

# Spectral Reapers

by Clark D. Rodeffer

## Overview

Spectral Reapers is a mancala game for 2 to 6 players (best for 3 to 5 players).

## Equipment

In a game with N players, you will need:

- N cups, one for each player for storing their captured beads,
- Eleven beads in each of N different colors, one set for each player, and
- A mancala board having two by N pits. This can be improvised using  $2*N$  more cups.

For example, a Spectral Reapers game for three players requires three cups for the players' storehouses, thirty three beads equally distributed among three different colors, and either a two by three pit mancala board or six more cups arranged in a loop.

## Method of Play

The game is played in two phases:

- 1) Determine a starting player and player colors by any fair method. Turns proceed clockwise. Each player, in turn, distributes all eleven of his own colored beads into any three pits. The only restriction on the initial bead distribution is that none of the three pits into which a player places his beads may initially contain less than three nor more than four beads of his own color, but may include any number of beads in other players' colors. Depending upon how players choose to distribute their colored beads, there may be one or more empty pits at the end of phase one, but no pits containing beads will have fewer than three nor more than four beads of any one color that it contains. The starting player from phase one will also begin phase two.
- 2) On his turn, each player lifts all of the beads from any one of the pits that contain at least one bead of his own color. Beginning with the pit immediately counter-clockwise from the emptied pit, the player sows them, one at a time, counter-clockwise around the board. If there are enough beads to go all the way around the board (possibly more than once), no beads are sown into the pit that was emptied. Beads may be sown in any order the player desires. If the last bead a player sows is one of his own color, and if by its addition, that last pit now contains exactly two beads of his own color (that is, in addition to any number of beads of other colors), that player must capture any one bead from that pit. In so doing, a player may, whether by choice or by force, capture one of his own beads. If a capture was made, the same player immediately takes another turn. Otherwise, the turn passes clockwise.

The game ends the moment that any one player has only one bead remaining in play. The player who made the final capture does not continue taking turns, and all uncaptured beads remain on the board. At that point, whoever has captured the most beads, regardless of color, wins.

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