

## Phka Champa Phka Champei / Champa Champei



### Site of Documentation

Phnom Pehn, Cambodia

### Description

*Phka Champa Phka Champei* is a guessing game widely enjoyed by children living in the suburban communities surrounding Phnom Pehn. In the game, blindfolded players have to use all of their senses to guess the identity of a mystery opponent. To keep the real identity of the players a secret, each of them is given a code name, usually that of a native flower such as Champa (Frangipani) or Champei (Magnolia).

### Who Plays?

This game can be played by both boys and girls of any age, although it is most suited to those between 9 and 14 years old.

### Time and Place

On average the game takes around 10 minutes to play. Depending on the number of players and how much time is available, children may spend up to 45 minutes playing several rounds. It can be played indoors or outdoors throughout the year as long as the weather is cool and there is plenty of shade.

Children are most likely to play the game during their school lunch breaks or whenever they have free time with a group of friends.

### **Skills, Strategies and Qualities of a Good Player**

To be a good player, those that are blindfolded need to be able to accurately read the faces and body language of their opponents. A player with exceptional sensitivity to sounds and movements will often have an advantage over others. It is important that those that touch the blindfolded player don't give the game away. They can do this by moving very quietly in and out of the game area and trying to carefully blend in with their team mates when it's time for their opponent to take their guess.

### **Popularity**

Although this game has been popular for many years, it can be time consuming to gather teams together and name each player, so it is played less frequently than some others. On the whole, the rules of the game have not changed significantly over time, but the types of code names given to players do differ. While girls still like to use traditional flower names, they also like to use those of modern film stars. Boys especially prefer to use the names of male film stars when playing.

### **History of the game**

*Phka Champa Phka Champei* is very similar to a game played members of older generations when they were young. Back then, children would play *Sdach Chang* (The King's Guess) and it is quite likely that *Champa Champei* was derived from this original game. In it, there were two main characters a 'King' and a 'Blindfolder'. The Blindfolder would name each of the King's 'subjects' and place the blindfold over the King's eyes. One of the 'subjects' would then approach the King and touch his hand before returning to their seated position with the other players. The King would then have to guess the identity of the person who had touched his hand. If the King guessed correctly his loyal subjects would cheer and sing to celebrate.

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### **How is the Game Played?**

**Step 1.** To start the game, players need to form two teams of equal size. Traditionally one team would be all boys and the other all girls, although there is no reason for teams not to be mixed, as long as the players are all of a similar age. A player from each team needs to volunteer to be the Team Leader.



**Step 2.** The teams must sit in two long rows, facing in each other, at a distance of approximately 5 metres. Both Team Leaders must then whisper a flower name to each of their team members. Each player must be given a different name, which they must remember for the duration of the game. Players are allowed to share their code names within their teams, but must not let their opponents over hear.



**Step 3.** Next, the Team Leaders play *Rock, Paper and Scissors* to decide who will start.



The winning Team Leader chooses a member of the opposing team and blindfolds them. Once blindfolded, the player (Player A) sits with their arms outstretched and palms open.



**Step 4.** The Team Leader then calls on one of their team mates (using their flower name) to come forward and touch the palm of Player A. After touching their palm, the player (Player B) returns to their seated position with the rest of their team. Player B must be careful to be very quiet and make as little sound as possible so to not give away their identity.



**Step 5.** The Team Leader then removes the blindfold. Player A must then stand up and go over to the opposing team and try to guess the identity of Player B. The other players can make noises, clap their hands or do anything they like to try to distract or confuse the player as they try to make their guess. Player B must be very careful not to give away subtle clues with their face or body language, and members of both teams are not allowed to provide hints to Player A.



**Step 6.** Player A has to make their guess using the real name of the player. If they guess correctly, then Player B will join the Player A's team. If Player A is incorrect then they will have to join Player B's team. Once seated with their new team, the game begins again. The Team Leaders each take turns to blindfold their opponent's players.



**Step 7.** The winning team is the team with the most players at the end of the game. Winners can choose to 'punish' the losing team by making them perform silly dances and songs for their own amusement.



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## Rules

1. The Team Leader that wins *Rock, Paper and Scissors* will be the first to blindfold an opponent and call upon one of their team mates to touch the player's palm.
2. The Team Leader who lost *Rock, Paper and Scissors* is only allowed to watch the game. They (and all the other players from both teams) are not allowed to give away hints or clues as to the identity of the chosen player.