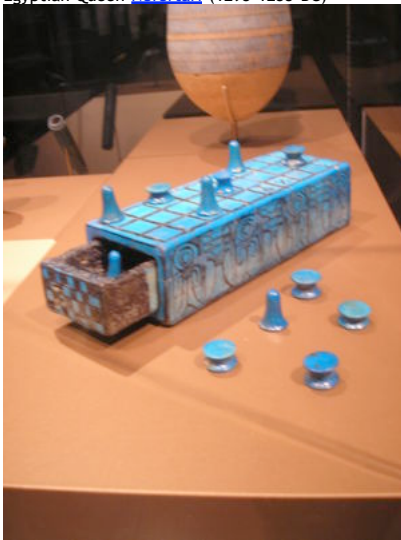


## Senet

[Wikipedia](#) Senet



Nefertari playing Senet. Painting in tomb of Egyptian Queen [Nefertari](#) (1295-1255 BC)



A Senet game from the tomb of [Amenhotep III](#) – the [Brooklyn Museum](#), [New York City](#)

**Senet** (or [senat](#)<sup>[1]</sup>), a [board game](#) from [predynastic](#) and [ancient Egypt](#), is the oldest board game whose ancient existence has been confirmed, dating to *circa* [3500 BC](#)<sup>[2]</sup>. The full name of the game in [Egyptian](#) was *sn.t n.t H/b* meaning the "passing game."

### History

Senet may be the oldest board game in [World History](#), although it is impossible to prove which game is the oldest. The oldest remnants of any ancient board game ever unearthed however are those of Senet, found in [Predynastic](#) and [First Dynasty](#) burials of [Egypt](#)<sup>[2]</sup>, circa [3500 BC](#) and [3100 BC](#) respectively. Senet is also featured in a painting from the tomb of [Merknera](#) ([3300-2700 BC](#)) (see external links below). Another painting of this ancient game is from the [Third Dynasty](#) tomb of [Hesvy](#) (c. [2686-2613 BC](#)). It is also depicted in a painting in the tomb of [Rashepes](#) (c. [2500 BC](#)).

By the time of the [New Kingdom](#) in [Egypt](#) ([1567-1085 BC](#)), it had become a kind of talisman for the journey of the dead. Because of the element of luck in the game and the Egyptian belief in determinism, it was believed that a successful player was under the protection of the major gods of the national pantheon: [Ra](#), [Thoth](#), and sometimes [Osiris](#). Consequently, Senet boards were often placed in the grave alongside other useful objects for the dangerous journey through the afterlife and the game is referred to in Chapter XVII of the [Book of the Dead](#). The game was also adopted in the [Levant](#) and as far as [Cyprus](#) and [Crete](#) but with apparently less religious significance.

### Gameplay

The Senet gameboard is a grid of thirty squares, arranged in three rows of ten. A Senet game has two sets of pawns (at least five of each and, in some sets, more). Senet was apparently a race game for two players, with moves determined by tosses of throwstick or, sometimes, [knucklebone](#).

The actual rules of the game are a topic of some debate, although historians have made educated guesses. Timothy Kendall and R.C. Bell are two Senet historians who have proposed (different) sets of rules to play the game. These rules have been adopted by different companies which make Senet sets

for sale today.

## References

- <sup>^</sup> [A history of board games](#)
- <sup>^</sup> [In Search of the Meaning of Senet](#) by Peter A. Piccione

## See also

- [Mehen](#), another ancient game.

## External links



[Wikimedia Commons](#) has media related to:  
[Senet](#)

- [Play a version of Senet online at the British Museum](#)
- [Gaming with the Gods: The Game of Senet and Ancient Egyptian Religious Beliefs](#) by Peter A. Piccione, Ph.D.

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