Nang Tong (Rubber Band Rope Jumping)

Site of Documentation
Tai Yai group, Mae Hong Sorn province, Thailand

Description

*Nang Tong* is a simple yet lively game that has been enjoyed by generations of Tai Yai children living in the Mae Hong Sorn province of Thailand. The game requires players to complete a sequence of jumps over a long rope made of rubber bands, which is held by their opponents. Each jump in the sequence is more challenging than the last and only the most agile win.

Who Plays?

This game can be played by both boys and girls, aged between 7 and 18 years old. A minimum of four players is required, but it can also be played in larger groups divided into teams of at least two players. If there are an odd number of players, the extra player is allowed to play on both sides during the game.

Accessories/Equipment

This game requires a large number of rubber bands that are tied together to make a long rubber band rope. Children typically buy rubber bands at school stationary stores or from local shops and construct the rope themselves, prior to playing the game. Depending on the player’s preference, they can choose from a rope made with single bands or double bands, threaded or knotted together.
Time and Place

On average, a game of Nang Tong takes around 30 minutes to play, which makes it ideal for playing during school lunch times. When children are out of school and have more free time, each game can last up to an hour, depending on the speed, skill and fitness of players. The environment the game is played in can affect the game’s duration, as children can become exhausted quickly. As a result, children usually play this game where they can find a large space with smooth ground (such as a concrete floor or grass lawn) and shade. Ideally, children need to find a space that is 4 x 10 meters, giving them plenty of room to run and jump.

Skill, Strategies and Qualities of a Good Player

The most important skill that this game requires is the ability to jump very high in the air. Often taller children with longer legs have an advantage, although each level does require slightly different skills all of which can be perfected through practice.

Popularity

Tai Yai children in Northern Thailand play this game for fun and enjoy testing their skill at jumping the rope, against that of their friends. As the game can be easily played anywhere, it is played frequently particularly by girls, although boys also enjoy playing as they believe it helps them grow stronger!

Nang in Tai Yai language means “Rubber Band” while Tong means circle. In the past, this game has been called many names including Len Nang Tong, Jok Nang Tong and Tor Nang Tong (“Jok” means jump and “Tor” means play).

History of the game

Nang Tong has been enjoyed by generations of Tai Yai children, although over the ages many features of the game have changed. Many years ago, children jumped the rope either individually or in small groups simply for exercise, whereas nowadays, children have created complex rules and action sequences to make the game more exciting.
Preparation

1. First of all, the rubber band rope must be constructed. It is made by linking numerous rubber bands together and is usually prepared well in advance of the game.

2. The players must then play O-Wa to divide into themselves into two equal sized teams. If there are an odd number of players, the additional player can choose to jump for either team.
3. Finally, the players must play *O-Chub* to which team starts the game. The winners will jump, while the losing team holds the rope.

**How is the Game Played?**

**Step 1.** First, two Rope Holders must sit or stand far apart from each other, holding the rope at a specific height. As the game progresses the rope will be held higher and higher, making each jump more difficult than the last. As the jumps get harder, the Jumpers are allowed to undertake a special challenge, ask a team mate for help or even use a special jumping technique to clear the level. It’s up the player and all the options are explained in ‘Step 5’ and the ‘Rules’ section. It’s important that all the players agree before the game starts at which level Jumpers can start choosing from these options.

**Step 2.** Taking turns, each player must run and jump over the rope at each height. There are 18 different heights that the Jumper will have to master. They are as follows:
**Level 1: Ei Ta Toom (Ankle Height)**

Rope Holders must place the rope at ankle level, pressing it down to the ground with one of their feet.

One by one, the Jumpers have to walk or jump across the rope, making sure they do not touch it as they pass. If they touch it, they are ‘dead’ and it’s the next Jumper’s turn. The next Jumper can try to bring back the player by shouting, “One dead body” as they jump the rope. If they get across, the ‘dead’ player is back in the game! If the Jumper can’t clear the jump, the whole team loses and must swap sides with the Rope Holders.
Level 2: *Ei Khao* (Knee Height)

Rope Holders must place the rope at knee height and the Jumpers must jump across, without touching it.

Level 3: *Ei Tai Kon* (Thigh Height)

Rope Holders must place the rope at thigh height and the Jumpers must jump across, without touching it.
**Level 4: Ei Pao (Pocket Height)**

Rope Holders must place the rope at the same level as the pockets on their school uniforms and the Jumpers must jump across, without touching it.

![Jumpers at Level 4](image1.jpg)

**Level 5: Ei Eaw (Waist Height)**

Rope Holders must place the rope at waist height and the Jumpers must jump across. From this level through to the final level, Jumpers are allowed to touch the rope while trying to jump it. As long as they make it over to the other side, they can continue to the next level.

![Jumpers at Level 5](image2.jpg)
**Level 6:** *Ei Poom or Ei Sai Due* (Navel Height)

Rope Holders must place the rope at navel height and the Jumpers must jump across it.

**Level 7:** *Ei Doom Nueng* (First Button Height)

Rope Holders must place the rope half a palm’s length above their navel. This is often measured using the buttons on their school shirts. The Jumpers must jump across it.
**Level 8: Ei Doom Song (Second Button Height)**

Rope Holders must place the rope around their lower chest (or the second button down from the top of their shirts. The Jumpers must jump across it.

![Image of person holding a rope at lower chest height](image)

**Level 9: Ei Ook Lok (Chest Height)**

Rope Holders must place the rope at chest height and the Jumpers must jump across it.

![Image of person holding a rope at chest height](image)
**Level 10:** *Ei Hae or Ei Jakkarae* (Arm Pit Height)

Rope Holders must place the rope underneath their arms and the Jumpers must jump across it.

**Level 11:** *Ei Kor* (Neck Height)

Rope Holders must place the rope at neck height and the Jumpers must jump across it.
**Level 12:  Ei Hoo (Ear Height)**

Rope Holders must place the rope at ear height and the Jumpers must jump across it.

![Image of a child holding a rope at ear height]

**Level 13:  Ei Ta (Eye Height)**

Rope Holders must place the rope at eye height and the Jumpers must jump across it.

![Image of a child holding a rope at eye height]
**Level 14: Ei Hua (Head Height)**

Rope Holders must place the rope at head height and the Jumpers must jump across it.

**Level 15: Ei Yod Noi**

Rope Holders must hold the rope up high, around 6 inches from the tops of their heads, and the Jumpers must jump across it.
Level 16:  *Ei Yod Yai*

Rope Holders must place the rope as high as they can above their heads and the Jumpers must jump across it.

![Image of a child holding a rope high above their head.]

Level 17:  *Ei Yeang Yae*

Rope Holders must place the rope as high as they can above their heads, while they stand on their tip toes, and the Jumpers must jump across it.

![Image of a child standing on their toes holding a rope high above their head.]

**Level 18: Ei Ngu or Ei Nam (Snake or Water Level)**

Rope Holders must wave the rope back and forth and while it is ‘snaking’ around, the Jumpers must jump across it without touching it. The first team complete all levels, wins the game!

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**Step 3.** If a Jumper knows that a jump is too high and they won’t be able to make it over – they can surrender from the game by making a Scissors shape with their hand and walk under the string to the other side. If a Jumper surrenders, they are 'dead', although a team mate can try to jump the rope on their behalf.
Step 4. If a Jumper does not want to surrender they can ask their team mates for help. To do this they have to touch a team mate’s hand. This team mate must then try to clear the jump on their team mate’s behalf. Once again, they will have to shout, “One dead body” as they jump. The Jumper gets two chances and if they fail both, the whole team loses and has to swap sides with the Rope Holders.

Step 5. From Level 9 (Chest Height) through to the final level, players are given the option to complete a special task rather than clearing the jump, to pass the level. There are three special tasks that they can choose from.
Taking Shirt Off (Also Known as Swimming): To ‘Swim’ the Jumper must stretch their arms out and place them over the rope, so it runs across the front of their chest and behind their arms.

Moving their arms in circles (clockwise), they need to wrap the rope around both arms 4-5 times.
Next, they have to pull the rope from across their chest and stretch it back over their head.

Finally, the Jumper has to move their arms in circles in the opposite direction (anticlockwise).

If done correctly, the rope should unwind and the Jumper should be set free. If the Jumper manages to complete this task they can go through to the next level.
**Eating Grapes:** To ‘Eat Grapes’ the Jumper must grab as much of the rope as they can, stretching and gathering it in their hands, before pretending to eat it like a bunch of grapes!

![Image of a child pretending to eat grapes](image)

**Beating Mosquitoes:** To ‘Beat Mosquitoes’ the Jumper has to pull the rope down and step on it with both feet.

![Image of a child pulling the rope](image)
They then have to bend down and slap their hands on the rope on either side of their legs.

Finally, they have to pick up the rope between their legs, stretch it up towards them before letting it slap down to the ground. This task is considered the easiest of the three choices.

**Rules**

1. Up to level 5, younger or smaller players only have to avoid touching the string, while older or taller players have to avoid touching it up to Level 7 or 8. Both teams need to decide when the Jumpers can touch the string, before the game starts.
2. If Jumpers fail a jump they are ‘dead’ but can ask a team mate for help. A team mate can try to jump for as many of the ‘dead’ players as they like, but if they fail the whole team loses and has to swap sides. If the succeed those ‘dead’ players can rejoin the game.

3. After teams have swapped sides, they commence from the level they reached in the last round.

4. If all Jumpers pass all 18 levels, the team wins and can start the new game.

5. Jumpers can use special jumping techniques such as “Double spring” where the Jumper, jumps with both feet together and land on the ground on two feet or “Short spring” where the Jumper turns their back to the rope and flips backwards over it. Younger or smaller players can do this from Level 5, while older or taller players can only start at Level 7 or 8.

6. Rope Holders can make the game more challenging by choosing their tallest players to hold the rope.

7. Once a Jumper gets up to Level 9 they are allowed to use a technique called “Crossing the World” to help their team mates. Here, they have to use their foot to lower the rope, but must be careful that it does not touch the ground. All the other Jumpers can pass over the lowered rope but must ensure that no part of their body touches the rope while they take their turn. If all the team ‘Crosses the World’ successfully, the team can move up to the next level.

8. The Rope Holders are allowed to stop a Jumper from jumping by shouting, “Can’t cross the World”. Once a Jumper hears this, they are not allowed to take their turn. This is usually done when a jumper is jumping on behalf of a team mate. Typically holders will shout it out just as the player jumps with the intention that the jumper can’t stop themselves in time and the whole team is ‘dead’ and has to swap sides.

9. If a Jumper chooses to undertake a special task rather than completing a jump and fails the task, they are ‘dead’ and their team mate must take their turn.

10. It’s up to the Rope Holders to direct the Jumpers, they can refuse Jumpers the chance to get a team mate to jump on their behalf or undertake a task – to make the game more challenging and exciting.