



Australian Government  
Australian Sports Commission

# Walbiri

'wal-bir-i'



SCHOOL  
YEARS  
K-3

SCHOOL  
YEARS  
4-6

## Background

A memory-testing game was played by the Walbiri children of central Australia. Players were required to recall sand-drawing maps of the locality after watching for a short time. This was a game that helped the children remember and identify the surrounding topography.

## Short description

This is a memory-testing game using various objects.

## Language

This game is named for the Walbiri people observed playing a memory game.

## Players

- Groups of four to ten players

## Playing area

- An indoor or outdoor area suitable for the activity

## Equipment

- Use cards, markers or pictures to represent the 'landmarks' of the area. For more experienced and older players as many as 50 objects can be placed around the playing circle at one time.

## Game play and basic rules

- A circle (5–10 metres in diameter) is drawn on the ground and around it are placed a number (10–30) of sticks and stones (or other objects), with each 'representing' prominent local landmarks in the area.
- After studying the arrangement of the objects for a time the players turn their backs on the circle. With their backs to the arrangement the first player calls an object at a given point and continues to call each object on the line around the circle until he or she calls incorrectly. When this occurs the next player continues.

- If the players cannot remember all the objects they turn away once more while the objects are re-arranged for the next game. The first player to call all the objects correctly has the 'honour' of arranging the pieces in readiness for the new game.

### Variations

- Use cards of animals, people and places as well as objects such as a marble, ball, pencil and so on.
- Pattern game: Use about 30 small pebbles of as many different colours and shapes as possible (such as found in sample rock kits) or draw/ make objects out of cardboard and paint them with designs in different colours. The pebbles (or objects) are laid out in a pattern — design several charts before the game (these will show set positions for the pebbles). Players observe the pattern for 1–2 minutes. The pebbles are gathered up and the group (about six players), or an individual, attempt to arrange the pebbles in their original order.
- Another method of play is to cover the pattern and have players draw on a piece of paper the approximate sizes, positions, colours and markings of the pebbles. The game can be played several times going from more simple patterns to more complex ones. The player who is the best at remembering the pattern arranges the pebbles for the next game. Allow players to receive hints.
- Add and take: Arrange a display of objects. These are re-arranged, added to or taken away from, and players attempt to list the object/s re-arranged, added and/or removed.
- Have pairs of cards (10–20 pairs). These are turned up and players have 1–2 minutes to remember them all. The cards are then turned face-down and players take it in turns to remember where the pairs of cards are. If they make a successful guess the cards are removed and they continue with their turn. When a player makes an incorrect guess the next player takes a turn. Continue until all the pairs are found. Re-arrange the cards and play another game.

### Teaching points

- Form a circle. Look closely at the objects.
- Turn your backs.
- First player go. Good.
- Next player.
- Stop. Well done.