

GAMES

toys and children

There are many types of games: board games, card games, dice games, puzzles, strategy games, travel games and word games.



Games offer exciting combinations of strategy, fantasy and chance - throwing dice or drawing cards. A game can be defined as an activity based on skill, with a goal and rules to determine play. Games can be competitive, like chess, or non competitive, as in "ring-a-ring-a-roses".

The difference between a game and a puzzle is that there is only one solution to a puzzle - for example, a crossword or a jigsaw puzzle - whereas a game, such as chess, Monopoly or SCRABBLE®, can end in many ways.

Board games are nearly as old as recorded history. The Royal Game of Ur may be the world's oldest board game. It was played in Babylon for over 5,000 years!

Board games were popular in India in the 5th century BC. Chess was introduced to China from India in about 700 AD. A form of Backgammon was popular in Rome in the first century AD.

The ancient Romans played a game with button-shaped pieces of varying colour and shape on a board of 7 x 8 squares. It seems to have been a war game, where players tried to capture a piece by trapping it between two opposing pieces. Variations on this game can be found throughout the world.

Jacks, originally a Roman pastime, enjoyed enormous and widespread popularity after the First World War.

The first commercial games were printed on paper sheets. A Journey Through Europe, published in 1759 by Carrington Bowles, is the earliest dated game known in England. Similar racing games based on topical events are still being manufactured, including races to planets and outer space.

Traditional board and card games, like snakes and ladders and ludo, were soon joined by a broad spectrum of games for children: card games (Old Maid), knowledge and guessing games (Trivial Pursuit, JUNIOR SCRABBLE®), social games (Monopoly), manipulation and co-ordination games (Tiddly Winks and Hungry Hippos) and strategy games (Risk and Dungeons and Dragons).

The most popular games 100 years ago included chess, draughts, lotto, dominoes, Parcheesi, cards, bagatelle, cribbage and dice. In 1990, best selling games included Trivial Pursuit, Pictionary, SCRABBLE®, Scattergories and Monopoly.

The birthplace of SCRABBLE® was New York during the depression of the 1930's. Today, over 100 million sets have been sold in 120 countries and Scrabble® is now produced in 31 languages.

Recently the games market has grown considerably with the introduction of DVD based games. Some of the world's leading game publishers have licensed games developers to produce a DVD version of the classic favourites - including Scrabble and Monopoly. The first DVD game in Australia to produce exciting results at sell thru for retailers was Sceneit which was distributed by Mattel.





GAMES FOR THE FAMILY

Games are suitable for every age group, from toddler to grandmother. Games are particularly valuable for youngsters and the elderly. For children, games are valuable teaching devices that sharpen their minds. For the elderly, games are tools that help their minds remain sharp. Board games are especially suitable for family play. Man or woman, boy or girl, board games - particularly those that use dice, spinners or cards - usually give every player a fair chance to win. This offers a rare opportunity for children to experience equality with parents and siblings. Today's parents more and more want their children to play at home, thus limiting their play with others. So, playing games together with parents, brothers and sisters is ever more important.



A game of chess, wrote Benjamin Franklin in 1779, can teach "foresight, which looks a little into futurity, circumspection, which surveys the whole chess board, caution, not to make our moves too hastily and the habit of not being discouraged by present bad appearance in the state of our affairs, the habit of hoping for a favourable change, and that of persevering in the search of resources".

Games also teach children to play by a set of rules and to compete fairly with others. From puzzles and board games to the latest computer games, play improves concentration, abstract and flexible thinking, and planning - all important problem-solving tools.

There are more than 900 decisionmaking and problem-solving games used for educational purposes. Occupational therapists use tabletop board games, like Hi-Q, to help adults with physical disabilities improve their perceptual, cognitive, sensory and fine motor skills.

GAMES FOR CHILDREN

Playing games with others is not only fun, it is a way of enjoying leisure time together in a relaxed and friendly manner. It helps children to develop all sorts of skills, from learning to take turns, to memory, strategy and reasoning.



For further information:
Australian Toy Association
PO Box 7061, St Kilda Road, Melbourne VIC 8004
Email: admin@austoy.com.au
Also visit www.austoy.com.au

The ATA acknowledges the work of the National Toy Council (UK) in the development of these materials.

This leaflet is available for download from the Parents Section at www.austoy.com.au