# Senet

Introduction:

Senet (*znt*) is a board game played by the ancient Egyptians, and is similar to modern backgammon. The exact rules were never written down, but many reconstruction attempts have been made. The pieces were called dancers (*ibȝw*), and were shaped either like 'cones' or 'reels', and the squares were called houses (*pr*). Casting sticks (*ḏbˤw*) were used as dice.

Aim:

The aim of Senet is to be the first to remove all of your dancers from the board.

Rules:

1. Each player controls either seven cones or seven reels, which begin in alternating houses, starting with the reels in the top left corner. Players then take turns moving their dancers in a Z-shaped pattern around the board. The cones take the first move.
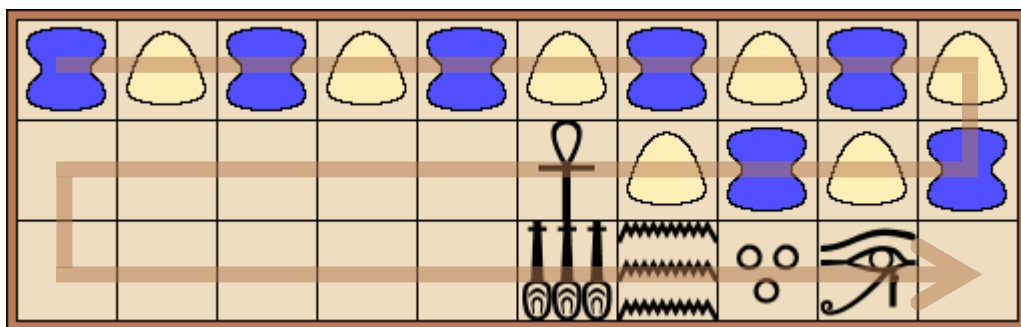

   Play moves in a Z-shaped pattern.

2. The player throws the casting sticks to determine how far they can move (by pressing SPACEBAR or clicking the casting area). The cast is equal to the number of sticks that land with the lighter side facing up. If none of the sticks land this way, the cast is worth five. The player then moves one of their dancers by this number of houses.

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

3. Players move forward if possible, otherwise they move backwards. They may move either to an empty house, or to a house with an unprotected opponent. A dancer is unprotected if it has no common neighbours. If a player lands on an unprotected opponent, then their dancers swap places.
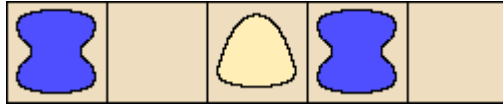
All dancers are unprotected. Play is going to the right.

The reels throw a cast of two. They may land on the unprotected cone.

The reel and the cone exchange places. The reels are now protected.

The cones throw a cast of four. They move to the empty house.

4. If a player's cast is one, four or five, they take another turn, as these throws are less common. If their cast is two or three, or they cannot move, play moves to the next player.

Reel's cast: 4

(Reels have another turn).

Reel's cast: 2

(Reel's last move this turn).

5. All dancers must land exactly on 'The House of Beauty' (*pr nfrw*) to proceed past it. After passing the House of Beauty, a dancer cannot move unless an exact cast is thrown to remove it from the end of the board. Dancers may be removed directly from the House of Beauty if a five is thrown.
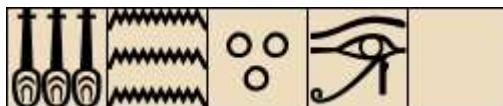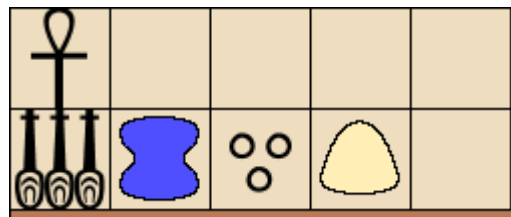
5) The House of Beauty
4) The House of Water
3) The House of Three Truths
2) The House of Ra-Atum
1)

6. If a player lands on any unprotected opponent beyond the House of Beauty, the opponent's dancer moves to the 'House of Water' (*pr mw*) rather than swapping places, provided that the House of Water is free.
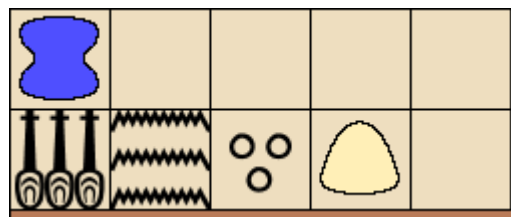
The cones cast a three.

The reel is sent to the House of Water.

7. After a player has cast, they may choose to sacrifice the rest of their turn (including any further casts) to move one of their dancers to the 'House of Life' (*pr ꜥnḫ*) in the centre of the board (by pressing the SHIFT key), provided that the House of Life is free.

The reels sacrifice their turn to move to the House of Life.

Winning the game:

The game is won once all of a player's dancers are removed from the board.

Congratulations!
Cones have won.

Press ENTER to start a new game.

Many variations of the rules have been proposed. Here is a summary of the most popular:

Timothy Kendall:

[Penalty Backgammon]
This is the most similar version to the rules found above. The main difference is that a player cannot move if they have a dancer in the House of Water. If a dancer in the House of Three Truths or the House of Ra-Atum cannot be removed, then this dancer is also moved to the House of Water. It is only when a player is stuck in the House of Water that they may sacrifice their turn to move that dancer to the House of Life. An exact cast is not required to remove a dancer from the final house.

Gustave Jéquier:

[The Game of Passing]
In this version, the special houses do nothing except to protect a dancer which is not already protected by its neighbours. The exception to this is the House of Water, which sends any dancer landing there back to the first unoccupied house. Players only have five dancers each, and can only move backwards if a house is unoccupied. A group of three or more similar dancers prevent opposing dancers from moving past them. The first player to cast a one takes possession of the cones, and begins the game by moving the leading cone one space. When all casting sticks land facing down, the throw is worth six rather than five. Dancers must land on the final house to be removed, but they are only removed if all the player's remaining dancers are also in the last row.

John Tait:

[Snakes and Ladders]
This version also begins with five dancers, and the cast is worth six when all casting sticks land facing down. Dancers begin off the board, and are moved on with throws of four or six. Any opponent dancer that is landed on is immediately removed from the board, as is any dancer to land in the House of Water. The only protected house is the House of Life. Players may only take another turn after a throw of six, but also after landing on the House of Beauty, or after using an exact cast to reach the end of the board.

R. C. Bell:

[Order and Insanity]
Each player starts with ten dancers off the board. If any of the last five houses are unoccupied, a cast may be used to place a new dancer on that house. Play then proceeds backwards, and any opposing dancer may be landed on and removed. Once a dancer reaches the first house, they must move all their remaining dancers into consecutive odd houses, and their opponent must move into consecutive even houses. Once a dancer has reached its final position, it cannot be moved or landed on. The first player to the first house scores 5 points, and the first player to finish scores 10 points, plus 1 for every further move by their opponent.