Site of Documentation

Tai Yai group, Mae Hong Sorn Province, Thailand

Description

E-Sok is a popular game played by Tai Yai children living in the Mae Hong Song Province of Thailand. In the game children have to test their skill at picking up tiny tamarind seeds with a paper cone. The player that can pick up the most seeds wins the game.

Who Plays?

This game requires between two and five players. Both boys and girls can play, aged 7 to 14 years old.

Accessories/Equipment

This game requires each player to have ten tamarind seeds. They can find them at home, or buy some dried or (if in season fresh) tamarind from the store and take out the stones. Many Lanna families use tamarind for cooking traditional dishes, so there are often some in the home. If the players end up with too many seeds, they can ask a parent to roast them as a snack, after playing! In some areas of the countryside, when tamarind can not be found, children use flame tree seeds instead.

The players also need one small paper cone, made by folding a sheet of paper from a notebook.
Time and Place

On average, this game takes between 3 and 5 minutes to play, depending on the number of players and their skill. As it is a fairly quick game children prefer to play it during their lunch break at school or at home on the weekend. This game can be played indoors, throughout the year and only requires a large area of flat ground, free from obstructions.

Skill, Strategies and Qualities of a Good Player

The best players have a steady hand and are an excellent judge of distance so they can scoop up the seeds without disturbing the others.

Popularity

This game is most popular among Tai Yai girls. The only indoor game that is more popular is E Sok is E Keb; this could be because the game requires tamarind seeds and players need some time to locate them. This game is also played in a number of other areas around Thailand, but in there it is known as E Tak.

Preparation

1. First, players have to make a paper cone from a sheet of paper by rolling or folding it at one end. Around 10 tamarind seeds should then be placed in the cone, ready to play.
How is the Game Played?

Step 1. Next, the order of play needs to be determined. There are two methods to do so:

a. The players can either use an elimination game such as O-Wa Kuen Korn or O Chub to select the first player.

b. Alternatively they all pour their tamarind seeds onto the ground and race to pick up them up again and put them back into their paper cones. The player who collects the highest number of seeds plays first, the player with the second highest number of seeds plays second and so on. If two players have the same number of seeds, they can either play again or compete in a round of O Chub to determine a winner.
Step 2. The first player spreads out their seeds on the floor and then has to try and pick up each seed using only their paper cone. They have to try to scoop up each seed, one by one and must not let the cone touch any of the other seeds while they are picking up another. Each time they successfully pick up a seed, they have to pour it out of the cone and into their hand. The player can keep picking up seeds until they accidentally touch another seed, in which case it’s the next player’s turn.

Step 3. The only time a player is allowed to use their hands is to separate seeds that have become stuck together.
**Step 4:** Players should all keep taking turns until there are no more seeds on the floor. The player with the highest number of seeds - wins the game.

**Rules**

1. If a player touches a seed while trying to pick up another, they have to wait until their next turn to try again.

2. If a player drops a seed before they can pour it into their hand, they also have to let the next player take their turn.

3. Players are only allowed to use their hand to separate seeds that are stuck together. If they touch the seeds more than once, they have to allow the next player to take their turn.