Chak Loklak / Finger Grabing

Site of Documentation
Phnom Pehn, Cambodia

Description
*Chak Loklak* is a game of 'Catch' played by children living in suburban communities surrounding Phnom Pehn, Cambodia. In the game players have to avoid being caught by their opponent; if they escape having their fingers grabbed, they then have to successfully complete two more challenges to win the game.

Who Plays?
This game requires four or more players. Both boys and girls of any age can play, although it is most suited for those between 8 and 10 years old.

Time and Place
On average the game takes between 30 minutes and an hour to play. It requires a large space with a smooth concrete floor where children can easily move about, without being hurt. As it can be played be played in small groups and doesn’t require any special equipment, it is ideal for playing at any time of day as long as the weather is fine. Children prefer to play it after school, on the weekends and during holidays.
Skills, Strategies and Qualities of a Good Player

As each game of Chak Loklak presents a number of different challenges to players, they each must use a range of skills to win the game. To begin, players need to be quick and alert if they are to remove their fingers from their opponent’s palm before it’s ‘grabbed’. Next, the players need to be able to successfully perform a task which usually involves speed, agility and coordination. In the final stage of the game, players have to be able to detect when the Catcher is distracted and swiftly act on the opportunity to touch them, before they themselves are caught.

Popularity

This game is played by large groups of children for fun and to pass the time. The more the players and the harder the assigned tasks, the more enjoyable the game is for all involved.

History of the game

Members of older generations played this game much in the same way as children play nowadays, except that players have added in additional challenges after the ‘finger grabbing’ to determine a loser. In the past, the winner would punish the losers by gently slapping their hands.

How is the Game Played?

Step 1. First, players must decide which of them will be the ‘Catcher’. A player can volunteer or alternatively the group can play Rock, Paper and Scissors to determine a loser to take on the role.
**Step 2.** Next, the Catcher stands with their arm outstretched and palm open. All the remaining players place one finger on the Catcher’s palm and together they sing,

“Chak Loklak,
Si Bay Loklak,
Chuob Nam Ak Nam Ek Nam Oy,
Koun Ta Soy Si Num Paing,
Koun Ta Paing Si Karem Kei”.

![Step 2 Image](image1.png)

**Step 3.** At the end of the song, the Catcher counts, “One, two, three”. On, “Three” the players must all quickly withdraw their fingers from the Catcher’s palm before they have a chance to grab it. If a player has their finger grabbed they lose and have to play the role of ‘Catcher’ in the next game. If two players have their finger’s grabbed, then both of them will play Rock, Paper and Scissors to determine who loses.

![Step 3 Image](image2.png)
Step 4. Often many players escape having their fingers grabbed. If this happens the Catcher must set a challenge for the players to complete. This could be anything from hopping on one leg, to singing a song or touching an object. If a player fails their task, they lose the game and become the Catcher in a new game.

Step 5. However if the players all successfully complete their tasks, then there is one final way to determine the loser. All players must crouch down on the ground and cover their ears with their hands. As long as they remain in this position they are safe from the Catcher. If they are not crouching down or their hands are removed from their ears, the Catcher is free to catch them.
**Step 6.** To win the game, each player needs to try to move across the game area and touch the Catcher. They can either slowly maneuver themselves while still crouched down with their ears covered or alternatively wait until the Catcher is distracted by another player and jump up to make a run for them.

**Step 7.** If a player manages to touch the Catcher before being caught, then they are safe and gain a special power. Team mates that can’t make it to the Catcher can now touch the winning player and get what is known as an “Electric Shock”. Once players get an Electric Shock they are safe from their opponent. If a player fails to reach the Catcher before they get caught, they lose the game and become the Catcher in the next round.
Rules

1. If a player fails to touch the Catcher before they are themselves caught, they lose the game and become the Catcher in the next round.

2. If the Catcher has played three rounds without catching another player, their opponents are allowed to set a task as a punishment, such as performing a dance, song or mime.

3. The game can be restarted or the Catcher swapped at any time, as long as the majority of players agree.