Seuangmohn / Hide the Eraser

Site of Documentation
Luang Prabang Children's Cultural Centre, Luang Prabang, Lao PDR

Description

*Hide the Eraser* is a popular game of bluffing and chase, played by children living in Luang Prabang, Lao PDR. In the game, players have to guess if the eraser has been placed behind them. If it has, they have to quickly pick it up and start chasing their opponent. They have one shot with which to throw the eraser and hit their target, if they succeed, they win the game; if not, they become ‘Fermented Fish’.

Who Plays?

This game requires a group of 20 participants. Both boys and girls can play aged between 6 and 10 years old.

Accessories/Equipment

Hide the Eraser is usually played with a black board eraser (in Laos this item is similar to a small cushion made of fabric), but it can be substituted by any soft object, such as a bean bag or knotted scarf or T-shirt.
Time and Place

*Hide the Eraser* can be played outdoors at any time of year, as long as the weather is cool and dry. As each round only takes around 30 minutes, it is perfect for playing during school lunch breaks or on the weekends. 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 themselves if they fall over.

Skills, Strategies and Qualities of a Good Player

As *Hide the Eraser* is in part a guessing game, good players are often able to accurately read the faces and movements of their opponent while they are walking around the circle. After finding it, players need to be fast runners and have a strong throw and accurate aim, if they are to win the game.

One smart strategy often used by those hiding the eraser, is to place the item under clothing while walking around the circle, so that the other players can not immediately make out whether it has been ‘hidden’. Regardless of the tactic they choose, the player responsible for hiding the eraser needs to be able to keep a straight face and bluff convincingly.

Popularity

*Hide the Eraser* is a favourite game for children living in Luang Prabang and is played frequently. Children particularly like this game as it gives them a good work out, improves their focus and above all is lots of fun. Most children learned this game from friends, at school or by visiting the local cultural centre.

History of the Game

This game was also played by members of the older generations much in the same way as it’s played nowadays. The only small differences were that when they were young, children did not sing a song and were allowed to check behind their backs to see if the eraser had been placed behind them. This made the game slightly less challenging than it is today. As most children were taught this game by friends rather than parents, small adaptations could have easily been made over time.
How is the Game Played?

**Step 1.** First, one player (Player A) needs to volunteer to start the game. All the other players must sit in a large circle, ready for the game to begin.

**Step 2.** Next, all those sitting in the circle must sing a song called “Alikaka” which goes like this:

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“Alikaka, Alikaka, Alikaka,
Solilo, Solila,
Baw Keu, Baw Keu, Baw Keu,
Dadada, Dadada, Dadada”.
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Step 3. While the players are singing, Player A must walk around the circle, holding the black board eraser. Player A has to choose a sitting player (Player B), and without them noticing, leave the eraser behind them. Once they have done this Player A needs to continue to walk around the circle until the song ends or until Player B notices the eraser behind their back. The sitting players are not allowed to look directly behind them as Player A passes, instead they must work out where the eraser is based on watching the body language and faces of all their team mates.

Step 4. When Player B notices that the eraser is behind their back, they must quickly grab it and chase after Player A. While running, Player B has to try to accurately throw the eraser and hit their opponent. If however, Player B does not notice that the eraser has been placed behind their back and Player A manages to walk all the way around the circle and back to Player B, then Player B loses.
**Step 5.** Player A must keep running around the game area and dodge the eraser as it is thrown by Player B. If they can make it back to Player B’s spot in the circle, without being hit, they win the game and can pick a new opponent in a new game. If they are hit, they lose the game and are nicknamed ‘Fermented Fish’ (*Pa Dek*).
**Step 6.** Player B is only allowed one shot. If they miss, they automatically lose the game and are also nicknamed 'Fermented Fish'. If they hit, they swap with Player A and the game begins again. Whoever becomes 'Fermented Fish' must sit in the middle of the circle of players during all the rounds that follow.

**Step 7.** The players can repeat the game as many times as they want, which usually results in a number of 'Fermented Fish' sitting inside the circle. When everyone agrees to end the game, the winners can decide on a punishment for the Fermented Fish. This can be anything from asking them to sing or dance, to challenging them to use their bodies to spell out words.
Rules

1. Players are not allowed to turn around and look behind them to see if the eraser is there. They must simply try to guess by looking at their team mates reactions to Player A’s movements.

2. Players are not allowed to tell team mates that the eraser is behind them.

3. Any player that loses is nicknamed ‘Fermented Fish’ and must sit in the middle of the circle.

4. Winners hide the eraser in the next game.