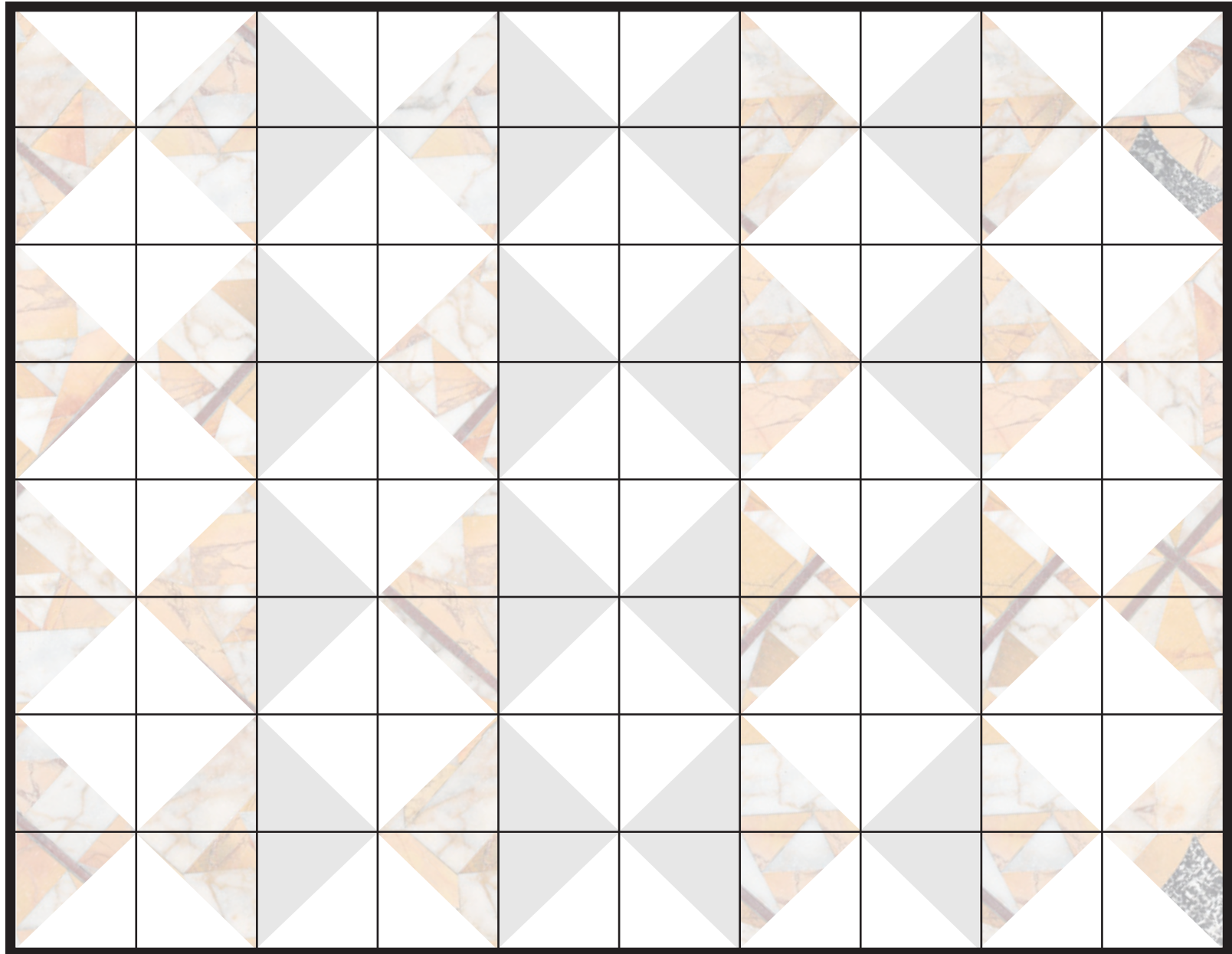# LUDUS CALCULORUM

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LUDUS CALCULORUM

ABOUT

This is a speed/strategy game. We are not completely sure of the rules, although the basics seem simple. The game is related in some ways to Gomoku and checkers. Many boards were scratched in the dirt and carved into pavements and doorways. Bored soldiers and entourages of the rich needed something to do in a pre-digital age!

Archaeology produces few rules for games, since people took them for granted (and written reports often decay with time). We can't be sure of all the games played on all the different boards that survive, but we CAN be sure there were variations.

Left: Roman clay floor tile incised with a game board, with ivory playing pieces, Silchester.
Right: Rectangular game board carved on the steps of the Basilica Julia, Roman Forum, Rome.

Left to right: Reading Museum, England. Photo by BabelStone / CC VB-SA3.0; Photo by Eric Livak-Dahl, 2004, Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 3.0, via Wikipedia

WHAT YOU NEED

• 2 players
• A gridded board; ours is 8×10 squares (download and print ours, or draw your own)
• 35+ playing pieces for each player, such as light and dark pebbles or coins (heads and tails). You can also cut out our gaming pieces and glue them to pennies or circles of cardboard

RULES

Goal: The first player to place five pieces in a row across, up, down, or diagonally wins

• Players take turns placing a game piece on any empty space
• Pieces are not moved or removed; they stay in place
• A double open-ended row of three is forbidden (3 game pieces that cross in a T or X if not blocked by an opponent beyond the third game piece)
• If there is no winner when the board is full or the pieces have run out, there is a draw

To make the game harder

Forbid a double row of four pieces in an X or T, as well as a double row of three

DIAGONAL WIN   HORIZONTAL WIN   VERTICAL WIN   ILLEGAL X-SHAPED ROW OF THREE