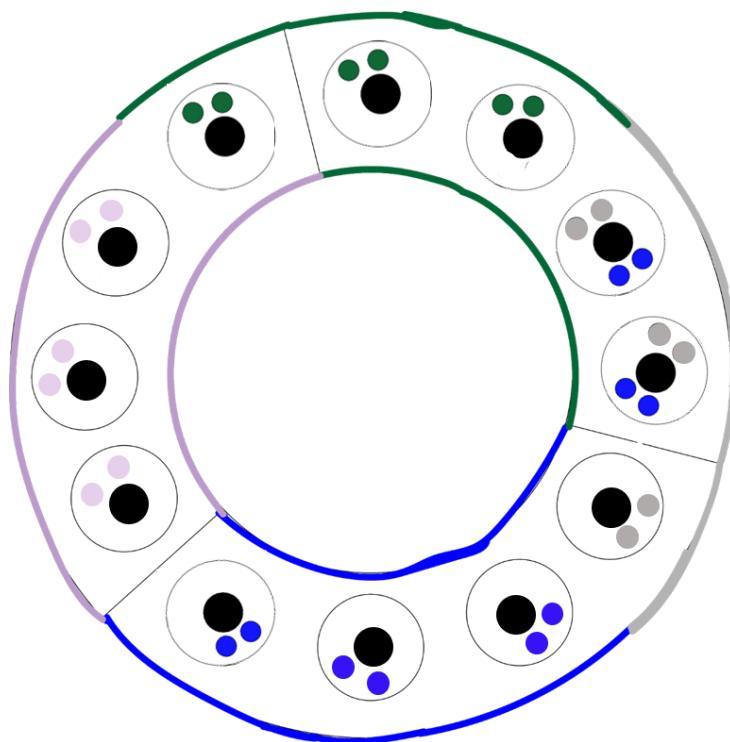


**Title:** XAllies

**Approximate Time:** 20 minutes

### **Set-Up**

1. Each player chooses a color-coded region of the board. For three players, the color designations are on the inner circle — blue, purple, and green — and include four wells per player. For four players, the color designations are on the outer circle — blue, purple, green, and gray — and include three wells per player.
2. Place one black piece in each of the 12 wells. In each color-coded region, place two pieces of the corresponding color into each of the segment's wells (if 3 players, disregard the gray colored pieces).
3. Keep the white pieces in their container, accessible to all players.



### **Game Objectives**

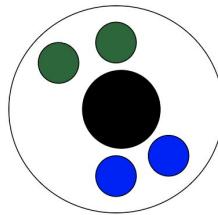
1. Players aim to score the most points by the end of the game.
2. The game ends when all of the black pieces are removed from the board and all of the white pieces have been used as cross-board marble shots.

## **Scoring**

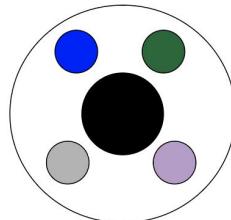
1. Each black piece is worth +3 points to each person in the alliance that obtained the piece
  - a. To obtain black pieces you must work with another player in the game. Working with a player for a black piece would be “forming an alliance” for that piece.
  - b. When one pair of one color is in the same well as another pair of another color, a black piece can be retrieved from that well (see gameplay section).
    - i. This black piece will count as +3 points for each player that took part in the alliance for the black piece.
  - c. A black piece can be eliminated from the game (points do not count for any players) if one color piece from each player is within a well containing a black piece.
2. White pieces:
  - a. At the end of the game, white pieces are chance pieces. They are worth +1 or +0 points.
  - b. To obtain white pieces, you must cross a color barrier (with your colored piece) landing your colored piece in the well next to the color barrier. These white pieces are accumulated until the end of the gameplay.
  - c. At the end of gameplay, white pieces can count as points via “shooting.”
    - i. +1 point if you shoot a marble across your color region and it lands in a well.
    - ii. +0 point if you shoot a marble across your color region and it does not land in a well.

## **Game Play**

- **To make a move**, a player chooses a well in her region and distributes the colored pieces in that well: she picks up all of the pieces in that well and drops one piece into the adjacent well, another into the next adjacent well, and so on. In one move:
  - A player can distribute in either direction, to the left or right of the chosen well, but must continue in that direction. (E.g. you cannot drop one piece in the right-side well and then the next piece in its left-side well).
  - All the pieces from the chosen well are distributed; none remain in that well.
  - Players can only pick up wells within their region, but distribution can move pieces into other regions.
- **To remove black pieces as alliance points:** if players move two pairs of colored pieces into a well, and the well contains no other colored pieces, then any black pieces in the well are removed. The black piece counts as +3 points for each of the players whose color contributes to the double-pair.



- If there are two blue pieces and two green pieces in a well with a black piece, then the black piece gets removed. Then after that is removed, if a purple piece comes into the well, that well is no longer viable to have a black piece removed.
- A well with three or four pairs can also remove black pieces, so long as there are no extra pieces outside of the pairs (e.g. for every color represented in the well, there are exactly two pieces). In this case, each of the players involved receives +3 points.
- To record the +3 points:
  - In a four-person game, record the points on paper
  - In a three-person game, record on paper or place the black pieces in between the two players in the alliance that won them.
- **To gain individual points:** each time a player crosses a boundary between color regions and drops a piece of her own color into the well immediately after the boundary, she takes a white piece. This counts as one possible individual point for that player (See "Determining Points Section").
  - In a three-person game, this applies only to the three-person boundaries; in a four-person game, this applies only to the four-person boundaries
- **To remove black pieces, without earning points:** if players move a colored piece into a well with one or more colored pieces of each other player, any black pieces in the well are then removed. The black piece does not count for any points.
  - This may be useful to the highest-scoring player if she wants to end gameplay while in the lead.



- **The player with the blue segment starts.** She makes one move, and then the turn passes to the player on the left. Each player makes one move at a time.

### Determining Points

- Once all of the black pieces are removed, each player ‘shoots’ colored pieces to determine the point value (0 or 1) of each of her white pieces. See the **scoring** section above
- Each black piece is worth +3 points per person in the alliance that acquired that piece

### Learning Objectives

1. Experiential game that provokes conflicting interests stemming from balances between individualist gameplay and collectivist gameplay
2. Promote critical thinking about mitigating issues of waste in regards to climate change through embedded designs of mechanistic gameplay.

### Game Inspirations

*XAllies* draws inspiration from the timeless *Mancala*, the futuristic board game *Terraforming Mars*, and the classic drinking game Beer Pong. By integrating the most engaging aspects of these three games (two iconic and one visionary), *XAllies* seeks to create an experience wherein the dynamic nature of the game makes it fun to play.

*XAllies*, similar to *Mancala*, is played by strategically moving colored stones into the other pockets on the board. The player deposits all of the contents from one pocket of the board into the others one at a time. *XAllies* offers its players significantly greater freedom of choice than *Mancala* because the game is multidirectional and the contents of each pocket vary considerably. However, at its most fundamental level, *XAllies* shares with *Mancala* the satisfying experience of dropping marbles into another pocket containing marbles. When they come in contact with other pieces, marbles produce a soft, unique clicking sound that many people find enjoyable. Marbles are also physically satisfying to hold, as their composition (a mixture of glass, clay, and steel) has a very soft feel on the skin. The small, spherical shape of marbles fits perfectly in the players hand. From a psychological perspective this is relevant because the tiny pieces give the player a sense of control at a subconscious level. This becomes a significant detail because in a person's everyday life, so much of what transpires is outside the realm of their control. To create a game environment where a player can reclaim that sense of control by handling and placing their pieces on their own accord is something that considerably enhances the player experience. For example, the experience of playing *Mancala* in person offers a significantly more gratifying experience than playing electronically, for these exact reasons. The same concept applies for playing Poker with physical chips versus playing online. The experience of holding chips in one's hand and hearing the sound they make when they collide with other chips reinforces a sense of personal control that is not present when playing through an electronic medium.

In order to accumulate points players must strategize with other players to create pairs that are mutually advantageous to both parties. However, players want to collaborate in a way that still affords them the greatest opportunity to win the game. Therefore, self-interest underlies

partnerships. This is where *XAllies* takes inspiration from *Terraforming Mars* — a game which pushes its players to work with others based on the resources each player has. Depending on the piece positions, you can create or break alliances each turn in order to gain points. Although *XAllies* does not use resources such as water and greeneries seen in *Terraforming Mars*, it uses the positions of colored pieces and the demand for score pieces to invite critical thinking about whether it is best to collaborate with others or accumulate independently for each turn.

The shooting aspect of the game takes inspiration from the college and tailgate favorite Beer Pong. At the end of the game a player has the opportunity to shoot their marble into a pocket directly across the board from one of their pockets. The number of white pieces each player has accumulated determines the number of opportunities they have to shoot their piece across the board. Each time a marble makes it into the pocket across from the board, each player gets a point. If a player misses, then no points are awarded to them. This mechanism adds a fun, unpredictable, physical element to the game which puts greater risk for the individualistic playing style. The white pieces represent a greater risk in that they are only valuable to you if you successfully make the shot. Shooting a piece at a specific target is an inherently exciting exercise as it is the basis for so many games of all kinds. Players who are more confident in their ability to successfully slide the marble into the opposite pocket will likely work to accumulate white pieces throughout the game which will impact their playing style. This feature is added at the very end to build excitement particularly if players are tied in the amount of points they have from black pieces. If player one and player two are the games top scores once all of the black pieces are removed, and they have both accumulated the same number of black pieces, whoever makes the most cross-board shots becomes the winner. This emulates the most exciting part of many sports and games — the final attempts to score in critical moments at the end of a game.