



Australian Government
Australian Sports Commission

kai
'kai'



SCHOOL
YEARS
4–6

SCHOOL
YEARS
7–9

SCHOOL
YEARS
10–12

Post-school age

Background

In this game from the Torres Strait Islands, a number of players stood in a circle and sang the *kai wed* (ball song) as they hit a ball up in the air with the palms of their hands. The game was played using the thick, oval, deep-red fruit of the kai tree, which is quite light when dry.

Language

Kai wed, also used as *kamut wed* for string-figure 'ball playing'.

Kai tupitare abukak kai o atimed kak kai o
*Ball strike without dropping it —
ball throw not the ball.*

Short description

This is a hand-hitting (volley) game in which players attempt to keep the ball in the air as long as they can.

Players

- Groups of four to eight players

Playing area

- A designated indoor or outdoor area suitable for the activity

Equipment

- A tennis ball, small beach ball, *paketa* or a small, soft ball

Game play and basic rules

- Players form a circle. The ball is thrown into the air and each player passes it to another by striking the ball upwards with the palm of the hand.
- The ball is usually passed around the circle (players at least 1.8 metres apart) but the game can be played by hitting to any player in the circle other than the one next to the player.

Scoring

In a team contest, the game is won by the group that is able to keep the ball going the best and does not allow it to hit the ground. If the ball hits the ground while attempting to achieve a designated target score, continue the score.

Variations

- **Group Kai:** Use a sponge ball, beach ball or other light ball. Players hit the ball — with hands and arms only — around the playing area (30 metres x 15 metres) to each other, or divide into two teams and attempt to hit (volley) the ball past the baseline (or a wall) to score. After a score the ball is hit back to the other team to continue play. Only one hit at a time is allowed for players in general play. No physical contact is allowed.
 - Allow players to make two contacts (one to control the ball and one to hit it).
 - **Team Kai:** This can be played as a cooperative game in which players as a group attempt to make as many hits as they can without missing. Players stand in a circle about 1 metre apart. One player throws the ball into the air, and the players take turns hitting it upwards with the palm of one hand. They may not catch the ball, but must keep their hands open and flat. A player may not hit the ball twice in a row. Players may sing a song or recite the alphabet as they play (one letter for each hit).
 - The ball must be hit to at least head height for younger players and at least 1 metre above head height for more-experienced or older players. When the ball hits the ground the game is restarted. The game can be played with the players taking turns in a set order, random hitting (with the ball not hit by the same player twice in a row), or individual players attempting to hit the ball the most number of times.
 - **Individual contest or practice kai:** Players compete to see who can hit the ball into the air (above head height) with their hand the most number of times without it hitting the ground. This can be played using either hand, alternating, or combined with other stunts/skills such as through the legs, etc.
- In a physical education class the game can be played with a number of modifications as part of a hitting-skill activity. Progressions are:
 - Players hit the ball around in a circle (either direction).
 - Players hit the ball to other players who call out their name. Attempt to work through the whole team.
 - Players work as a team to hit the ball in the air and go through the letters of the alphabet. No player is allowed to touch it twice in succession or receive it straight back from another player.
 - Give each player a number and work through the numbers in a set order.
 - One player stands in the middle of the circle and the ball is deflected to the other players who in turn hit it back to the middle player. Change the middle player each time any player makes an error. The aim is to keep the centre player in as long as possible.

Teaching points

- Players in a circle. Palms of hand up. Hit to start.
- Hit to different players.
- Hit and move back out of the way.
- Count the volleys. Keep going. Let's start again.
- Good work. Call for the ball.
- Watch out for each other.
- Direct the ball to another player.



Kai

Suggestion

- Use as a practice activity for sports such as tennis, touch football, Australian rules football, volleyball and speedball.