

Chhma Denh [or] Chap Kandol / Cat Chasing the Mouse



Site of Documentation

Phnom Pehn, Cambodia

Description

Chhma Chap Kandol is a much loved game of 'Catch' played by children living in the suburbs surrounding Phnom Pehn, Cambodia. Inspired by the cartoon 'Tom & Jerry', in the game the Cat must do all they can to capture the Mouse while they both weave in and out of a large circle of players.

Who Plays?

The game requires at least 8 to 10 players; the more players, the better the game. Boys and girls of any age can join in with the fun, but it is usually played by children aged 9 to 14 years old.

Time and Place

On average, this game takes around 15 to 20 minutes to play. It can be played at any time of the day, as long as children have free time and there are plenty of willing participants. As the players need to form a large circle and the game requires a lot of running, a large space of at least 5 x 5 metres needs to be found

Skills, Strategies and Qualities of a Good Player

The Mouse needs to be quick and alert to be able to avoid being caught by the Cat. The best players are those that have fast responses and good running skills so they can remain one step ahead at all times. The Cat on the other hand, needs to be agile as they will have to jump over or run under the circle of hands to catch their opponent. For those players holding hands in the circle, one of the most important qualities is strength, as they must not break their grasp, no matter how hard the Cat tries to pull them apart.

Popularity

Played frequently, children learned this game from peers or older siblings. Often boys prefer to play the role of the Cat while girls prefer to play that of the Mouse.

History of the game

This game is relatively new and was not played by older generations. It is thought to have been inspired by the antics of the two characters in Tom and Jerry, a popular Disney cartoon.

How is the Game Played?

Step 1. Before the game begins, children need to find two volunteers to play the roles of the Cat and the Mouse. If there are no volunteers then children can play *Rock, Paper and Scissors* to identify two losers. These players can then play *Rock, Paper and Scissors* against each other to determine who will play each role. The winner becomes the Cat and the loser plays the role of the Mouse.



Step 2. All the remaining players need to stand in a large circle, holding hands. The Mouse must stand in the middle, while the Cat stands just outside the circle of hands.



Step 3. The Cat must try to catch the Mouse by chasing them in and out of the circle.



Step 4. The Mouse, however, has an advantage over the Cat. Players must allow the Mouse to weave easily in and out of the circle by letting go of their hands as the Mouse approaches.



For the Cat, the game is more difficult, as players in the circle keep their hands firmly locked together. The Cat can jump over or run under the circle of hands, or alternatively they can try to break the other player's hands apart so they can pass through.



Step 5. Players in the circle who break their grip are immediately disqualified and take on the roles of Cat and Mouse in the next game.



Step 6. If the Cat is not able to break the circle of hands then the game continues until the Cat finally catches the Mouse or the players are too exhausted to play on.



Rules

1. Players must form a circle by holding hands and must try to prevent the Cat from easily moving in or out.
2. Players that have their hands broken by the Cat are immediately disqualified and must swap places with the Cat and Mouse.