

Rules for Three Medieval Games

Doug Strong

Fox and Geese This game dates back at least as far as 1300 CE in Iceland. The player who represents the Geese places 13 pieces along one edge of the game board as shown by the circles on the diagram. The player representing the fox may place their game piece on the board in any un-occupied space. The object is for the fox to "eat" all of the geese or for the geese to trap the fox so that it can not "eat" any more geese. Each piece may move one square at a time, following along the lines. Geese may only move to adjacent un-occupied spaces. The fox may move in the same way a goose does or it may "eat" by jumping a goose. A fox may jump as many geese as it can, in one turn, as long as there is an un-occupied space between each of them (as in checkers.)

Nine Men's Morris This game, also called "Merels," dates back to 1400 **BCE!** It is by far the oldest game presented here and it is still played in England today. Each player has nine "men." Players take turns placing their "men" on an un-occupied space, trying to get three of their men in a row. When one player is successful in creating a row of three, (s)he may remove one of the opponent's pieces. This continues until all eighteen pieces have been placed on the board. Then the players take turns trying to line up three men by moving their pieces to adjacent un-occupied spaces. When a player can no longer move, (s)he has lost. A player may also be defeated by being reduced to only two men. Rows of three men cannot be made by simply moving the same pieces in and out of line unless at least two of the pieces have been moved.

Shut the Box This game probably dates to about 1500 CE in England. It is a simple, fun, and easy gambling game. Each player simply draws a box divided into nine squares. Each square should be numbered from one to nine. The first player rolls a pair of dice and may cover either the number on each die or the number that represents the total of the dice. For example if a player rolls a 2 on one die and a 3 on the other they may either cover the 5 or the 2 **and** the 3. Play continues for a single player until they roll a number already covered. When the numbers 7, 8, and 9 have been covered they may choose to roll only one die. They then record the total values of the spaces left **un-covered** and pass the dice over to the next player. (S)He in turn tries to "shut the box." The lowest score wins and the loser pays the winner the difference between their scores in silver coin. If there are multiple players then the play continues until all of the players have had a chance to shut their own box. Each loser must pay the winner the difference between their totals.

Game Boards



