



Make and Play Your Own Senet Game

What is Senet?

Senet is an ancient Egyptian game that was first referenced in Egypt around 2500 BC. Images of Senet games can be seen in Old Kingdom tomb paintings and reliefs, and some Senet game boxes from the New Kingdom have survived to the present day. Ancient Egyptian Senet games have been found in the form of slab boards, boxes, and even graffiti! While Egyptians invented the game, it was also played in Nubia, including by royalty, and was adopted by people in the Levant and Cyprus.

Senet seems to have gotten its start as an ordinary board game. Over time, it took on more and more religious significance for ancient Egyptians and became symbolic of the journey of the soul through the afterlife. Archaeological evidence suggests that King Tut had six Senet sets in his tomb!

Make Your Own Senet Game

You will need:

- Printed Senet board (included at the end of this document)
- Markers, crayons, and/or colored pencils
- Scissors
- Cardboard or shoe box (optional)
- Four popsicle sticks or a piece of cardboard
- Five dark-colored and five light-colored tokens (see instructions)

Instructions:

Make the Senet board. Print and decorate the Senet board on the last page of this document. For a sturdier board, glue the Senet board to a piece of cardboard or to the lid of a shoe box.

Make the throwing sticks. Decorate one side of each of the four popsicle sticks with any design you like. Leave the other side blank—this side will be the light-colored side when you play. If you don't have popsicle sticks, you can make throwing sticks by cutting out four pieces of cardboard, each about one inch wide and six inches tall.

Find or make five dark-colored tokens and five light-colored tokens. You can use pennies and nickels, two different types of beads, beans, or stones, or even different-colored pieces of paper. Make sure that the tokens you choose are small enough to fit inside the squares on the game board.

Once you have your board, throwing sticks, and tokens, you are ready to begin!

How to Play Senet

Goal:

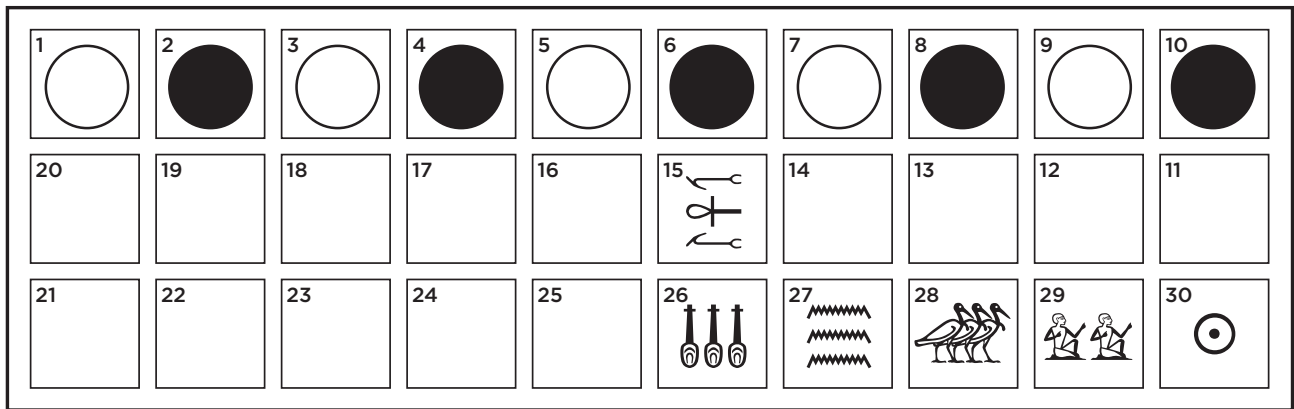
Be the first player to move all 5 of the tokens in your player color (dark or light) off of the end of the game board. The game ends when one player has successfully passed square 30, the “House of Horus,” with each of their five tokens, removing them from the game board.

Materials:

Printed Senet board, 4 throwing sticks, 5 dark tokens, 5 light tokens

Setup:

Place all the colored tokens on squares 1-10, with the light tokens on the odd-numbered squares and the dark tokens on the even-numbered squares.



How Players Move:

Toss the wooden throwing sticks. The number of light sides that land facing up is the number of spaces a player moves one of their tokens. Only one token may be moved per turn.

- Toss 1 light stick, and you move one token one space and get to toss again.
- Toss 2 light sticks, and you move one token two spaces.
- Toss 3 light sticks, and you move one token three spaces.
- Toss 4 light sticks, and you move one token four spaces and get to toss again.
- Toss 0 light sticks, and you move one token five spaces and get to toss again.

Tokens move along the board in a reverse “S” shape, following the order of the numbers.

To Begin:

To determine who goes first, toss the throwing sticks. The first player to throw a “1” plays with the dark tokens; players may need to toss the sticks multiple times until one of them has thrown a “1.” That player moves their dark token from square 10 to square 11 and gets to toss again, and this time may select any of their dark tokens to move.

The second player can toss any number to begin moving their light-colored tokens, but must move the token that starts on square 9 first.

How to Play Senet, Continued

Game Play:

1. Only a single token can occupy a space on the board. If your token ends its move on the same space as one of your opponent's tokens, send your opponent's token back to the space your token occupied at the start of its movement. You cannot land on a space occupied by one of your own tokens.
2. If two tokens of the same color are on consecutive squares (for example, squares 17 and 18), neither token can be displaced by an opponent landing on the same space. This also works for squares around the corner from each other, such as squares 20 and 21, but not on spaces across from each other, such as squares 18 and 23.
3. On your turn, you must try to move forward. If you cannot, you must move a token backwards instead, and you lose any extra turns you may have thrown. If after tossing the sticks you have no valid moves, your turn ends immediately.
4. If your token ends its move on square 15, the House of Second Life, immediately place that token on square 1 at the start of the game board.
5. The last 5 squares of the game are special. On the last 4 squares, tokens do not protect each other as described in rule 2, above.
 - Square 26: The House of Beauty. No token may proceed past this square until it has first landed here as the result of an exact throw.
 - Square 27: The House of Waters. If a token lands here, you lose any additional turns you gained from your throw. On your next turn, you must deal with this token. You have two options.
 - Option one: You can choose to return your token to square 15, the House of Second Life, and end your turn without throwing.
 - Option two: You can toss the throwing sticks. If you throw a "4," your token leaves the House of Waters; you successfully remove the token from the board, and gain an extra turn. If you do not throw a "4," the token remains in the House of Waters, and your turn ends immediately.
 - Square 28: The House of Three Judges. Your token cannot move from this space until you toss an exact throw of "3."
 - Square 29: The House of Two Judges. Your token cannot move from this space until you toss an exact throw of "2."
 - Square 30: The House of Horus. You can successfully remove your token from the board with a throw of "1" or greater.

Printable Senet Board

