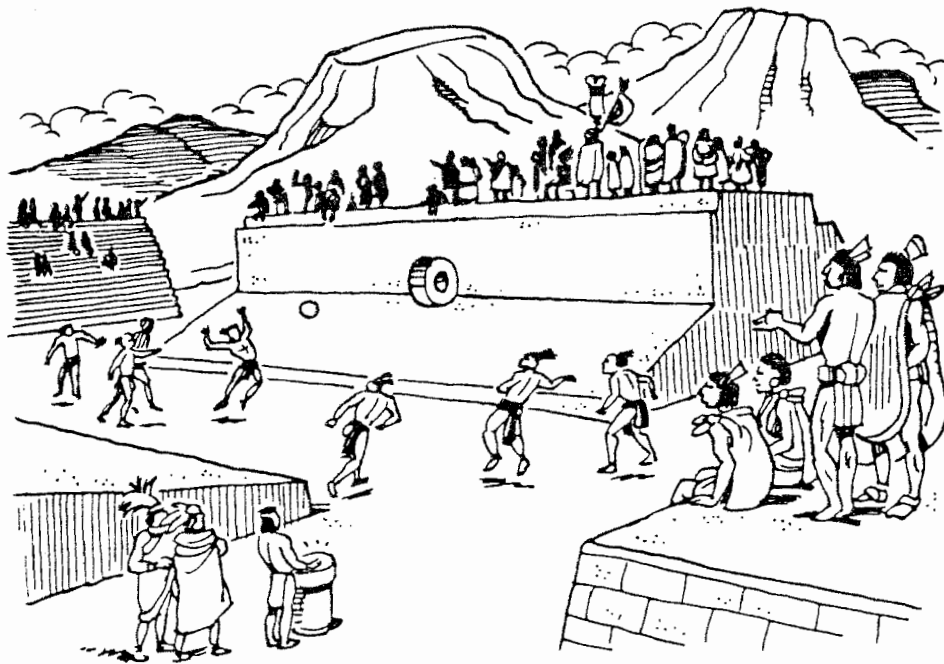


## AZTEC GAMES



**Tlachtli** was an Aztec game played on a court. It seems to have been similar to a combination of modern basketball and soccer.

*Tlachtli* became the most important Aztec game. *Tlachtli* was a ball game similar to a Mayan game named pok-a-tok. *Tlachtli* began as a sport and later became a ritual game. The Aztecs played it during religious ceremonies. They played the game as entertainment for the ruler and priests as well as for the common people. Sometimes, the Aztecs sacrificed the losers to the gods.

We do not know the rules of the Mayan game, but all large Mayan and Aztec cities had game courts. The Mayan city, Chichén Itzá, had seven game courts. The largest court was 545 feet long and 225 feet wide. A basket was at each end of the court. The Mayas decorated the basket as a snake. It was 35 feet high.

The Aztec courts were similar to the Mayan courts. They were often near the temple areas. The courts were in the shape of a capital "I". They had seats on both sides for viewers. A vertical stone ring was in the middle of the side walls. The object of the game was to put the ball through the ring. A team also scored a point if the other team let the ball touch the ground.

*Tlachtli* used a hard, rubber ball about six inches in diameter. The players wore padding. They could not touch the ball with their hands. The ball could only be moved by the players' hips, knees, legs, and elbows.

The Aztecs also played board games. The most popular was *patolli*. It was similar to parcheesi or backgammon. However, we do not know the exact rules of *patolli*. The Aztecs played it on a cross-shaped design painted on a board or mat. They used beans painted with dots as dice. They used beans or kernels of maize as markers. The object of the game was to move around the board and return to home base. The Aztec often played *patolli* as a gambling game. The Aztec ruler Montezuma and the Spanish conqueror Cortés may have played *patolli* while Montezuma was a captive.

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

## QUESTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION

1. What was the most important game of the Aztecs?

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2. To what game was it similar?

\_\_\_\_\_

3. How many game courts did Chichén Itzá have?

\_\_\_\_\_

4. How did the Mayas decorate the basket?

\_\_\_\_\_

5. What was the shape of the game courts?

\_\_\_\_\_

6. What was the object of the game?

\_\_\_\_\_

7. Of what substance was the ball made?

\_\_\_\_\_

8. In what way could players not touch the ball?

\_\_\_\_\_

9. What was the name of the popular Aztec board game?

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10. What did the Aztecs use as dice?

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