United States Patent

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[54] MATCHING GAME APPARATUS

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[52] **U.S. Cl.**.....**273/1 R,** 35/22 R, 273/130 R

[51] **Int. Cl.**.....**A63f 3/00**

[58] **Field of Search**.....273/1, 95 R, 95 F, 146, 130 R, 273/134 GB, 135 AA, 135 D; 35/22 R, 22 A

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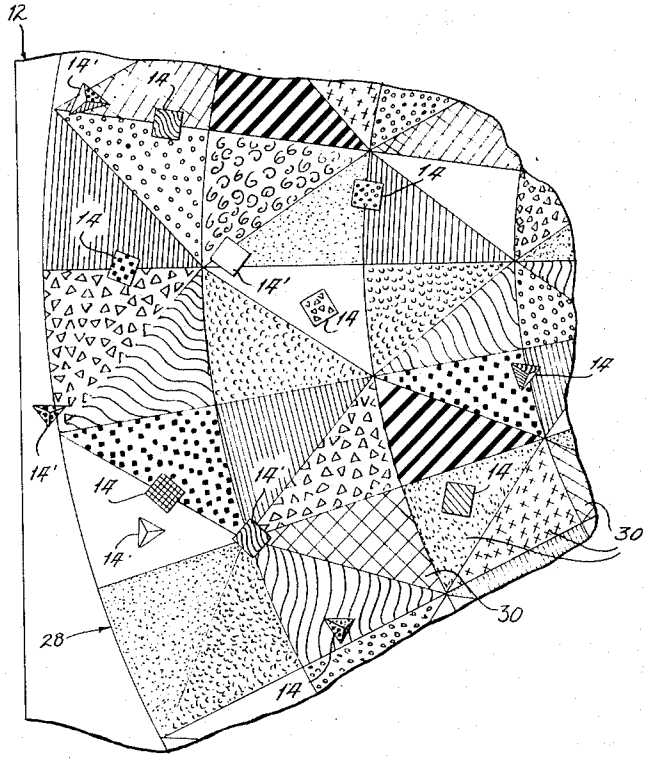
[57] **ABSTRACT**

A game apparatus which is entertaining and has educational values for improving muscular and visual coordination and requires skill and dexterity including a game board having a plurality of different distinctive areas thereon, and a plurality of objects having distinctive surface characteristics matching certain of the distinctive areas of the game board for distributing randomly on the game board so that the player or players of the game can compete by attempting to pick up as fast as possible only those objects that are on areas of the game board having similar matching distinctive characteristics. A timer is provided to determine the time period during which a player's performance can be measured, and scoring members bearing distinctive characteristics identical to the characteristics of the playing pieces are provided for award to the players removing the most playing pieces of each distinctive characteristic during each playing period.

6 Claims, 4 Drawing Figures



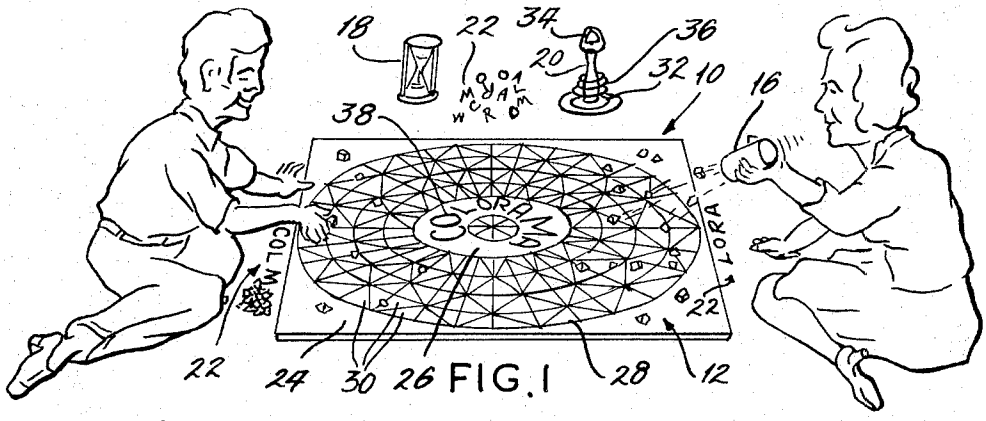


FIG. 1

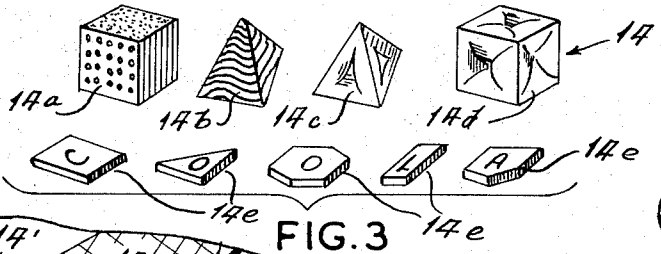


FIG. 3

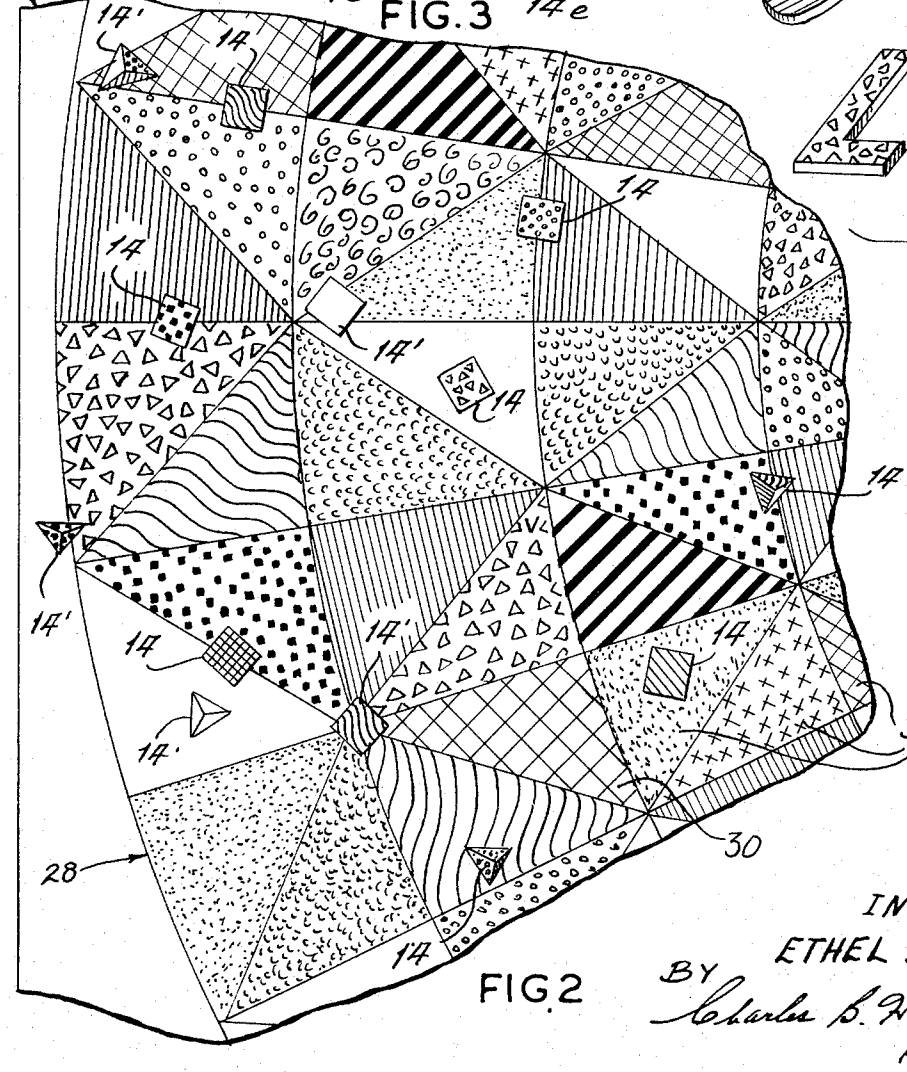


FIG. 2

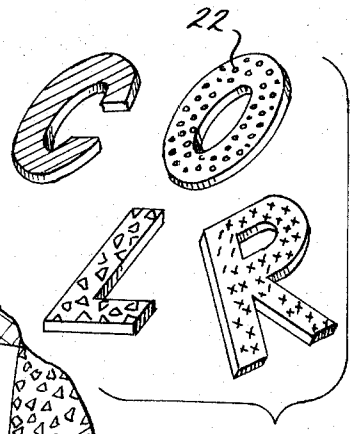


FIG. 4

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MATCHING GAME APPARATUS

The present invention relates to a novel game apparatus which as well as being entertaining, exhilerating, and fun to play can also be used in rehabilitating, improving or generating muscular coordination in certain handicapped individuals such as those having some brain and/or visual damage or a nerve or muscular impairment. The subject apparatus can also be used to improve the visual recognition and/or motor skills. The subject game, however, is designed primarily to be played as a competitive game requiring that the players use their skills and abilities to recognize and distinguish shapes, colors and/or patterns, and be able to use these skills and abilities in a competitive way. The size, surface condition and/or shape of the objects provided with the game can also be chosen to increase or decrease the visual and motor skilled required to play so the game can be made to match the relative abilities of the participants.

It is a principal object of the present invention therefore to provide a game apparatus which is both entertaining and fun for the participants.

Another object is to provide an apparatus for playing a game which can be played by participants of various ages and various visual and mental skills.

ANother object is to provide means that can be used to improve the visual and motor skills of the players or participants.

Another object is to provide a game apparatus which is relatively inexpensive and easy to manufacture.

Another object is to provide a game apparatus which can be used to provide competition between the participants and which can also be used to test their relative visual and motor skills.

Another object is to provide a game apparatus the rules of which can be changed to adapt it to the age level and/or the motor and visual skills of the participants.

Another object is to provide a game apparatus which is entertaining to individuals having widely varying motor and visual skills.

Another object is to provide a game which tests the color perception of the participants.

These and other objects and advantages of the present invention will become apparent after considering the following specification which discloses a preferred embodiment thereof in conjunction with the accompanying drawing wherein:

FIG. **1** is a perspective view of a game apparatus constructed according to the present invention, said apparatus being shown in playing condition;

FIG. **2** is an enlarged fragmentary view showing a portion of the upper playing surface of a preferred form of the subject game board with objects used in playing the game randomly distributed thereon;

FIG. **3** is an enlarged perspective view showing different types of objects which may be used in playing the subject game; and,

FIG. **4** is an enlarged perspective view of scoring members which may be included in conjunction with the subject game.

Referring to the drawing more particularly by reference numbers, number **10** refers generally to the game apparatus which is shown in FIG. **1** as including a game board **12**, a plurality of objects **14** for random distribution on the playing surface of the game board **12** by means such as a cup **16**, optional means for timing the periods of play of the game such as hourglass **18** or any other suitable timer such as random timer **20**, and a plurality of members **22** which are shown as cutouts of letters used for scoring the game.

The game board **12** has a playing surface **24** which is divided into a central portion **26** with an annular portion **28** formed thereabout. The annular portion **28** is in turn subdivided into many smaller separate areas **30** having different characteristics as shown in FIG. **2**. The areas **30** may differ in characteristic from one another by having different patterns thereon as shown in FIG. **2**, by having different shapes or colors or by having different combinations of patterns, shapes and/or colors. There should usually also be repeats of the same pattern, shape and/or color in the various areas **30** for reasons that will become apparent later when it is explained how the game is played.

The objects or playing pieces **14** used in the playing of the game have characteristics which are similar to those of at least some of the various areas **30** of the playing portion **28**. For example, the playing pieces **14***a* which are shown in FIG. **3** as cubes have different patterns (or colors) on the various different sides thereof. In like manner, the pieces which are tetrahedrons are shown having the same pattern on all sides thereof, tetrahedron objects **14***c* are shown having different colors on the different sides thereof, cubical objects **14***d* are shown having the same color on all sides thereof, and objects **14***e* of which five examples are shown are wafer-like objects having different geometric shapes and scoring characteristics thereon. Like the areas **30**, the objects may have identifying characteristics which are combinations of patterns, shapes and/or colors, and many more shapes and pattern or color arrangements for the playing pieces in addition to those shown are possible and within the scope of the present invention.

When playing the game, a plurality of the objects **14** are placed in the cup **16** (or held in the players' hands or in any other suitable container), and are randomly distributed onto the playing surface **12** by one or more of the players. This can be done by shaking them or tossing them like dice. The players then race to identify and pickup as many of the objects **14** as they can from the playing surface that have one or more surfaces that have the same pattern, shape and/or color on a side thereof as the pattern, shape or color of one or more of the areas **30** on which it rests. In other words, some part of the playing piece or object **14** must have a pattern or other form of identification on it that extends to adjacent a portion of the playing surface that has the matching pattern for a playing piece to be picked up. The removal of the objects **14** from the playing surface **24** will continue until the players agree that there are no more objects **14** on the playing portion **28** of the playing surface **24** that have a surface thereon that matches the adjacent surface of the playing surface.

The present game can be played by any desired number of players or teams of players who are gathered around the game board **12**, the number being limited only by the space available. After the playing pieces **14** have been distributed over the playing surface preferably as uniformly as possible so that all players will have the same chance, the signal is given to begin playing. All of the players then commence to look for pieces **14** that match in some desired way with all or some portion of the playing surface on which they rest. The matching pieces are designated with a prime in FIG. **2**. When a player spots such a piece **14'** he is entitled to immediately remove it from the playing surface **12** and to commence looking for another matching condition. THis is repeated either until all of the matched pieces **14'** are removed or until someone such as a timekeeper calls a stop to the playing. A timer such as hourglass **18** (FIG. **1**) can also be used for this purpose. After each playing period is over the players count the number of pieces, by color or pattern, that they have removed, and scoring pieces **22** are then distributed accordingly, the player having the most playing pieces of each color being awarded the corresponding color scoring piece. The playing pieces are then regathered and redistributed over the playing surface and a second playing interval takes place like the first, and after it is over scoring pieces are again distributed. This procedure is repeated until finally some player has accumulated enough scoring pieces of each color to have completed a key word as will be explained later, and that player is then declared to be the winner. Some of the other details of how the game is played will be described hereinafter.

If an hourglass **18** is used to time the playing intervals it is overturned at the time the objects **14** are distributed on the playing surface or shortly thereafter and provides a definite length of time for each play period. The timer should also be located at some place where all the players can see it.

As another alternative, the random timer **20** may be used so that the total playing time period available is an unknown quantity. The central portion **26** of the game board **12** is usually the preferred place for the timer means because the timer means are then equally visible to all the participants.

The timer **20** may be any suitable random timer device and is shown as a spring loaded suction cup **32** with a bell **34** attached thereto. The timer **20** is activated by depressing the suction cup **32** in the central portion **26** of the playing surface **24** which is preferably constructed of relatively smooth material which allows the suction cup **32** to "stick" thereto. The spring **36** tends to bias the suction cup **32** away from the board **12** so that after an unknown period of time which is relatively random, the timer **20** springs upwardly from the board **12**, ringing the bell **34** and calling an end to the playing time.

The scoring members **22** (FIG. **4**) are constructed having characteristics which may be similar to the objects **14** and the areas **30** of the game board **12**. The game is preferably divided into a plurality of playing periods which can be controlled by timer means as aforesaid or by having a timekeeper who signals the beginning and ending of each play period. A typical playing period will usually last about a minute or two although the playing periods can be increased or decreased substantially as desired.

The scoring member **22** are distributed at the end of each playing period to the player or players who have picked up the most playing pieces or objects with the same characteristic color, pattern or shape as one of the areas on which it is resting. The scoring members **22** as shown in FIG. **4** are alphabetically shaped members with characteristic patterns and the object is for each player to try to accumulate as many different letters as possible until one player has accumulated enough to spell out a key word **38** which in the game as shown is the word "Colorama." The first player to accumulate enough letters to complete the spelling of "Colorama" is the winner of the game. The key word **38** is shown displayed at the central portion **26** of the game board **12** for the players' reference as shown in FIG. **1**. It should also be apparent when playing that strategy may be important. For example, if a player sees that his opponent needs one or more particular colored pieces to win, he should try to pick up the same pieces **14** as are needed by his opponent so that the opponent will be prevented from accumulating the required scoring member or members **22** to complete the key word **38**.

The relative difficultness of the game largely depends on the size, shape, and type of objects **14** employed and the size of the areas **30**. For example, the smaller the objects **14** become, the more difficult it is to locate matching colors and the longer it takes to accumulate like pieces. Also, if tetrahedron shaped objects **14***b* or **14***c* are used it will become relatively more difficult to pickup the pieces than if cube shaped objects such as the objects **14***a* and **14***d* are used. The objects may also be made easier to pickup by dimpling their surfaces as in the case of objects **14***c* and **14***d*. Objects having solid colors on their sides are also relatively easier to distinguish and match than objects that have patterns on the surfaces. The difficulty of the game can be further increased by using more than one type object **14** simultaneously as shown in FIG. **2**.

The rules of the game can also be substantially varied as by making the objects **14** to be picked up the ones that do not have any surfaces that match an adjacent area **30** on the playing surface and so on. When this is the case, objects such as objects **14***a*,**14***b* and **14***c* having different characteristics on different sides thereof can also be used.

Although the rules normally require that an object **14** only partially be on its characteristic area **30** to be picked up, they can also be varied to require that the objects **14** be completely on their characteristic areas **30** thereby reducing the number of objects **14** eligible for removal.

Thus there has been shown and described a novel matching game apparatus which fulfills all of the objects and advantages sought therefor. Many changes, modifications, variations, and other uses and applications of the present apparatus will, however, become apparent to those skilled in the art after considering this specification and the accompanying drawing. All such changes, modifications, variations and other uses and applications which do not depart from the spirit and scope of the invention are deemed to be covered by the invention which is limited only by the claims which follow.

What is claimed is:

1. A game apparatus comprising a game board having a plurality of several different types of distinctively different contiguous surface areas thereon, a plurality of different kinds of objects respectively identified to correspond to different ones of the different surface areas of the game board, means to randomly distribute said objects on said game board surface areas, a plurality of scoring members each member having a characteristic that corresponds to a different kind of the said objects, and means to determine the periods of play of the game during which the players try to remove as many of the said objects from the surface areas as possible which have characteristics that correspond to the characteristics of a surface area on which they rest; after each period of play the players who have removed the most objects of each distinctive type are awarded the corresponding scoring member, the first player to be awarded scoring members which are arrangeable in a predetermined sequence being declared the winner of the game.

2. A game apparatus for one or more players comprising a game board having a playing surface defined by a plurality of distinctive areas thereon, a plurality of objects having distinctive characteristics which correspond to said distinctive areas of the game board, means for randomly distributing said objects on said game board whereby the players of the game test their relative performances in determining which of the objects rest on areas of the game board that have a particular relationship between the distinctive characteristics thereof and the distinctive characteristics of the objects, and timer means for determining the play period during which the relative performances of the players are tested, said timer means including means to randomly determine said play period.

3. A game apparatus for one or more players comprising a game board having a playing surface defined by a plurality of distinctive areas thereon, a plurality of objects having distinctive characteristics which correspond to said distinctive areas of the game board, means for randomly distributing said objects on said game board whereby the players of the game test their relative performances in determining which of the objects rest on areas of the game board that have a particular relationship between the distinctive characteristics thereof and the distinctive characteristics of the objects, and a plurality of scoring members having distinctive characteristics corresponding to the distinctive characteristics of the objects for awarding to players who have determined and removed the greatest number of objects from the game board that have the particular relationship with the areas of the game board on which they rest, the first player obtaining a selected combination of distinctive scoring members being declared the winner of the game, said scoring members including selected letters of the alphabet, the selected combination of said scoring members being sufficient to spell a predetermined word.

4. The apparatus defined in claim **3** wherein said distinctive members are formed in the shapes of letters of the alphabet.

5. A game apparatus for one or more players comprising a game board having a playing surface defined by a plurality of distinctive areas thereon, said distinctive surface areas including a plurality of several different kinds of distinctive areas arranged and distributed to form the playing surface, a plurality of different kinds of objects having distinctive characteristics which correspond to and match respective ones of the different kinds of said distinctive areas of the game board, said objects during playing of the game being randomly distributed on said game board whereby the players of the game test their relative performances by gathering up as many of the objects as possible that rest on areas of the game board that have a

particular matching relationship with the distinctive characteristics of the objects, and timer means for determining the play period during which the relative performances of the players are tested.

6. A game apparatus for testing the recognition abilities and manual dexterity of one or more players including a game board surface having a central portion and another portion thereabout, said other portion being defined by a plurally of smaller areas including a plurality of each of several distinctively different types of areas which are identified by having different distinctive, easily recognizeable characteristics, a plurality of multi-surfaced playing pieces including pieces which have surfaces with characteristics that correspond to respective characteristics of the different types of smaller areas, means to randomly distribute said playing pieces on said other game board surface so that players can identify and remove playing pieces that have surfaces thereof touching ones of said smaller areas that have corresponding identifying characteristics, timer means for establishing playing periods for the game, and a plurality of scoring members identified respectively by means which correspond to the different distinctive characteristics of the playing pieces for awarding to players removing the most playing pieces of each of said distinctive characteristics during each playing period.

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