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

Description
O-Siw 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 skip over a rope as it is swung around in a big circle by their opponents. If they can jump in time to the rhyme being sung by their opponents and at the end, catch the rope between their feet – they complete the challenge.

Who Plays?
This game requires a group of 3 to 10 players. Both boys and girls can play aged 8 to 12 years old.

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. The rubber band rope can be either a single thread (using only one rubber band in each link), or a double thread where two rubber bands form a link. Ropes usually are around 2 to 3 metres long to ensure there is plenty of space for the players to jump.
Time and Place

If all three levels of O-Siw are played, the game lasts around 5 to 10 minutes, 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 longer, 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 5 x 5 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 repeatedly over an extended period of time. Often taller children with longer legs and those with a good sense of rhythm have an advantage over others. All players have not only have a high level of physical fitness, but also able to keep quiet and still, so to not interrupt those who are jumping.

Popularity

Tai Yai children play this game for fun and enjoy testing their skill at skipping the rope, against that of their friends. It is particularly popular with young girls. Lanna children from other areas also play this game, but it’s usually a simpler version without a number of rounds (such as ‘Frog’ or ‘Pointing at the Sky’) and is known as O-Siew.

History of the Game

This game was also played by members of the older generations when they were young. Back then they chanted, “O-Siew Sun To Siew O Ving Pai Ving Ma Hew” which has no real meaning and is a little different from the rhyme sung nowadays.
Preparation

1. Players must first compete in a round of O-Wa Noi Ok to determine which players will hold the rope.

How is the Game Played?

Step 1. The rope holders then have to stand around 3 metres apart from each other, holding either end of the rope. The rope must be slack enough so that the rope can easily be swung in a circle.

Step 2. The rope holders then need to start swinging the rope in either a clockwise or counter clockwise direction.
Step 3. Once the rope has started to turn, each player has to run into the centre and start to jump over the rope. As they jump, the rope holders have to chant, “O-Siw Sun To Siw O Vi Wan Vi Two Hew”. As they chant the last word, “Hew”, the player must land with both feet on the ground, one foot either side of the rope. If they fail, they have to swap places with one of the rope holders.

If the players have plenty of time they can play additional levels of the game. Each additional level has exactly the same sequence of steps as before, it’s just the players add in an extra lighthearted challenge before the player starts to jump. It’s up to the players how many extra levels they play.

Level 1: Frog

In this level, each player has to imitate a frog and ‘hop’ on their hands and feet into the game area. They then repeat the sequence of movements as before.
Level 2: Pointing Sky

In this level, each player has to enter the game area and make their first jump over the rope with one hand pointing up to the sky. They can then continue the rest of the sequence of movements as before.

Level 3: Pointing Earth

In this level, each player has to enter the game area and make their first jump over the rope with one hand pointing down to the ground. They can then continue the rest of the sequence of movements as before.

Rules

1. The two rope holders can play O-Chub to determine who gets to swap first, when a player makes a mistake.
2. Players that don’t land with their feet on either side of the rope at the end of the rhyme, have to swap sides with a rope holder. They are not considered out the game completely and can still play in the new rounds that follow.