Nine Men's Morris

Roman stone and bone gaming pieces and bone die from Leicester.

Entertainment on a day-to-day basis, at home or at the bath-house centred on board games. Archaeologists often find game counters on sites in Leicester. These were usually made of bone and occasionally glass, stone and recycled pottery. Some were manufactures as sets in workshops, others were made in a ad hoc fashion from recycled materials. Common games included *duodecim scripta*, *ludus latrunculorum*, Rota and Nine Men's Morris.

Nine Men's Morris, is a strategy board game for two players which dates back at least to the Roman Empire. It was also very popular in the medieval period, and the board can often be found carved into flagstones, stone seats, and old roof tiles. The Roman poet Ovid mentioned the game in the 1st century AD, and it also appears in William Shakespeare's A Midsummer Night's Dream in the 16th century.

Many of the Roman game counters and dice found in Leicester would have been used in games like this.

You will need the game board on this sheet and 18 game counters, 9 black and 9 white, the game is for two players.

The board is a grid with 24 intersections. Each player has 9 pieces and take turns to form horizontal or vertical lines of three-in-a-row.

Placing pieces

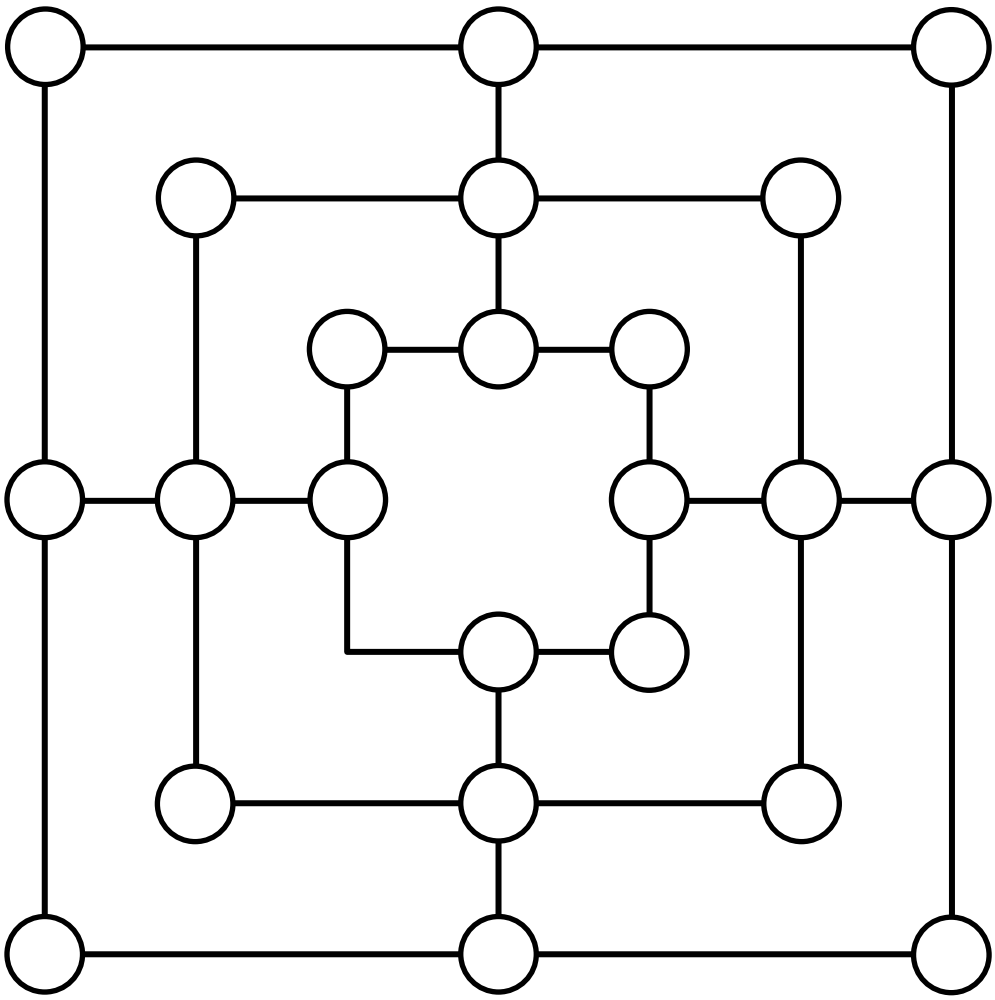
- The game begins with an empty board. Players determine who plays first, then take turns placing their counters, one per turn, on empty points.
- If a player can place three-in-a-row, vertically or horizontally, they can remove one of their opponent's counters from the board and the game.
- A player cannot remove a counter from one of their opponent's three-in-a-row unless there are no other counters available to remove.

Moving pieces

- Once all the counters are placed, players continue to take turns moving counters to adjacent points.
- A counter cannot jump another counter.
- Players continue to form three-in-a-rows and remove their opponent's counters.
- A player can break their own three-in-a-row by moving a counter, then back on their next turn to reform the same row.
- Each time this happens they can remove one of their opponent's counters from the board.

Flying

When one player is reduced to 3 counters, there is no longer a limit on that player moving to only adjacent points. The player can now 'fly' any counter to any vacant point on the board.

Winning

A player wins by reducing their opponent to two counters (whereby they can no longer form a row of three), or by leaving them without a legal move.