

# Venomous Snakes And Ladders (Hard)

*BAPHL Curator Note: What follows is an excerpt of a log from a game of Venomous Snakes And Ladders, a board game that was briefly popular in 1924. Its rather depressing rules proved to be antithetical to the general excesses of the Roaring Twenties, and it faded into obscurity. Only a few years later, the Great Depression caused Monopoly to evolve into its currently known form. The rules of the game are reproduced below, followed by an image of the game board and the play log itself.*

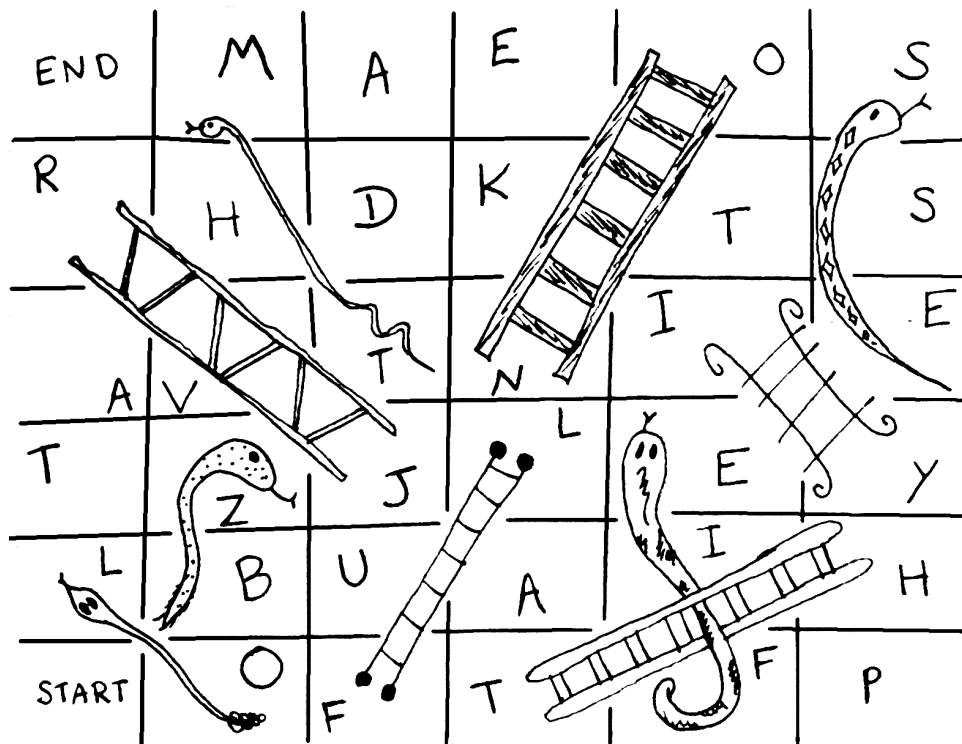
## The Rules

Players start at the bottom-left corner at the square labeled “START”, and the goal is to make it to the square labeled “END”. On a player’s turn, they roll a single 6-sided die, and move the number of spaces directed. Movement follows a snake-like pattern: players move to the right when on the bottom row, then move up one square and move towards the left, and so on until the ending square is reached. If a player rolls more than strictly necessary to reach the finish, they are still considered to have reached the ending square.

Complicating matters are the titular ladders and venomous snakes. If a player’s turn ends with them moving onto a square that contains the bottom end of a ladder, they climb up the ladder. If a player ends their turn on a square containing the head of a snake, they slide down the snake’s body and wind up on the square containing its tail. If they instead land on the square containing its tail, they step on the snake’s tail. Enraged, the snake then immediately bites them, the player dies from the poison, and is eliminated.

## The Board

*BAPHL Curator Note: The journal writer added a crude drawing of the game board. We have contacted the BGHL (Board Game Historical Library) for input on whether the letters present were actually part of the original game board or are an invention of the journal writer.*



## Play Log

*BAPHL Curator Note: Unfortunately, only fragments of the log survived our forensic analysis. The remains are reproduced here.*

May 8th, 1924

Four were present for tonight's session: Andersen, Ballantine, Carruthers, and myself (Davies). All present hoped for a game where at least one player would survive to completion; alas...

We decided to proceed in alphabetical order of name. On our first moves we all rolled different values, I rolling the largest number and Carruthers the smallest. One should not be too inclined to gloat in this game, however...

...At the start of my second turn, Ballantine had just rolled a measly one to move exactly one space ahead of me. Somehow, it turned out to be the only one rolled during the entire game. I responded by rolling half of what Andersen rolled on his second roll.

The third roll had...and...rolling the same number as each other....

...I was the first to be killed by poison, on my fourth turn, having rolled exactly the same as my immediately previous roll. It turned out that Ballantine and Carruthers lasted five turns, and Andersen ended the game with his sixth. That fourth turn had only Carruthers rolling higher than a three.

Looking back on it, all of our final rolls turned out to be identical. Ballantine remarked, "What are the odds of that?", a pointed question to which none of us had a proper mathematical answer. Looking further on the coincidence, only Carruthers among us rolled a different number each turn - the rest of us repeated that same final roll somewhere. And to further compound the coincidence, it turns out each of Andersen's roll values occurred exactly twice...My traditional post-game astrological divination showed that this attempt was particularly ill-fated, and with that revelation our foursome parted ways.