The Tiger Must Catch the Pig

Site of Documentation

Luang Prabang Children’s Cultural Centre, Luang Prabang, Lao PDR

Description

*The Tiger Must Catch the Pig* is a much loved game of ‘Catch’ played by children living in Luang Prabang, Lao PDR. In it, the Pig must make it back to the safety of their ‘pen’ without first being caught by the Tiger.

Who Plays?

This game requires at least 5 players although groups can be up to 20 players in size. Both boys and girls up the age of 14 years can play, although it is most suited to those between 6 and 10 years of age.

Time and Place

*The Tiger Must Catch the Pig* can be played outdoors at any time of year, as long as the weather is cool and dry. As each round only takes around 15 minutes, it is perfect for playing during school break times. As the game requires a lot of running, it is best played on smooth, flat
surfaces such as lawns or school yards where the children are less likely to hurt their feet if running barefoot.

**Skills, Strategies and Qualities of a Good Player**

Players need to be quick, agile and alert to be able to avoid being caught by the Tiger. The best players are those that have fast responses, good running skills and are able to throw the Tiger off their tail by moving swiftly in different directions around the game area.

**Popularity**

*The Tiger Must Catch the Pig* is most popular with children aged 6 to 10 years old. On average, the game is played once a month for fun and physical fitness. The majority of children learned this game from friends, at school or from visits to the local cultural centre.

**History of the Game**

*The Tiger Must Catch the Pig* is one of the area’s most well preserved games and was played by members of the older generations in almost exactly the same manner as it is played today. The only minor difference is that when they were young the song started with the lyrics, “Joy, joy the pig eats sugarcane”.

**How is the Game Played?**

**Step 1.** First, two players need to volunteer to be the Tiger and the Pig. The remaining players must stand in a circle, holding hands to form the Pig’s ‘pen’. The Pig stands at the centre of the circle in their ‘pen’, while the Tiger stands just outside of it.
Step 2. Next, the players need to walk around the circle, while still holding hands and sing,

“Joy, joy the pig eats husks,
The pig just ate a little,
Then ran away from the pig’s pen,
The tiger tried to catch the pig,
after it escaped its pen”.

Step 3. Once the song is over, the players stop walking and those that are standing closest to the Pig drop each other’s hands and allow the Pig to run out of the circle.
Step 4. The Tiger must immediately start to run after the Pig and try to catch them. The Pig must run around the area outside the circle while being pursued by the Tiger. Usually, the Pig will run for a couple of minutes before running back to the safety of their pen.
**Step 5.** Once the Pig is back inside, the players quickly close the pen by holding hands again. If the Tiger is locked out, the Pig wins the game. However, if the Tiger manages to slip in before the circle closes or breaks the player’s hands apart, they can try to catch the Pig and win the game instead.
Rules

1. The Pig wins the game if they can get back inside the circle without being caught by the Tiger. The winner will continue to play the Pig in the next round.

2. The Tiger wins the game if they can catch the Pig before they make it back inside their pen. The Tiger will then swap places with the Pig in the next round.

3. The Pig and the Tiger should continue playing and swapping roles with each other. Other players can request a turn at anytime or alternatively there can be multiple Pigs and Tigers in any one game.