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a game by Jonathan A. Leistiko

Object

To selectively gather tossed pennies, ultimately ending each round with more pennies than any other player.

You Need

- Three pennies, plus two additional pennies for each additional player (a two player game uses seven pennies).
- A flat surface, seperated into two areas called the "Theatre", and the "Balcony".
- Some way of keeping score (like a pencil and paper).

Setup

- Gather together three pennies, plus two pennies for each person playing.
- Place all pennies in the Balcony.
- Peacefully choose someone to go first.

play! >>

Seven Pennies

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Play

Starting with the first player and proceeding to the left, each player takes a turn. A turn consists of the following steps:

1. Throw.

Take any pennies in the Balcony in your hand and toss them onto the Theatre in a way that assures randomness.

2. Booth.

Look for Head-Tail pairs, and set all of them aside in the Balcony for the next player's turn. If no pennies are left in the Theatre, then your turn is over.

3. Gather or Cancel.

All pennies left in the Theatre will either be all Heads or all Tails. If you do not have any pennies, then you may Gather them — remove them from the area of play, making sure that they retain their “facing” (heads-up coins must remain heads-up, and vice versa.) You may also Gather them if their facing matches the facing of any pennies you’ve already Gathered. You may also choose to Cancel — move all of the pennies in the Theatre back to the Balcony. If you do this, note the facing of the pennies Canceled in this way. If a player has Gathered pennies with the opposite facing, s/he must return one of his/her Gathered pennies to the Balcony for each Canceled penny. If more than one player has Gathered pennies of the opposite facing, only the player with the most pennies of the opposite facing must pay this penalty.

Turns continue until no pennies are left in the Balcony. This signifies the end of a round. At the end of a round, each player puts their pennies back into the Balcony, scoring one point for each penny they replace.

For an example of play, see the next page.

Winning

A game ends when a player's score equals or exceeds the number of players times ten.

more >>

Tabletop
Games

Seven Pennies [Invisible 003]
a simple coin-throwing game for two or more players
page 2

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Appendix A : Example

There are two players playing, Kevin and Jess. (This is a seven-penny game, since the game is played with three pennies, plus two for each player playing, and $3+2+2=7$.)

Throw: Jess goes first and throws the seven pennies into the Theatre. She throws this:



Booth: She then moves all the head-tail pairs into the Balcony, leaving one penny (tails up) in the Theatre.



Gather or Cancel: She elects to Gather the remaining penny, so she removes it from play (keeping it tails up.) This ends her turn.

Kevin throws the six pennies in the Balcony and gets this:



He Booths the single head-tails pair and Gathers the rest.



Jess' turn begins and she Throws this:



Since there are no head-tail pairs, she does not Booth.

more >>

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an invisible city productions game
<http://www.invisible-city.com/games/>

Tabletop
Games

Seven Pennies [Invisible 003]
a simple coin-throwing game for two or more players
page 4

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Example, continued

At this point, she is faced with the choice of whether to Gather or Cancel. Since the two pennies in the Theatre are tails-up, they match the facing of the ones she has already Gathered, so she could Gather these as well. If she did this, there would be no pennies left in the Balcony, and the round would end. She would score three points for the pennies she has Gathered, and Kevin would score four points for the pennies he Gathered. Both of them would return all their pennies to the Balcony and a new round would begin.

However, she could also choose to Cancel, and return those two pennies to the Balcony. Kevin has the most pennies of a facing opposite the facing of those Canceled—he has four heads-up pennies and the ones being Canceled are tails-up—he would need to return two of these to the Balcony as well, thus losing much of his lead. Jess' turn would then end, and Kevin would begin his turn by Throwing the four pennies that would be in the Balcony.

Appendix B : Variants

- One of the simplest variants is called T.K.O.. Each player starts the game with three nickels (or other tokens). A player loses a nickel every time all of their pennies are sent to the Balcony (Canceled) by another player. A player also loses a nickel every time they Throw and all of their pennies Booth (when their turn ends before they have a chance to Gather or Cancel). A player gains a nickel if they Throw and Gather all pennies thrown. The game is no longer played for points; it ends when only one player has any nickels left.
- Seven Pennies can also be played with a homogenous set of dice of any kind, although six and eight-sided dice are best. When playing with dice, replace every reference to pennies with the appropriate die type.

more >>

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Tabletop
Games

Seven Pennies [Invisible 003]
a simple coin-throwing game for two or more players
page 5

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Variants, continued

For this variant, replace the text on Bothing (above) with:
"Booth: Look for pairs of dice that add up to one greater than the number of faces on any die. For example, if you are playing with eight-sided dice, you would be looking for pairs of dice which add up to nine. Set these pairs aside in the Balcony for the next player's turn. If no dice are left in the Theatre, then your turn is over."

Also replace the text on Gathering or Canceling (above) with:
"Gather or Cancel: Using the dice remaining in the Theatre, you may either Gather or Cancel. If you have no dice, you may pick a number and gather all dice that have that number showing. If there are dice whose number matches the dice you have, then you may gather those dice. When gathering, remember to keep the face up that the die landed on. If you Choose to cancel, then you may pick a number and place any dice in the Theatre with that number in the Balcony; a player of your choice with dice that would pair with that number (see Bothing) must place one of their dice in the Balcony for each die you place in the Balcony."

There is an optional rule for this variant which states that if a player Throws and is capable of canceling their own dice, then they must cancel as many of their dice as possible. Another optional rule states that a player who gathers instead of canceling (when the choice is available) gets to take another turn. There are many more possibilities for variations. If you think of some, I'd really like to hear them.

Origin and Credits

Seven Pennies was created when several friends whined about being bored and not having anything to do (Hi Dax!).

It was derived from the game Eights, which was taught to me by Frank M. Truelove. Thanks again, Frank!

Credits:

Concept, development : Jonathan A. Leistiko
Editing, graphic design : Jeremy P. Bushnell

Enjoyed this game? Let us know: jonathan@invisible-city.com

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