

Games

Sumerians played games for entertainment and to obtain good luck. They played on game boards and used flat, round pieces of shells, stones, and bones to mark their places. Some game boards had exquisite stonework and mother-of-pearl designs. Sumerians used the brilliant blue stone lapis lazuli and red limestone to form detailed patterns. One game board from Ur has 20 decorated squares across 3 sections, including 5 *rosettes* (rose designs) and 4 zigzag-patterned squares. Another game board has 12 squares arranged in a rectangle, with 2 squares decorated with bulls and 10 decorated with goats.

Sumerian games typically began with the players rolling dice and moving their playing pieces across the board. The winner was the first person to move his or her piece off an “exit square” located at one end of the board. Art experts believe that these simple games were used to predict the players’ futures. For example, Sumerians believed winners would have luck in gaining food, drink, and love.