Cari Cucu / Search for Grandchild or Grandmother

Site of Documentation
Rural Malay communities, Titi Teras, Balik Pulau, Penang, Malaysia.

Description
Grandmother is a guessing game widely enjoyed by children from rural Malay communities in Penang, Malaysia. In the game a blind ‘Grandmother’ has to catch a “Grandchild” and use all of their senses to correctly guess the identity of this mystery opponent.

Who Plays?
This game requires at least five players. Both boys and girls can play aged 9 years and older.

Accessories/Equipment
This game requires a piece of cloth, scarf or shirt that can be used as a blindfold. Alternatively players can just close their eyes or cover them with their hands.

Time and Place
On average, this game takes between 10 to 25 minutes to play, which makes it ideal for playing during
school breaks and when time is limited. It can be played at any time as long as the weather is cool and dry. As the game requires running, it is best played on smooth flat surfaces such as lawns or school yards. The game area should be free from obstructions, so the blindfolded player does not accidentally injure themselves.

**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 ‘Grandmother’. As the Grandmother, children will have an advantage if they can sense the movements of the other players while blindfolded. A player with exceptional sensitivity to sounds and movements will often have an advantage over others.

**Popularity**

As the game doesn’t require any many props, little preparation and only a few players, it has maintained its prevalence. A popular way of passing the time, the game is played for fun frequently by children in rural Malay communities.

**History of the game**

Although the origins of the game are not easily traced, the game was played by members of older generations when they were young. The game has not evolved significantly over time and is played today in much the same way as it always was.

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**Preparation**

First the players need to select who will play the role of ‘Grandmother’. To do this they can either play an elimination game called *Lai-Lai-Li-Tam-Plom* or simply ‘count feet’.

1. To play *Lai-Lai-Li-Tam-Plom* all the players sit in a circle and chant:

   "Lai-Lai-Li-Tam Plom
   Apom pi apom
   Mak Minah balik kampong
   Beranak dalam tong
   Namanya sotong"
2. While the players chant they each wave one hand in front of them. At the end of the chant the players each flip their palms either up or down.

3. The odd player out (e.g. the only player with his palm up while all the other players have their palms down) becomes the Grandmother.

4. If more than one person has their palm in a different direction compared to all the others, then the game continues until finally one player is selected.

Alternatively players can use the ‘counting foot’ method.

1. All the players stand in a circle and place one of their feet into the middle.

2. One player chooses a random number, for example, 10. Once chosen, another player starts going round the circle counting up to that number, while pointing at each player’s foot. In this example, the player that has the 10th foot has to play the role of the Grandmother in the game. The other players play the role of ‘Grandchildren’.
How is the Game Played?

Step 1. First all the players stand in a circle. The Grandmother is then blindfolded (or closes their eyes) and stands in the middle of the other players.

Step 2. The Grandchildren hold hands and walk around the circle in a clockwise direction. As they walk, they chant,

“Nenek, nenek, si bongkok tiga.
Siang mengantuk, malam berjaga.
Mencari cucu di mana berada.
Nenek kahwin dengan anak raja”.

Translation: “Grandmother, Grandmother, the three-humped one.
Sleepy in the day, watchful at night.
Searching for her grandchildren wherever they are.
Grandmother is married to the king’s son”

Step 3. Once the Grandchildren finish chanting, the Grandmother responds by chanting:

“Cucu, cucu tak dapat lari.
Nenek tua banyak sakti.
Sekarang nenek nak cari ganti.
Siapa yang kena, dia menjadi”.

Translation: “Grandchildren, you cannot escape.
Old Grandmother is more powerful.
Now Grandmother is finding a replacement.”
Step 4. Once the Grandmother finishes chanting, it is the cue for the Grandchildren to run away very quickly.

Step 5. The blindfolded Grandmother then has to try to catch one of the other players. Once caught, the Grandmother has to correctly identify which Grandchild they are holding onto. The Grandchildren are allowed to distract the Grandmother by making sounds with their feet or shouting random names.

Step 6. If the Grandmother guesses the identity of the player correctly, then that player has to swap places with them and the game begins again.
Rules

1. If the Grandmother fails to correctly identify the Grandchild, the Grandmother must try to catch another player and guess again.

2. If the Grandmother cheats by peeking out from the blindfold or opening their eyes, then they are suspended for the next round of the game and another Grandmother chosen using one of the two selection processes.

3. The game can also be played as a game of ‘Hide and Seek’. With players hiding, rather than running from the Grandmother.

4. Players can also choose to play a longer version of the game which involves the Grandmother catching and identifying each player, one by one, rather than swapping roles after one correct guess.