

**In the letter to the left and transcribed below, Alice K. Grierson fills in her eldest son, Charlie, on the happenings at home. She mentions the loneliness that comes from missing family despite the fact that she was surrounded by people, a common complaint for wives at frontier posts. She tells of Charlie's little brothers accompanying their father, Col. Benjamin Grierson, on a scout. And she hints at the racial disparity that plagued the army. She also mentions the amusements of the post, from hunting to playing parlor games.**

### A letter to Charlie from his mother Alice

Fort Concho Aug 22<sup>nd</sup>, 1878

My dear Charlie

Robert's postal from St. Louis has just come – he says you were going to Jacksonville that evening which is just as well as to have staid longer probably. Before this time next week you will be again at West Point, if nothing unexpected occurs. Edith has been quite ill with sick headache for the last two days – it hangs on so long I am afraid it is something worse, and shall send for the Doctor.

I hope papa will be back soon, it is too quiet without Harry and George, now that you and Robert are gone. Doc looks about very wistfully, trying to find old acquaintances and no doubt will wag his tail with delight when he hears George's voice again. Helen and Walker went plover hunting Tuesday afternoon, Helen shot four times, killed one plover and wounded another, says the wads were too small for three of her loads, or she thinks she would have been more successful. Walker shot 14. Lt Lear found plover on his breakfast table next morning, and asked his cook where they came from, and the cook said "Miss Fuller left them, he thought she shot them, as she had been hunting with Walker." Lt Lear spent last evening here, and Miss Constable the evening previous – she and Helen played "Muggins" with dominoes. There are people here more or less every afternoon and evening, but they do not make up for the missing family. I hope you are pretty well rested from your long journey by this time, and am glad there will be no stage riding in your journey next week.

A letter came to papa this morning from Gen Davidson – He says Capt Lee was acquitted in his recent Court Martial, although he was proved to have made false reports and returns. Gen D thinks had Brown been a white soldier, and the evidence given by a white person, Capt Lee would not have been acquitted. Col Anderson, (and family I suppose) have gone to San Antonio by way of Ft Clark, so will not pass through Concho. Edith was intending to entertain Miss Maud and will be sorry not to meet her again.

My Graphics commenced coming yesterday, and the receipt came for the letter you registered – so that money went alright. Dr. DeHanne has been in to see Edith, says a good many of the men are troubled with stomach complaints, thinks they are caused by the weather, hopes she will soon be better.

I wonder if you are playing backgammon with Aunt Louisa, and checkers with Grandpa for amusement. I hope you are feeling better than you did the last few days you were here. Hoping to hear from you soon, I am as ever

Your affectionate mother  
Alice K. Grierson

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One of the pastimes Alice mentions is "Muggins." Muggins was a popular domino game that is still played today. It is one of the domino games known as a point game, with the goal of not simply "going out" but to score points by making the open ends of the layout to add up to five or a multiple of five. Muggins requires a double-six set of dominos and is usually played by 2-4 players, larger sets can support more players.

To play the dominoes are shuffled and each player draws a single tile to determine who goes first. The player with the heaviest tile (largest numerically) goes first. Each player then draws tiles to make up their hand. For a 2 player game, each player gets 7 tiles and for a 3 or 4 player game, each player gets 5 tiles. The remainder of the tiles form the boneyard to draw upon at need.

The first player places the first domino. The first tile can be of any value, and does not have to be a double. If a double is played, all four edges can be played off and is known as a spinner. All subsequent doubles can only connect on two edges.

Play proceeds clockwise. Each player adds a domino to an open end of the layout. If a player is unable to make a move, that player draws from the boneyard until he can make a move. If the boneyard has been used up, the player passes.

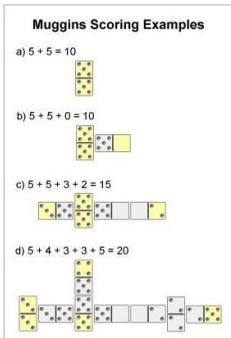
The object of the game is to make the open ends of the layout equal a five or multiple of five. The player who makes such a score receives that number of points.

At any time, there may be 2, 3, or 4 open ends. When a double is played at the beginning, all of its dots count toward the total, i.e. the double five equals ten points.

Points scored during play are called "muggins points." If a player creates a score but fails to record it, an opponent may claim the score by calling out "muggins."

#### Examples

1. If the first tile placed is a 5-5, then the player scores a 10. At this point all sides of the 5-5 are available for play.
2. If the second tile placed is a 5-0, then the player scores a 10. At this point three sides of the 5-5 are available for play, as well as the blank.
3. If a 3-5 is played on, the 5-5, the total is 13 (5 + 5 + 3 + 0), so that move scores no points. If the next move is a 0-2, then the total is 15 (5 + 5 + 3 + 2), so the player scores 15 points. The top and bottom of the initial 5-5 are still available for play, as is the 3 and 2.
4. Four moves later, a 5-4 has been placed atop the 5-5, a 2-2 has been placed off the 0-2, a 2-5 has been connected to the 2-2, and a 3-3 has been connected to the 3-5. The total is 20 (5 + 4 + 3 + 3 + 5), so the player scores 20 points. There are now 4 open ends: the bottom of the initial 5-5, the 3-3, the 4, and the 5 on the right. Note that the top and bottom of the 2-2 are not open.



A hand ends either when a player plays all his tiles, or when a game is blocked, at which time the lightest hand wins total of his opponents points (minus any points in his own hand), rounded to the nearest 5, and divided by 5. For example, if the winning player has 3 points in his hand, and his three opponents have 5, 11, and 13, then the total difference is 26. This is rounded down to 25 and divided by 5. Thus, 5 additional points are added to the winner's total. All players retain the points that they have attained during gameplay, but only the winner gets the bonus points at the end of a hand.

A game is generally played to 100, 200, or whatever is agree upon before the game begins.

Source: Domino-Games.com