Zero Point

Site of Documentation

Urban Indian, Georgetown, Penang, Malaysia

Description

Zero Point is a simple yet lively game that has been enjoyed by generations of Indian children living in Georgetown, Penang, Malaysia. 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 requires a minimum of 6 participants, although groups can be up to 20 players in size. Both boys and girls can play, aged 10 to 12 years old. The game is better suited to taller children with long legs.

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.
Time and Place

On average, a game of Zero Point takes between 30 minutes and one hour to play, which makes it ideal for playing during school break 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 4 x 10 meters, giving them plenty of room to run and jump.

Skills, 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 version of this game has different features and provides children with the opportunity to use different skills. All players have to be able to keep quiet and still, so to not interrupt those who are jumping.

Popularity

Malaysian children play this game for fun and enjoy testing their skill at jumping the rope, against that of their friends. The game is played 2 to 3 times per month, particularly by girls and was learned in school, from peers and family members.

History of the Game

Zero Point has been enjoyed by generations of Malaysian children, although over the ages many features of the game have changed. Back then, there were more special gestures and actions required in the same game played by previous generations in the community. Some gestures and actions were even accompanied with specific songs.

Preparation

1. First, players need to gather together between 60 and 100 rubber bands.
2. Next, the player needs to take two rubber bands. Pass one rubber band through the middle of the other and pull both ends, to form a loop at either end.

3. Pass another rubber band through the loops and keep repeating with more bands until the desired length of rope is achieved.
4. Tie the ends of the rubber band rope, by passing one of the loops of the last rubber band through the other and pulling tightly until it’s locked shut.

How is the Game Played?

**Step 1.** To begin, two players must volunteer Team Leaders. Away from the other players, both Team leaders have to choose the name of an item that they can see in their vicinity. For example, “Stone” or “Leaf”.

**Step 2.** Next, the Team Leaders tell the other players the two words (Stone and Leaf) and without telling them which name, belongs to which Team Leader - asks each of the players to pick one of the words. Once they have all chosen, the Team Leaders reveal which team is theirs.
**Step 3.** Finally, a player has to volunteer to go and find a small item (this can be a coin, stone or stick) – it doesn’t really matter what it is, as long as it is small enough to fit into the player’s palm. The player must place the item in their hand and shut it tight to make a fist.

**Step 4.** The Team Leaders have to guess which fist the item is held in. If they guess correctly, their team will play the Jumpers, while the other team hold the rope. If both Team Leaders correctly select the same fist, then the player must hide the item again and repeat the process.

**Step 5.** *Zero Point* comprises of five rounds. In each round the rope is placed at five different heights, increasing in difficulty as the round progresses. To progress to the next round, players must complete all five levels. They are:

Level 1: Rope is placed on the ground
Level 2: Rope is held at knee height
Level 3: Rope is held at waist height
Level 4: Rope is held at shoulder height
Level 5: Rope is held at head height
Round 1 (Jump all Five Levels)

1. This is the most basic round of the game. In this game, two players will sit or stand far approximately 2 metres away 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.

2. Each of the Jumpers must jump over the rope as it is held at each height, and as they do so say, “One Point”, to indicate that they are at Round 1.
Round 2 (Jump Level 1, Special level 2, Jump the rest)

1. In this round, at the Level 1 (Ground height) Jumpers have to jump over the rope, and as they do so say, “Two Point”, to indicate that they are at Round 2.

2. Level 2 (Knee height) is more complicated and requires the Jumpers complete a special sequence of movements.

3. First, they have to place their legs on either side of the rope.
4. Next, they have to turn 180° in either direction, so that the rubber band rope is stretched over the front of one leg and behind the other.

5. The leg that the rope is in front of should stay still, while the player moves the foot of their other leg back over the rope and onto the ground, then back again to the other side. They step their foot back and forth across the rope three times in total.
6. The player must then turn back 180° to return to their original position. They then step one leg back over the rope, so they both legs are on one side of it.

7. In Level 3, 4 and 5, Jumpers have to jump over the rope, and as they do so say, “Two Point”.

8.
Round 3 (Jump Level 1-3, Special level 4, Jump Level 5)

1. During this round, for the first three Levels, Jumpers have to jump over the rope, and as they do so say, “Three Point”, to indicate that they are at Round 3. Picture round 3 level 1

2. Level 4 requires players to once again perform a specific sequence of movements.

3. First, each player must stand behind the rope and swing their arms forwards underneath the rope and over it, so the rope winds around their arm. Players must then repeat the motion, so that the rope is wrapped around their arms three times.

4. Next, while still standing in the same position, the player has to clap their hands three times.
5. Finally, the player has to pull the rope from across their chest and pull it up and over their heads. Finally, they need to swing their arms in the opposite direction, so the rope unwinds and they are completely released from the rope.

6. In Level 5, the Jumpers have to jump the rope, and as they do say "Three Point".

**Round 4 (Jump Level 1, Special Level 1 then Jump the Rest)**

1. In this round, at the Level 1 (Ground height) Jumpers have to jump over the rope, and as they do so say, “Four Point” to indicate that they are at Round 4.

2. Once they have done this, they each need to complete another special sequence of movements.
3. First, they must stand with one leg either side of the rope and tilt their heads up to look at the sky.

4. Next, they need to jump up and cross their legs over, so the land with the opposite leg on either side of the rope.
5. Then, they jump once again and uncross their legs, so they return to their original position.

6. Each player needs to repeat the two jumps, three times to pass the level.

7. After the player has completed all the jumps, they return to jumping each of the remaining levels as usual, saying, “Four Point” as they clear each jump.
Round 5 (Jump level 1 - 5 Special 5)

1. In this round, at the Level 1 (Ground height) Jumpers have to jump over the rope, and as they do so say, “Five Point” to indicate that they are at Round 5.

2. Each player jumps each of the Levels in this manner.

3. Once they have completed jumping Level 5 they have to complete a special sequence of movements to finish the game.

4. The rope holders swing the rope in a circular motion while they chant,

   “Rumah terbakar panggil bomba,
   Bomba datang berlumba-lumba,
   Satu, dua, tiga, empat, lima,
   Enam, tujuh, lapan, sembilan, sepuluh”

*Translation: “Call the fire fighters when the house is on fire,
   Fire fighters come in a rush,
   One, two, three, four, five,
   six, seven, eight, nine, ten”*
5. As the holders swing the rope, each Jumper must jump the rope without tripping or stepping on it. They must jump over the rope once, for each word of the rhyme.

6. After the final ten turns of the rope, the Jumper must jump and land so that their legs are on either side of the rope, catching it between them.

7. If all players from each team complete all five rounds of the game – they win!

**Rules**

1. If a Jumper touches the rope with their hands while jumping over, they are eliminated.
2. If a Jumper steps on the rope while jumping over, they are eliminated.

3. Jumper's legs are allowed to touch the rope from Level 3 onwards. If their legs touch the rope in earlier jumps, they are eliminated.

4. An eliminated player can be brought back into the game, if one of their team mates successfully passes a round.

5. If one or more Jumpers successfully complete all five Levels, the whole team progresses to the next round. If they fail, the teams will swap sides and play a new game.