



Australian Government
Australian Sports Commission

wirrwuyu

'wirr-wu-yu'



All school-age groups (K–12)

Post-school age

Background

As in various other cultures, stone skipping (throwing) along a surface of water was played by Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

On Dunk Island in Queensland, the throwing of cuttle-fish (*krooghar*) bones was observed. The bones were thrown along the surface of the water like 'skipping stones' and often reached surprising distances in a series of skips.

Language

The word *wirrwuyu* means 'throwing stones' in the Djapi dialect of the Yolngu language of northern Australia.

Short description

An outdoor education activity where players take turns in throwing the stones to make them 'skip' as many times as possible along the surface of the water. It provides a fun activity as well as practice for throwing.

This activity is usually known as 'ducks and drakes' and is a well-known favourite.

Players

- Any number of players but usually two to six in a group spread out in a row

Equipment

- A large supply of small flat pebbles or stones

Playing area

- An open area near water

Game play and basic rules

- This game of throwing skill was played by both children and adults who lived near a sea, lake or river.
- Players collect a supply of small flat stones or pebbles.

- The idea of the activity is to throw a small flat stone across the surface of the water to see how many times it skips or bounces before sinking.

Comments

This activity requires considerable skill and much practice. The thrower attempts to release the stone as low as he or she can towards the water at a flat angle.

If performed well, the stone skips along the surface of the water in a spectacular fashion. A stone that skips or bounces across the water more than five times is a very good throw, and more than ten would be excellent.

Variations

- Use a 'target' such as a stick or large rock to aim at.
- Use tennis balls and a bin or wicket. Players 'bounce' the ball off the ground (or even water) once or twice to hit the target.
- Use a suitable light ball and standing in waist-deep water bounce the ball off the water for a partner or other players to attempt to catch.

Safety

Ensure that appropriate safety aspects are observed for all activities. It is recommended that only one player throw at a time.

Teaching points

- Collect the stones. Spread out in a line.
- Off you go. Keep the arm low, bend the knees, flick the wrist. Elbow leads.
- Count the bounces.
- Keep going.