured piece back to the house your piece was in when you began your move—your piece and the other player's piece trade places!

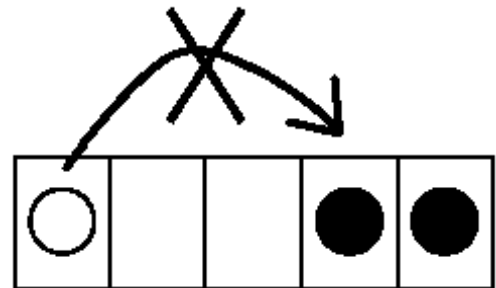
Protecting Pieces

If any **two** or more of the same player's pieces are in houses that are right next to each other, then each piece is **protected** and cannot be captured.

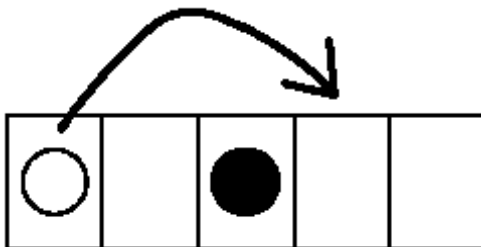
For example, if the first player throws a 3, follow the illustrations below for examples of these rules:



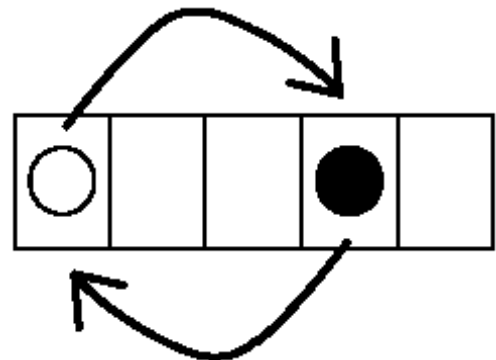
Stays put because player's **own** piece is in the way.



Stays put because opponent's piece is **protected**.



Jumps opponent's piece, but does not capture.



Captures opponent's piece by trading places.



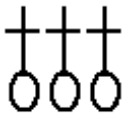
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How to Play the Game of Senet (cont.)

Special Rules for Houses with Pictures

Six of the houses on the Senet game board have special pictures drawn on them, and there are special rules that determine how you move once you've landed on these houses. Note that the name for the last house is unknown.



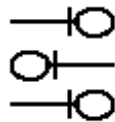
House of Happiness

You may not jump over the House of Happiness (who would want to skip Happiness?), but you must land each piece on it exactly, and then keep the piece there until you choose to move it again.



House of Water

When you land a piece on the House of Water, move it straight back to the House of Rebirth.



House of Rebirth

A piece stays there until you choose to move it again.



House of the Three Truths

You can move a piece off the board by throwing a 3.



House of Re-Atoum

You can move a piece off the board by throwing a 2.



You can move a piece off the board by throwing a 1.