

Ashtapada

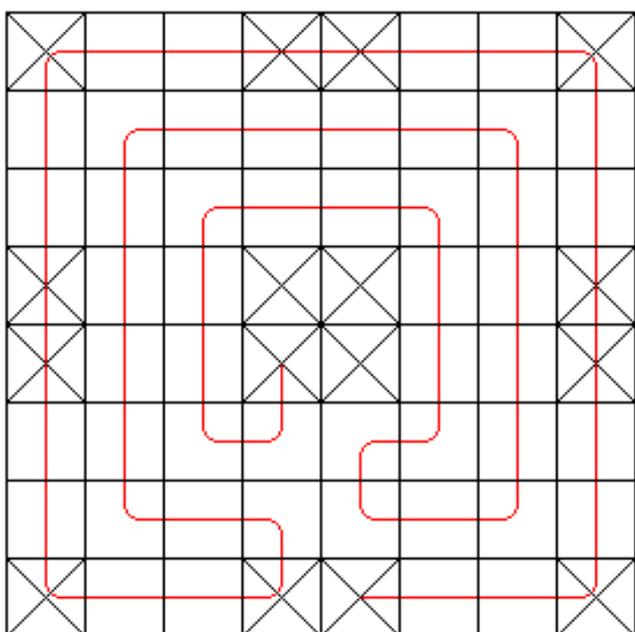
Ancient games are revealing snapshots into the past. They share enjoyments, activities, developments, and beliefs of the people who played them. Originating in India, Ashtapada, meaning eight square, refers to both the game board's dimensions and the game played upon the sixty-four squares. The game is of a simple race type and shares that pleasure was found by a leisurely method of play.

Ashtapada is possibly the first game played on an 8×8 game board in India. It is one of the oldest board games of the region. Later, and believed to originate in India, this size of board would be used to create the popular and skilled game of Chess. Shaturanga, the precursor to chess, was established using this board.

Ashtapada is seen mentioned in the earliest known list of games as one in which the Gautama Buddha wouldn't play. Including other favourite pastimes enjoyed by people of the period, this interesting record dates Ashtapada back to around the 5th or 6th century BC; since Ashtapada must have been played during his life to have been acknowledged in the Buddha's account.

Besides being an 8×8 squared board, the board consists of certain marked spaces which denote safety, entry, or exit for players. The four corners, the four central squares, and two centre squares on each side are crosscut, like shown. Two, three, or four people can play the game. If two players are playing, each would sit on one side of the board and enter their two pieces onto the centre crosscut squares along the outer side. The object of the game is to be the first player to enter and exit both his pieces. A player exits his piece once reaching the centre squares.

The path of play begins by moving along the outer edge, counterclockwise, and then moving clockwise around the middle squares only to then turn and move counterclockwise to meet the centre. Movement for the game is determined by four cowrie shells.



1. The game begins with all the pieces off the board.

2. Each player throws the dice. If using four sticks, the score is the number of light sides facing up, if cowrie shells are used, the mouths are counted instead. All four back sides facing up count as 8.

3. The player who throws highest starts the game, play passing to her left when she has completed her turn.

4. A player starts her turn by throwing the dice repeatedly, noting the throws made, until a two or three is thrown.

5. Once the series of throws ending in

two or three is complete, the pieces can be entered and moved, using in any order the throws noted.

6. A piece not already on the board can only be entered using a throw of 1, in which case it is placed on the player's own right hand X marked box.

7. If a player has no pieces on the board, any throws made before a 1 are discarded.

8. A piece already on the board may be advanced along it using any of the throws individually or combined.

9. The order in which the numbers were thrown is not significant except as noted in rule 7.

10. A piece does not move twice; when combining two or more throws to move one piece, the piece moves the total number of squares without stopping on any intervening squares.

11. If one of the throws is 1, a piece may, however, enter the board and advance in the same turn.

12. Each player's pieces follow a path starting on their own right hand X marked box. The route is shown in the diagram.

13. Every throw in a series must be used, if possible.

14. Any number of the same player's pieces may occupy the same square.

15. A player's piece on an X marked box is safe and cannot be landed on by an opponent and knocked off.

16. There are no special rules for triplets or quadruplets.

17. If a piece lands on a square occupied by enemy pieces, those enemy pieces are removed from the board and handed back to their owner.

18. Such captured pieces must re-enter the board as if they had never been on it.

19. After capturing, a player is granted another turn. So after completing her moves she again proceeds as per rule 4 onwards.
20. Twins can be captured only by other twins. Single pieces landing on twins will simply share the same square as if it were a palace or the keep.
21. Twins being captured are separated and re-entered as single pieces.
22. Twins may capture singletons.
23. The keep is at the end of each player's course, and may only be entered by an exact throw.
24. Twins entering the keep are there regarded as two individual pieces.
25. When a player has all her pieces in the keep, she may start bearing off.
26. On a throw of one, a piece completes its journey and is removed from the board (borne off).
27. When a player has borne off all of her pieces, the game is over and she is declared the winner.

The game is relatively simple but still involves some tactical skill. The first thing to take advantage of is the differing chances of each of the throws: 2 is the most common, followed by 1 and 3, followed by 4 and 5. Positioning a piece two squares behind an opponent, threatening capture, is a good way to force the opponent to move that piece. Similarly, you should avoid leaving a piece in an unprotected square when an enemy piece is two squares behind.

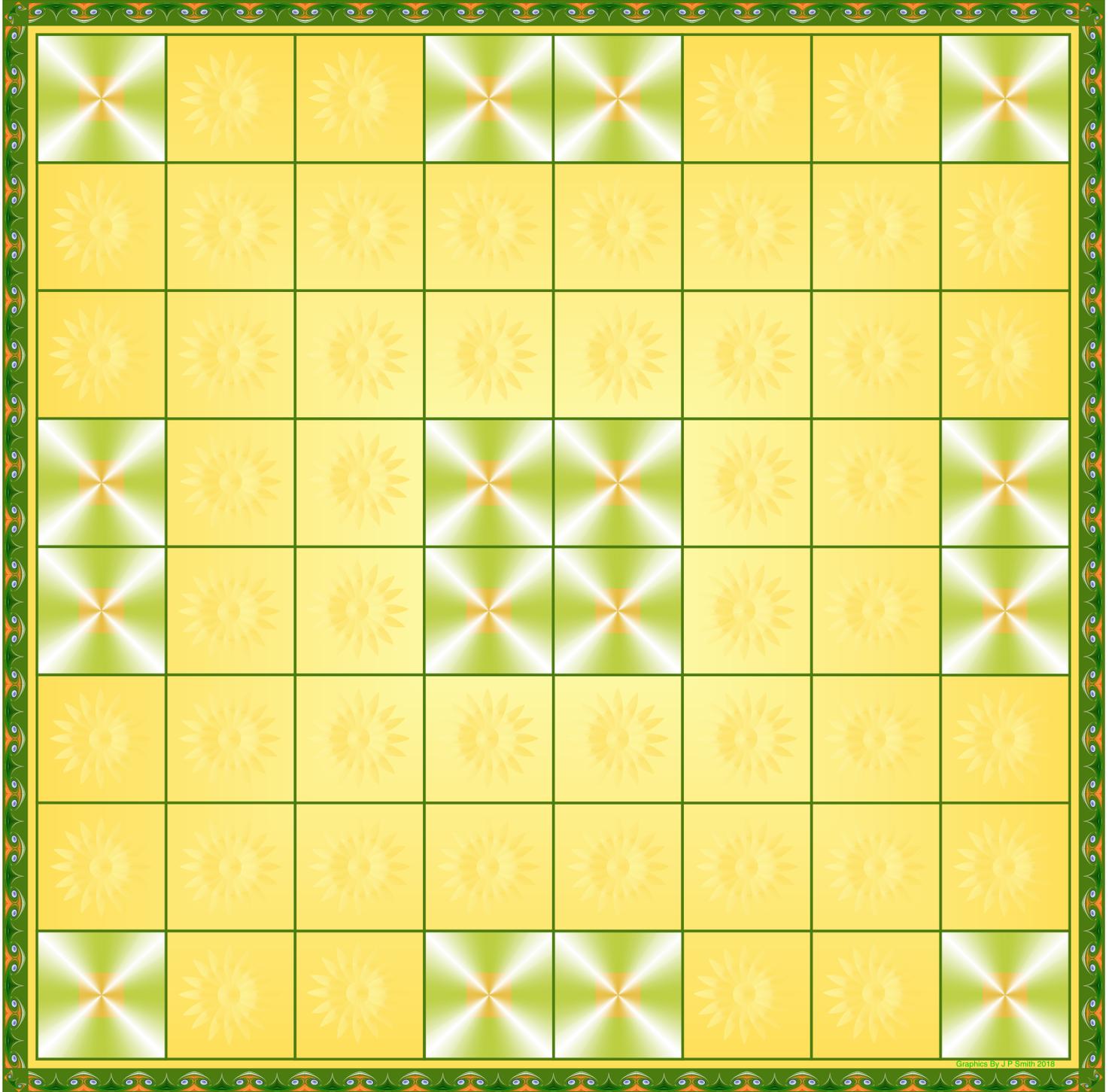
The path around the board is easy to remember, but the difficulty comes in recognising (and remembering) that the opponents paths are not the same as your own: they are rotated versions of it. It is easy to forget this, and make plays to threaten enemy pieces that in actuality you can never reach.

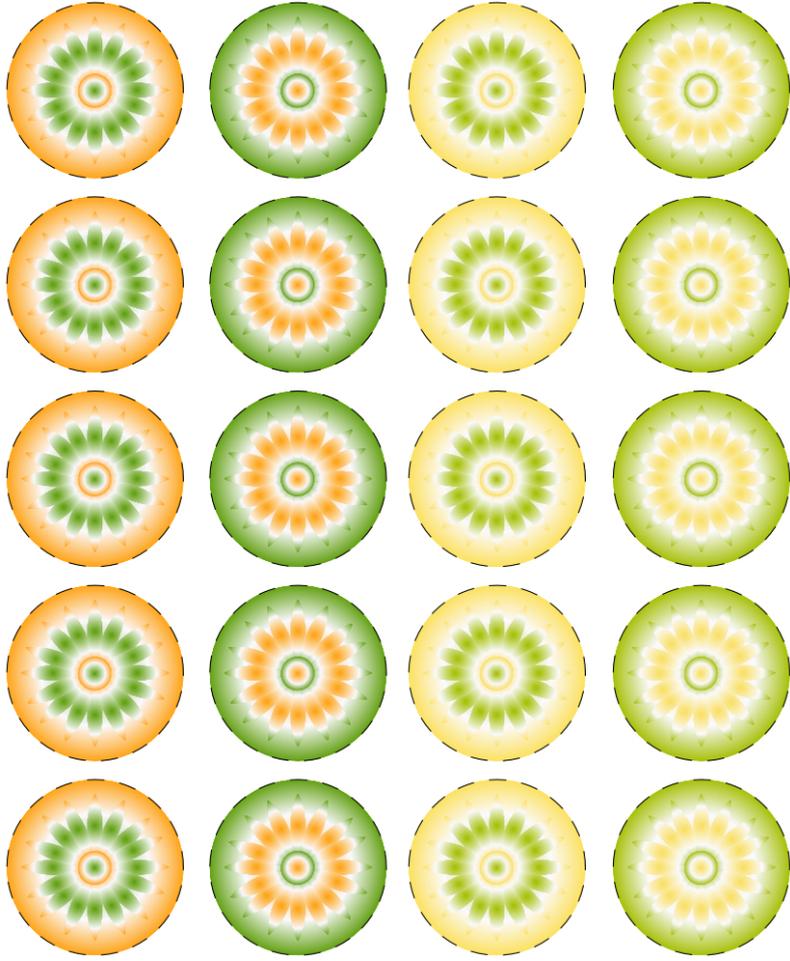
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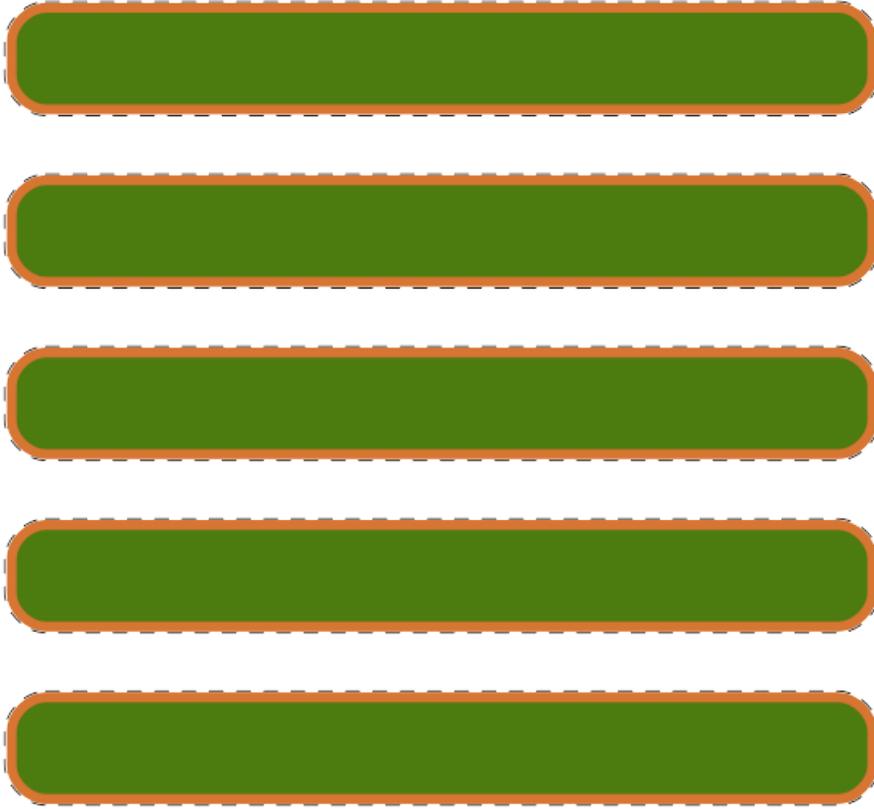
Page 5. Printable playing counters and spinner dice 1-5. Stick to card and cut out. Insert a small pointed stick or pencil through the centre of the spinner dice.

Page 6. Printable two sided casting sticks. Stick to card and cut out.





Casting Sticks Back



Casting Sticks Front

