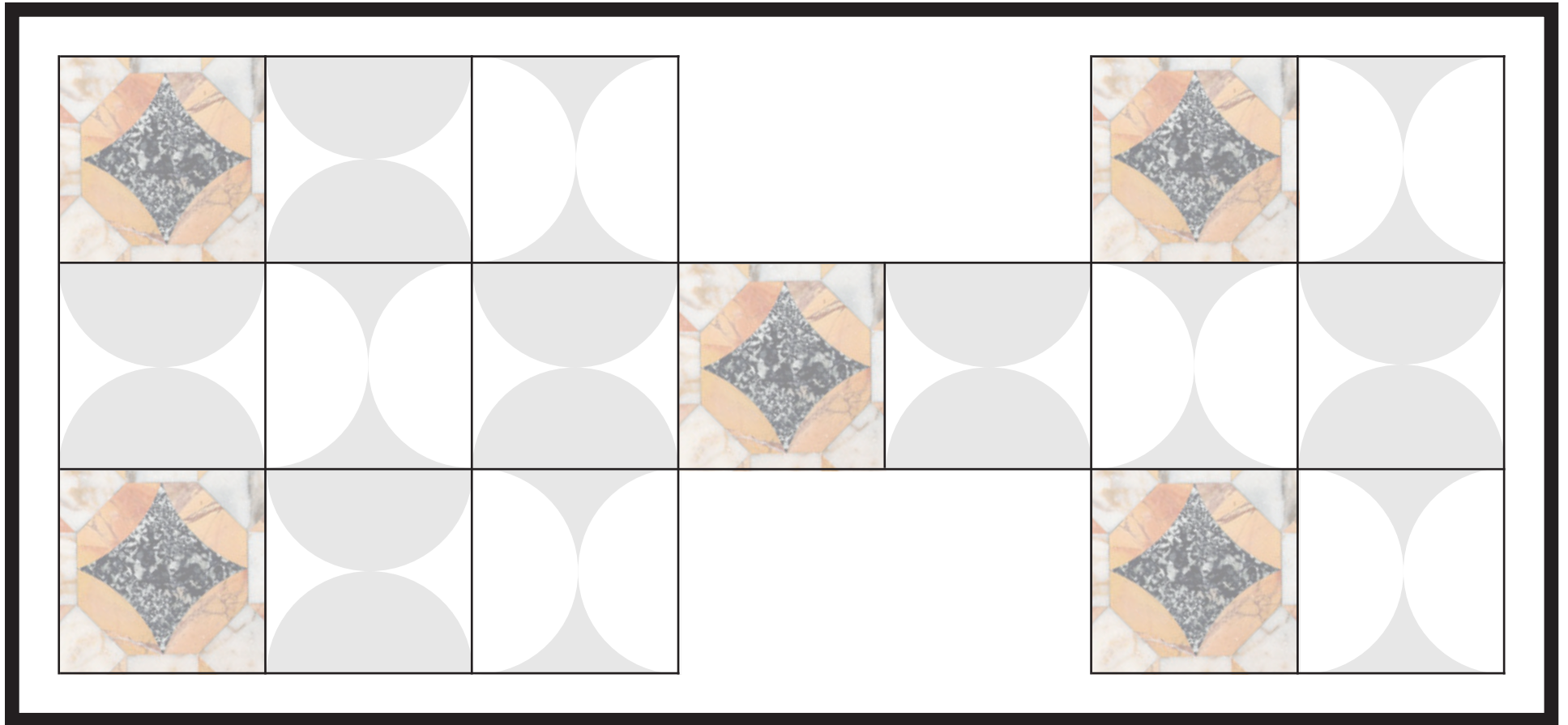


GAME BOARD

# ROYAL GAME OF UR



## INFORMATION AND RULES

# ROYAL GAME OF UR

### ABOUT

The Royal Game of Ur, a speed and strategy game, is one of the oldest and longest-lived board games ever discovered. This template is based on a 4,600-year-old board from the city of Ur in Mesopotamia (modern Iraq). Although first excavated in a royal cemetery, this game was not only played by the elite—it was popular with all levels of society. It fits within a category of games played on varied configurations of 20 squares.

After about 1,000 years the game evolved into a more complex version, whose rules are partly explained in a cuneiform tablet in the British Museum deciphered by Irving Finkel. Working backward, he designed this simple version of the game.

You will have to play this game a few times to understand it. Remember its remarkable age and popularity, and settle in to learn winning strategies.

### WHAT YOU NEED

- 2 players
- A game of Ur board (download and print ours, or draw your own)
- 7 game pieces for each player, such as light and dark pebbles or coins (heads and tails). You can also cut out our gaming pieces and glue them to pennies or circles of cardboard
- We recommend a 6-sided die. (The ancient players might use tetrahedrons, 2-sided dice, 4-sided dice/knucklebones, or throwing sticks)



Wooden Game of Ur board inlaid with shell. British Museum.

Photo by BabelStone, 2010. Creative Commons CC0 1.0 Universal Public Domain Dedication

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### RULES

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

- The first player is selected by the roll of a die (the higher number plays first)
- Players begin on opposite sides (see diagram)
- Moves are determined by a throw of the die; only 1, 2, 3, and 4 count
- If you throw a 5 or 6, try again until you throw 1-4
- A number may not be split to move multiple pieces
- New pieces may enter on any throw
- A player must always move if possible
- An opponent can land on and capture a solitary piece in the central long “bridge” (except on the colored square); this knocks it off the board to start over
- Pieces may be doubled; they can then move together and are safe from an opponent
- Pieces are also safe from capture in the outside squares on each player’s side of the board and on the colored squares
- Landing on a colored square gives the player another throw
- Exiting requires an exact throw (so to exit from the final square requires throwing a 1)

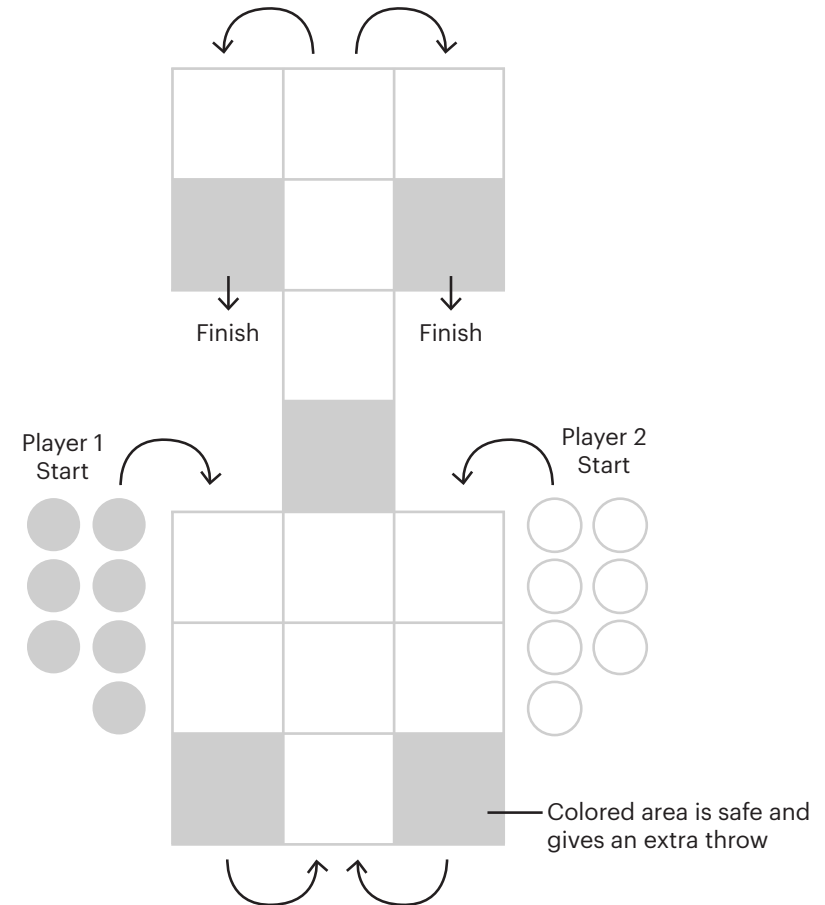
Need help?

Irving Finkel Teaches the Game of Ur:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WZskjLq040I>

Deciphering the World’s Oldest Rule Book:

<https://youtu.be/wHjzvnH54Cw>



Adapted from Irving Finkel’s *Games: Discover and Play 5 Ancient Games*.