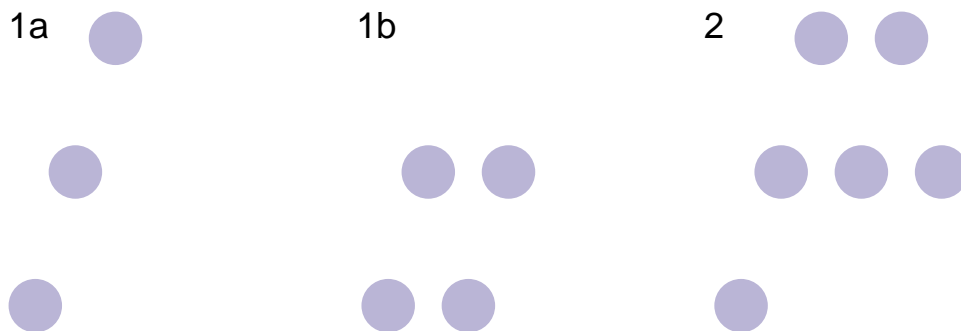


This is a game for two people.

Start by placing 9 counters in three rows as shown in the illustration. Players take turns removing any number of counters provided they are all in the same row. The player who is forced to pick up the last counter loses.

There is a sure way for the first player to win. If the first player doesn't make the correct move, the second player can win.

This is the classic game of Nim. It can be played with any number of counters and any number of rows.



Notice that in Classic Nim it is the one who takes the LAST counter that loses.

Suppose it is your opponent's turn and any of the following two configurations (shown in Figure 1, a and b) is left. After your opponent's turn, you can force a win.

So the strategy is to leave your opponent with one of these patterns.

If it is your opponent's turn and she has the pattern as shown in Figure 2, then on your next turn you will either be able to win right away, or you will be able to leave her with one of the patterns shown in Figure 1.

So, on the first move, take 3 counters from the row containing 4 counters.