

Notice that we have only defined thinking games. The definition would have to be changed if we were to define athletic games, role playing games, and so forth.

What Makes a Thinking Game a Classic?

The word *classic* is probably as overused as the word *antique*. People seem to apply both words to anything that's old. You might get agreement on the following two statements. If your parents used it, it's an antique. If your grandparents used it, it must be a classic. These are not, however, the definitions you'd find in a dictionary, nor are they definitions that will be used in this book.

If you use a modern dictionary to help write the definition of a classic thinking game, you might define it as a game of enduring excellence. That means time does not diminish the inherent appeal of the game. It means that if your grandparents enjoyed playing it, you and your friends would most likely also enjoy playing it.

A classic game should have appeal across cultures. Chess, for example, is a classic game of Western culture, yet people of other cultures play the game. Similarly, Go is a classic game of Eastern culture and Mancala is a classic game of African culture, yet people of other cultures play both of them.

Are there common characteristics of games that cross cultures? Researchers have shown that there are. **Common characteristics of games that cross cultures include:**

- a clearly established set of rules
- a physical game board with playing pieces
- head-to-head competition
- turn-based play
- great pride in being a skilled player

Because a classic thinking game should have appeal across cultures, it is likely to include most of these characteristics.

The physical board with pieces should be loosely interpreted. A checker board with checkers or a Go board with polished stones fit this description perfectly. However, a board with pieces also includes holes in the ground and found stones or a piece of paper on which a board is drawn and on which pieces are drawn as they are played.

Head-to-head competition is not intended to rule out solitary thinking games. In solitary thinking games you are competing with yourself. Can you improve your score? Can you reach a higher level? Can you do better than you've ever done before?

In addition to crossing cultures, a classic thinking game should also span generations. The game should appeal to young and old and have a long history of doing so. Calling any computer game a classic seems like a stretch. Computer games don't have a very long history, and I can't think of one of them that appeals to young and old alike. That