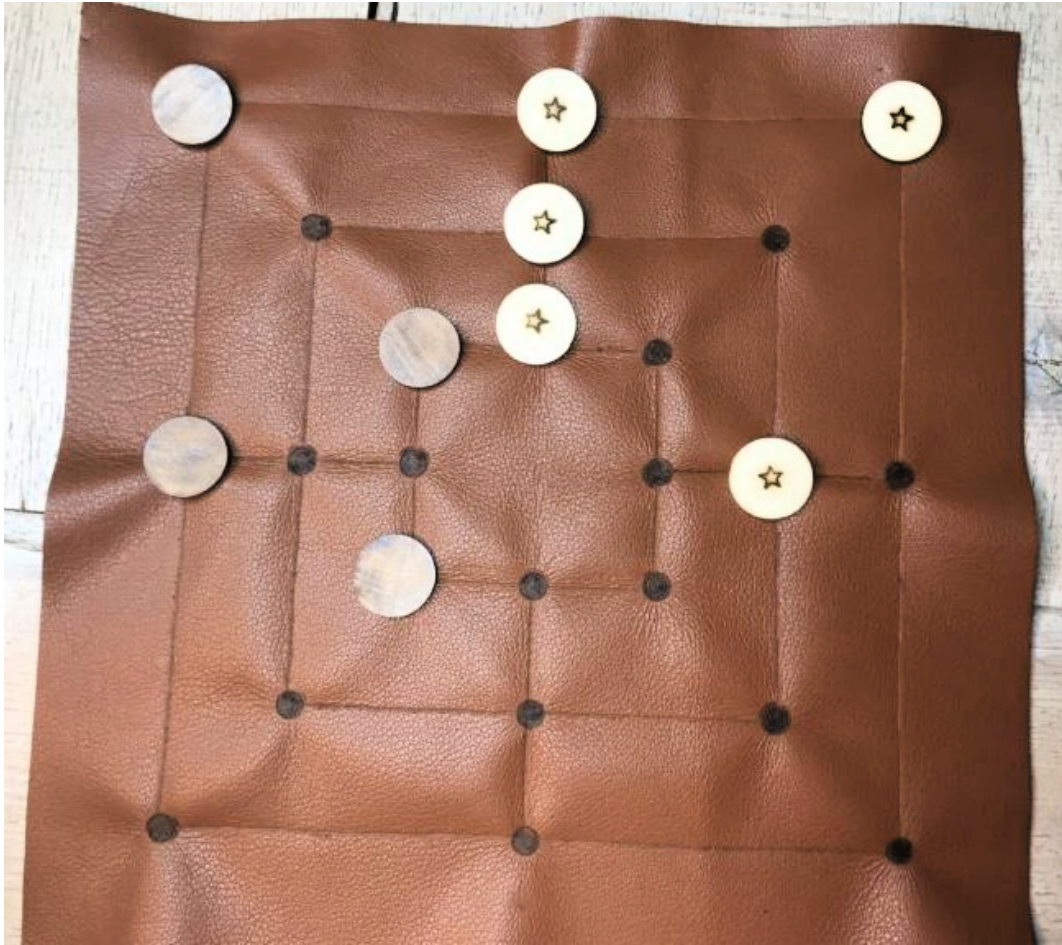


# Nine Men's Morris Colonial Board Game



**Morris** is also known as "Mills and Merrills," and there are a variety of similar games that share the name. All of them have a few things in common:

They are played with pips, marbles, or checkers on a board. That board is comprised of crossing lines, with the markers moving from one intersection to the next.

When a player aligns three of his pieces in a row, he may remove another player's piece. The goal is to reduce the opponent to two pieces. The most common Morris boards feature nested squares, with their corners and centers joined by lines.

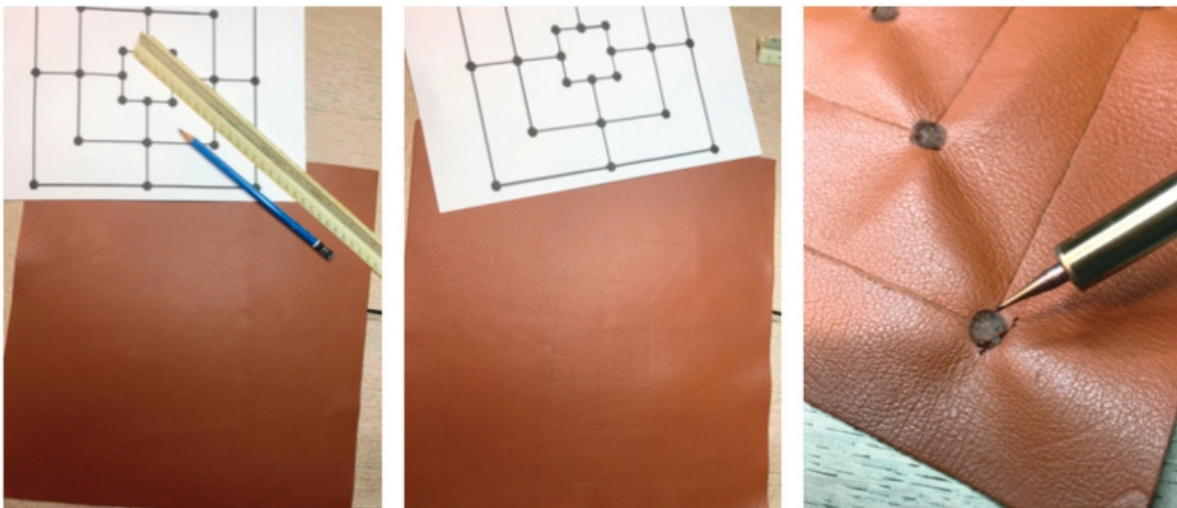
**Nine Men's Morris** is considered the standard version the game, and would have been the one played by Colonial Americans. Children may have drawn rough makeshift board on the ground and played with rocks, or draw them in chalk on a board, but dedicated wooden Morris boards with checkers or marbles for pieces were common.

## Supplies

- 12x12 inch leather square
- Pyrography burning pen
- 18 wood discs
- Pencil for marking
- Ruler
- Bag for game pieces
- Printed set of rules



To create the 9 black game pieces, use the shading tip of the pyrography pen to color in the discs. You can leave the white discs plain or add a decorative stamp with your pyrography pen. We added a star to ours.

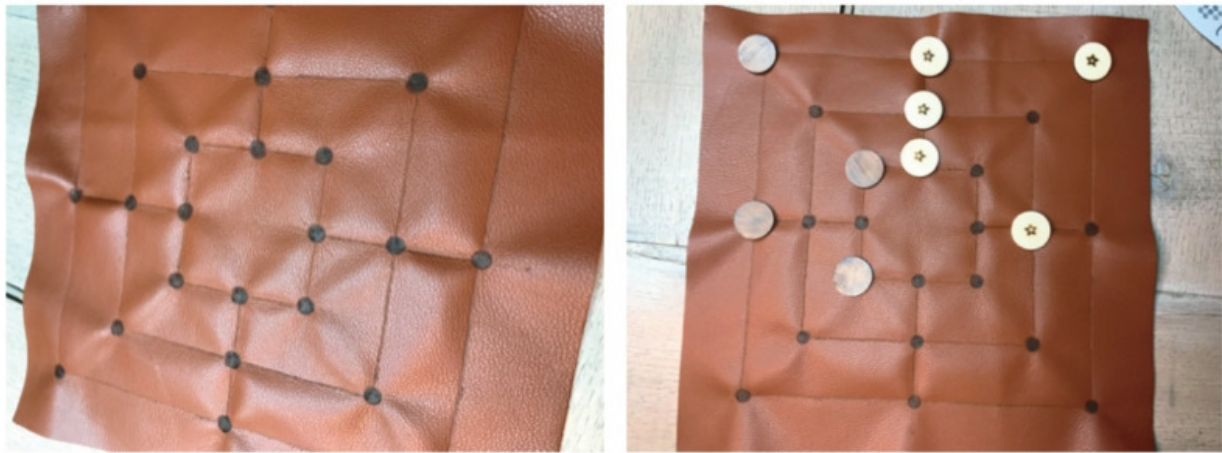


To create your game board, you will need to trace the three concentric squares and the dots onto your surface. We used leather (please make sure you get real leather — vinyl will not work).

Trace the first square in the center of your surface 3 inches across. The next square will be 6 inches. The last square will be 9 inches. The board template shows you where all the circles will go.

Use your pyrography pen to burn in the thin straight lines. We used the circle stamp to make the dot outlines and then burned out the middle with the pyrography pen.

The heat will curl the leather a bit, but it stretches back out.



Your completed board will look like the one above. It rolls up with the directions inside and ties off nicely with a ribbon if you choose to carry it that way.

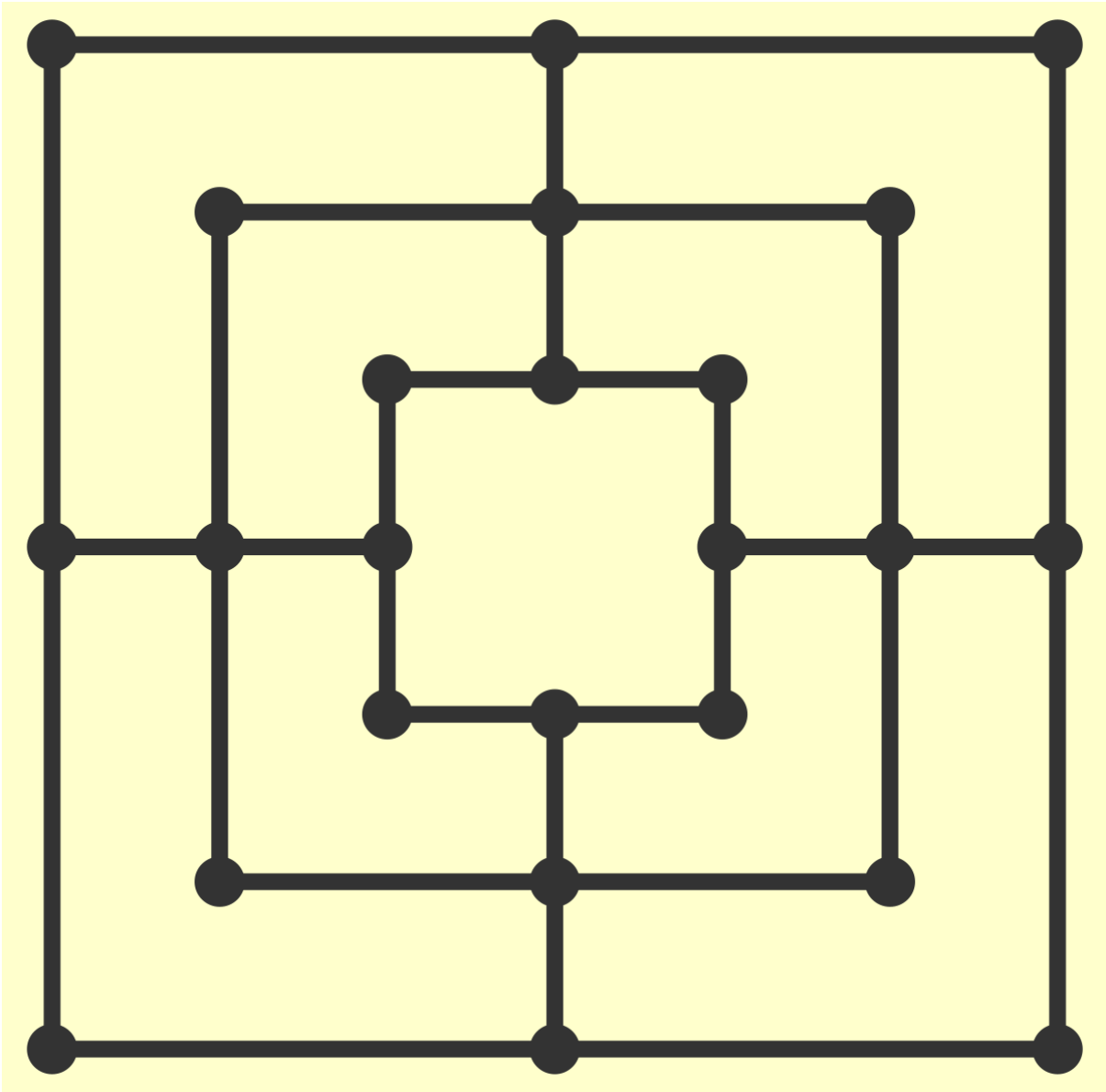
**Note:** You can also choose to make a paper board, a wooden board, or be creative and come up with your own idea! A 12x12 paver stone with paint and clear coat would make a fun outdoor game board.

### Game Board Set Up

For our leather game board, we used a 12x12 inch leather square. The center square is 3", the middle is 6" and the outer is 8" across.

You can use the same dimensions for a wooden or paper board.

Use the template below to create your board. You can resize it to the dimensions you need.



# 9 Men's Morris Game Rules

The board consists of a grid with twenty-four intersections or points.

Each player has nine pieces, or "men", usually coloured black and white. Players try to form 'mills'—three of their own men lined horizontally or vertically—allowing a player to remove an opponent's man from the game.

A player wins by reducing the opponent to two pieces (where they could no longer form mills and thus be unable to win), or by leaving them without a legal move.

The game proceeds in three phases:

1. Placing men on vacant points
2. Moving men to adjacent points (optional phase)
3. Moving men to any vacant point when the player has been reduced to three men

Nine Men's Morris starts on an empty board. The game begins with an empty board. The players determine who plays first, then take turns placing their men one per play on empty points.

If a player is able to place three of their pieces on contiguous points in a straight line, vertically or horizontally, they have formed a mill and may remove one of their opponent's pieces from the board and the game, with the caveat that a piece in an opponent's mill can only be removed if no other pieces are available.

After all men have been placed, phase two begins. Players continue to alternate moves, this time moving a man to an adjacent point. A piece may not "jump" another piece. Players continue to try to form mills and remove their opponent's pieces as in phase one.

A player can "break" a mill by moving one of his pieces out of an existing mill, then moving it back to form the same mill a second time (or any number of times), each time removing one of his opponent's men. The act of removing an opponent's man is sometimes called "pounding" the opponent. When one player has been reduced to three men, phase three begins.

When a player is reduced to three pieces, there is no longer a limitation on that player of moving to only adjacent points: The player's men may "fly" (or "hop", or "jump") from any point to any vacant point.

A 19th-century games manual calls this the "truly rustic mode of playing the game". Flying was introduced to compensate when the weaker side is one man away from losing the game. At the beginning of the game, it is more important to place pieces in versatile locations rather than to try to form mills immediately and make the mistake of concentrating one's pieces in one area of the board.

An ideal position, which typically results in a win, allows a player to shuttle one piece back and forth between two mills, removing a piece every turn.