

How to play Kisolo

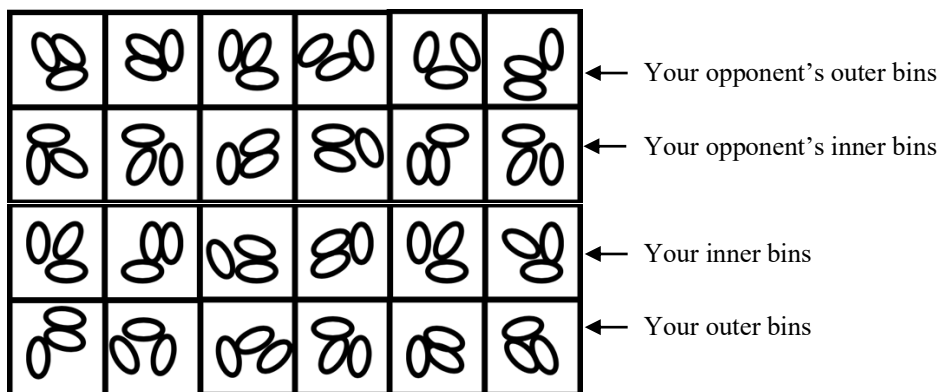
Kisolo is a Congolese variant of the widespread Mancala-type games. These are simplified rules, designed so you can play a game in fifteen minutes or so.

To make a Kisolo board: Take two egg cartons, and cut their lids off. Tape them together to make a game board with six by four bins. (Most traditional Kisolo boards are four by seven bins in size, but a

smaller board is allowable and makes for shorter game play.) You can also use the commercially available Mancala boards—take two of them, place them side by side and ignore the larger bins at the ends of the boards.

To set up the board: Place three seeds in each bin. You can use actual bean seeds, or small glass tokens or what-have-you, for seeds.

Your opponent sits here...



And you sit on this side.

To start:

Two players sit at the long sides of the game board opposite each other. The twelve bins on your side belong to you, and the twelve bins on your opponent's side belong to them. Each player has six "outer bins" (the row of bins nearest to them) and six "inner bins"—see the diagram.

To play:

Youngest player starts.

When it is your turn, see if one of your inner bins contains seeds AND your opponent's inner bin opposite it contains seeds. (If that's true of more than one of your inner bins, just pick one; OR if you can't capture any seeds, see below.)

Then remove all the seeds from *your* inner bin, *plus* the seeds in the corresponding bin that belongs to your opponent, *and* any seeds in your opponent's outer bin that's next to that inner bin.

Now "sow the seeds," that is, starting with the inner bin you've just emptied, place one seed in

each of your bins and continue counterclockwise sowing seeds only into you bins, until you have sown all the seeds.

If your last seed falls in one of your inner bins, then you ALSO get to remove all the seeds from *your* inner bin, *plus* the seeds in the corresponding bin that belongs to your opponent, *and* any seeds in your opponent's outer bin that's next to that inner bin. Then you sow the seeds as before—it's like you get another turn (but after that your turn is over).

IF YOU CANNOT CAPTURE ANY SEEDS, then empty the seeds out of any one of your bins and sow those seeds counterclockwise into your own bins.

To win the game:

Capture all the seeds in your opponent's INNER bins (doesn't matter how many seeds are in the OUTER bins).

Note that some games will end in a draw, where neither player can win. If it feels like the game is going nowhere, the players can agree to a draw.