



Australian Government  
Australian Sports Commission

# mer kai

'mer kai'



SCHOOL  
YEARS  
4-6

SCHOOL  
YEARS  
7-9

SCHOOL  
YEARS  
10-12

Post-school age

## Background

This is a version of a game from the Torres Strait Islands, using the thick, oval, deep-red fruit of the kai tree which is quite light when dry.

## Language

Mer is the name of one of the islands in the Torres Strait. A kai fruit was often used for playing.

## Short description

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

## Players

- Groups of six players

## Playing area

- Use a designated indoor or outdoor area. The centre circle of a basketball court with the line through the centre is ideal.

## Equipment

- A tennis ball, small beach ball, *paketa* or a small, soft ball (such as a covered sponge 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.
- In this game, teams are presented with a set of activities that can be performed and after some practice develop a performance that highlights their ball skills, body handling and originality.

- Teams develop a routine that contains some of the following elements:
  - random hitting to other players in the circle
  - hit to every player in the circle in a set order
  - hit around the circle in one direction then back the other way
  - hit up to the middle of the circle and the person next to the hitter steps into the middle and hits it up — all players then have a turn, continuing around the circle twice
  - hit and follow to replace the person the ball is hit to as he or she hits it to another player — pass and follow
  - a player in the middle who hits the ball back to each person in order — all players have a turn in the middle
  - hit back and forth at speed in a zig-zag pattern to the three players in opposite halves of a circle
  - walk/march/jog around in a circle and hit the ball over the head for the next person (for advanced groups).

### Suggestion

Players learn the basic aspects of the routine and then work out their routine. When this is mastered they look to include more creative aspects to the performance.

### Performance considerations

- Introduce two or more balls as part of the routine (for advanced groups only).
- Show hits with both hands/arms up to the elbows.
- No gymnastic stunts such as handstands are allowed, but under the legs, high hits, kneel or sit down, behind the back, jumps into the air to hit the ball, turns, hand claps (individually or as a group) can help with a creative performance.
- For some stunts players may tap/block the ball in the air with one hand and hit it with the other.
- Players must not move more than 1 metre back from the marked circle.

### Judging

The overall performance of groups can be judged on criteria related to skill, teamwork, elements of the routine, flow and movement, originality, and overall appeal.

Dropped balls, etc. are 'penalised' in the final assessment.

### Comment

Different age groups will have different elements to include in their routines. For very young players it may be a case of compiling as many hits as possible in a set time, hitting in a set order, and basic 'tricks' or skill variations.

### Teaching points

- Players in a circle. Palms of hand up.
- Ready and go.
- Well done. Keep going.