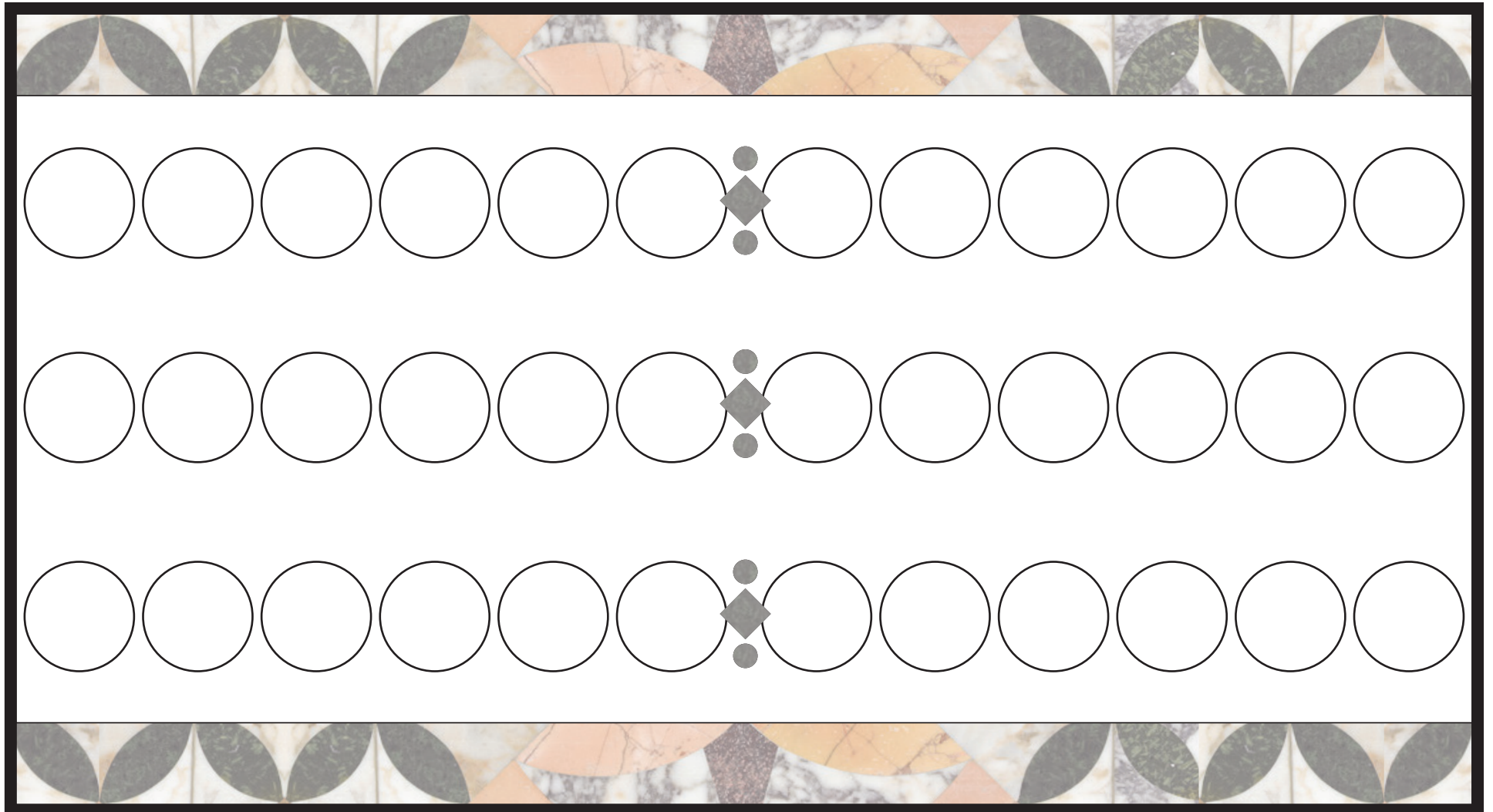


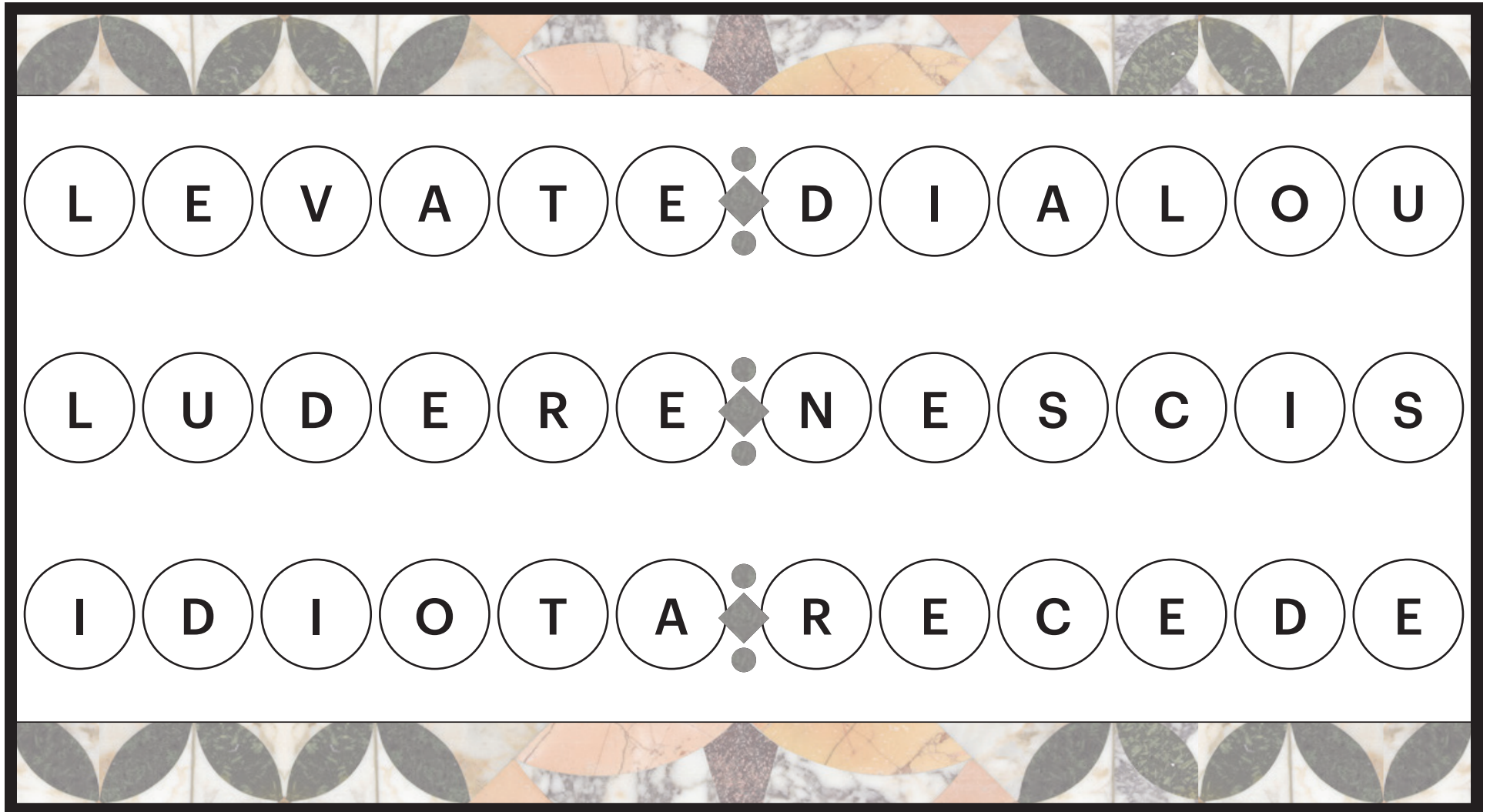
GAME BOARD

LUDUS DUODECIM SCRIPTORUM



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This inscribed board says: "Get up, get lost. You don't know how to play! Idiot, give up!"

Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum (CIL) xiv.4125

INFORMATION AND RULES

LUDUS DUODECIM SCRIPTORUM

ABOUT

This game of chance and strategy is a bit like Backgammon, and it takes practice. The game may last a long time—over an hour. Start to play a first round to learn the rules before getting more serious—or before deciding to tinker with the rules to make them easier!

We provide two boards to choose from, one very plain, and another with six-letter words substituted for groups of six landing spaces. Romans loved to gamble, and some scholars conjecture that Duodecim boards with writing on them were intended to disguise their function at times when authorities were cracking down on betting.

Some boards extolled self-care, Roman style; one says: “To hunt, to bathe, to play, to laugh, this is to live!” Another is a tavern’s menu: “We have for dinner: chicken, fish, ham, peacock.” But some boards are too obvious to fool anyone. Our example is an “insult board”: “Get up, get lost. You don’t know how to play! Idiot, give up!” Both players could assume negative comments were about the opponent.



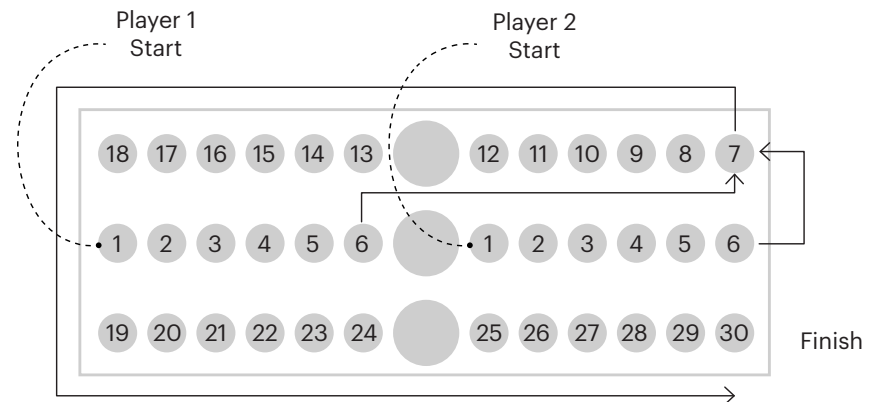
Ludus Duodecim Scriptorum board from Aphrodisias in Turkey.

Photo: William Neuheiser. Creative Commons Attribution 2.0 Generic, via Wikimedia Commons

Scholars have reconstructed the direction of play based on a beginner’s board with a sequence of letters. Roland Austin and Harold Murray figured out the likely game basics in the early twentieth century. Rules are adapted from Tabula, a similar game

WHAT YOU NEED

- 2 players
- A game board with 3 rows of 12 game spaces (download and print ours, or draw your own)
- 5 flat identifiably different game pieces for each player. They will be stacked. Pennies work: heads for one player, tails for the other
- You can also print and cut out our gaming pieces and glue them to pennies or cardboard
- 3 six-sided dice



INFORMATION AND RULES, CONTINUED

LUDUS DUODECIM SCRIPTORUM

RULES

Goal: The first player to move all playing pieces off the board wins

To enter

- The first player is selected by the roll of a die (the higher number plays first)
- Play begins in the middle row, in players' 6 home spaces (see diagram)
- No piece may advance from home until all 15 are on the board
- Pieces may be stacked
- No player may enter the other's home row
- Each player throws three dice per turn and moves based on the throw

To play

- Each player can move 1, 2, or 3 game pieces based on the throw
- The numbers on the dice can be used separately to place 3 game pieces, or can be added together to move one piece or two stacked pieces
- Example: 3 dice throws of 1, 3, and 6 offer five possibilities:
 - 1 piece moves 10 spaces (1+3+6)
 - 3 individual game pieces moves 1, 3, and 6 spaces (1, 3, 6)
 - 1 piece moves 1 space and 1 piece moves 9 spaces (1, 3+6)
 - 1 piece move 3 spaces and 1 piece moves 7 spaces (3, 1+6)
 - 1 piece moves 6 spaces and 1 piece moves 4 spaces (6, 1+3)
- No die may be ignored
- A number may not be split, only added
- A players' stacked pieces are always safe from an opponent
- Players may not land on the opponent's stacked pieces, but can count the space and move to an empty spot beyond

- An opponent may land on a single piece, forcing it to start over at the beginning of the next turn
- To return a captured piece home and then back onto the main board, players switch to one die
- If a player's pieces are blocked by stacked pieces of the opponent, the player's turn is lost until the board opens up

To exit

- A player's game pieces must gather in the final six spots before any may exit
- Exiting requires an exact throw (a piece on the last spot still needs a throw of 1)
- At this stage in the game, players switch to one die

No, it's not you—this game is hard to grasp at first. If you are patient and play one game while learning the rules, you'll have fun.

To make the game faster/easier

- Allow entire stacks to move as one if the total of the 3 numbers rolled allows the stack to reach a free spot
- Decrease the number of game pieces and/or dice

To make exiting faster/easier

- Allow an exit once all pieces have reached the final 12 spaces.
- Allow pieces to exit whenever they can without waiting for others to catch up

To make the game harder

- If a piece is sent back to the beginning, the player may not move any other pieces until that piece is off the home space again and on the main board