

The traditional game of bowling A home-based lesson plan

Historical Background

In the third and fourth centuries, German monks introduced bowling to local people, not as a game, but as a religious practice. The German **peasants** believed it would tell them whether or not they would be pardoned from sin. When the German people attended church they brought a wooden club, called a **kegel**, to precipitate in bowling. The **parishioner** set up his own kegel as a pin. Then, they would roll a stone at the kegel and if the kegel was knocked down, the person was considered free from sin. In some parts of the United States and Europe bowling is still known as kegeling.

This practice became a popular game. Early Europeans bowled with a duckpin ball, nine pins, and a wooden plank. A duckpin ball is smaller than a modern bowling ball and has no finger holes. The nine pins were also smaller and set up in a diamond pattern. Nine-pin bowling is still the most popular form of bowling in Europe and championships are held every year.



Modern nine-pin bowling
Photo Credit: Wikipedia

Nine-pin bowling was brought to North America by British, German, and Dutch colonists. The earliest known instance of bowling in the American colonies is of Dutchmen playing a version of the game in New York in 1670. By the early 1800s, bowling halls had become popular places for people to relax and enjoy some recreation. According to **folklore**, ten-pin bowling came about in response to government officials banning nine-pin bowling in order to stop the **gambling** that was occurring at some bowling halls. Instead of using nine pins, people began to use ten pins.

Today, in the United States, people play pin bowling and target bowling. If you go to a bowling alley today, you play ten-pin bowling. Target bowling is typically played outside on grass, gravel, or another surface, but can also be played indoors. The objective of the game is for a player to throw the ball at a designated area. Examples of target bowling include bocce, petanque, and boules.



Contestions playing boules
Photo Credit: Cavalry Travel Insurance

Key Words

Peasant - a person who owns or rents a small piece of land to farm.

Kegel - a German word for a wooden club.

Parishioner - a person who goes to a particular local church.

Folklore - a story that is passed from person to person.

Gambling - the act of betting money or something of value on an event with an uncertain outcome.

Activity: Make your own nine-pin bowling game

Supplies:

- 9 empty water bottles
- Weight (sand, marbles, water, etc.)
- A tennis ball, or similar sized ball



Louisa County Historical Society

Instructions:

1. Fill each bottle with some sand or other weight, such as marbles, just enough so that the pins will not fall over too easily. Be careful not to fill them with too much or they will be too hard to knock over. * If you like, you can decorate the bottles before you weigh them down. You can paint them different colors, add colorful tape, number them by using foam letters, add a bit of paint on the inside...screw the cap on and shake, put different color glow sticks in each pin, etc.



2. Either indoors or outdoors, set up the pins on a flat surface. Make sure you set the pins up in a safe area where no one can trip and nothing can be damaged.
3. Stand at least a couple of feet away from the pins. Take turns rolling the ball at the nine pins. Each player should count how many pins they knocked over and record it using the provided template. Once all the squares are filled in, tally up the scores, and see who won! Whoever knocked down the most pins (has the highest score) wins!

