

19th Century Toys & Games

Marbles

Marbles have been a popular pastime for children of many generations and are even enjoyed today! Marbles were made of stone, pottery, clay, or china. Children who had no marbles could use musketballs, nuts, or hard berries instead.



Marble collections were always changing as children won, lost, and traded with each other. Bags of marbles were treasures. Losing a marble you liked was very disappointing.

Make Your Own Marbles

1. Provide each student with a handful of terracotta clay.
2. Students should take a small pinch of clay (the amount of clay is dependent on how big they choose to make their marbles) and roll it between their palms to form a ball—the shape of a marble.
 - a. Clay will likely rub off onto students hands, so students should be prepared to wash their hands after creating their marbles.
3. Dry the formed marbles. The time needed to dry will also be dependent on how big or small their marbles are and where the drying takes place.
4. Once air dried, marbles can be colored using either markers or washable tempera paints.

Materials Needed

- Glass marbles for playing
- Terracotta clay
- Sharpie markers or washable tempera paints
- Wet wipes (or hand washing supplies)



* See the NM Historic Sites YouTube Channel for a video explaining this process.

Shooting a marble:

A key skill in order to properly play marble games is the ability to “shoot” the marble. To shoot a marble, point your hand down and curl your fingers into your palm. Tuck your thumb behind your index finger. Place a marble in the space between your thumb and finger and knuckle down—or rest the knuckle of your index finger on the ground. Flick out your thumb to shoot the marble.

*Marbles are available online.

Try It! Ring Taw

Draw a large ring on the ground. Draw a smaller circle inside it and place several small marbles in the circle. These smaller marbles are called the nibs. Crouch down on the outside of the larger circle and take turns flicking one of the larger marbles—



called a shooter—into the circle. Your hands must remain on the outside of the larger circle. The goal is to knock other marbles out of the circle. Each player keeps the marbles he or she knocks out. The winner is the player with the most marbles.

Information and game adapted from the Historic
Communities series by

Bobbie Kalman