Omega

Site of Documentation

Ethnic Chinese community, (Kheng Tean National-type Elementary School), Georgetown, Penang, Malaysia.

Description

Omega is a simple elimination game played by Chinese children living in Georgetown, Penang. In it, children have to chant a series of words which are accompanied by a sequence of hand movements and actions. At the end of the chant, each player must produce a hand sign (similar to Rock, Paper and Scissors) to determine the winners. Winners then punish the losers by tickling them.

Who Plays?

This game requires at least two players. It is played by both boys and girls aged 7-10 years.

Time and Place

Each round of Omega takes as little as two minutes to play and can be played anywhere, at anytime. Typically children play it during school breaks or at the end of the day when they are waiting to be picked up by their parents.
Skills, Strategies and Qualities of a Good Player

*Omega* is easy to play and for the most part only requires listening and movement skills. The best players have excellent hand coordination, speed and a sense of rhythm. Those that are alert and can accurately predict the moves of their opponents will also have an advantage over others.

**Popularity**

*Omega* is one of many popular games that involve clapping and chanting rhymes. Played for fun and to pass free time, games such as these are played, particularly by girls almost every day. Most children are taught the game by friends or family members.

**History of the game**

The origins of *Omega* can’t be easily traced back within the local community, although the game is similar to those played by many members of older generations when they were young. Back then, the most popular games were *Sek Sek Sek, Bom Bom Bom* and *1, 2 Ta Li Som*.

Nowadays, there are many additional versions of this type of game, each with different rhymes and sequences of movements. Often the games’ lyrics incorporate contemporary terms and objects which reflect the modern day. Many of these games such as *Hamburger and Punctuations* have very similar structures so it is possible that they are all variations of one original game.

**How is the Game Played?**

**Step 1.** First, all the players sit (or stand) next to each other, with their arms bent and hands outstretched. If they are in a group, players can sit in a circle and do the actions with the players next to them. Alternatively, if there are only two players, they can sit facing each other.
Step 2. Next, each player positions their right hand with their palm pointing up, below the left hand of the player next to them, and their left hand, palm down, above the hand of the player on their other side.

Step 3. All the players have to chant the words, “Omega, Caterpillar, Mother and Baby Boy”. As they chant each word they have to complete a sequence of actions.

The sequence has three parts and all three must be repeated for each word. The sequence is as follows:

1. Players clap each other’s hands, with both hands pointing up.
2. Players clap each other’s hands when they are flat (one palm up and one palm down).

3. Players clap their own hands together quickly, three times.

Step 4. The players then repeat the chant “Omega, Caterpillar, Mother and Baby Boy”. This time as they say each word, they have to clap each others hands when they are flat, as before, very quickly.
Step 5. Next, the players chant, “Assam”*. As they say the word, they need to make a fist with both hands and cross their arms over so that their fists touch the opposite shoulder.

* Assam is a type of sour food, popular in Malaysia.

Step 6. Finally the players chant, “Cheese”. This is the last part of the rhyme, and as the players say it, they have to unfurl their fists and make a scissors, cloth or stone shape with their hands.

The outcome is determined by: Cloth beats Stone; Stone beats Scissors and Scissors beats Cloth.
1. If players are playing in pairs and they draw the same symbol, they need to repeat the game until they draw different symbols and a winner can be determined. If they are in a group and all three symbols are being displayed by the players, then the group repeats the game until they are each showing only one of two symbols, and a winner (or group of winners) can be identified.

2. In a game with three players or more, the loser (or group of losers) can only be punished once by the winners.

**Step 7.** The winner (or winning team) then punishes the losers by tickling them all the way up their arm and then pulling their hand forwards.