



Australian Government
Australian Sports Commission

Woomera

'woo-mer-a'



SCHOOL
YEARS
4-6

SCHOOL
YEARS
7-9

SCHOOL
YEARS
10-12

Post-school age

Background

A woomera or throwing stick was used by Aboriginal boys and men in all parts of Australia to propel spears with great force, often over considerable distances.

On Dunk Island in Queensland a favourite target for spear-throwing contests was the white ant nests hanging from the gum trees.

Short description

This is a throwing competition for accuracy, using a woomera and a tennis ball.

Players

- A group of players

Playing area

- A playing area about 15 to 25 metres long

Equipment

- Use 1-metre square pieces of board as targets. Targets are set up on the ground and tilted at a slight angle away from the throwers. As an alternative, large wheelie (rubbish) bins can be used as the targets.
- Have a large supply of tennis balls.
- A pet toy called a 'dog thrower' works in a similar fashion to a woomera and a spear. A tennis ball is placed in the end and is thrown.

Game play and basic rules

- Players use tennis balls and a woomera. Players take turns in throwing at the target from behind a line 15 and 20 metres away (10 and 15 metres for younger players). The player who hits it gains one point. Players should be encouraged to perform for their own enjoyment and personal achievement, but it is recognised that many will seek to engage in competition against other players.

- As a competition (individual or team) players have two rounds of 20 throws at 15 metres and three rounds of 20 throws at 20 metres.
- There is a total of 100 throws in a full competition. In a competition the player with the most points at the end of the game (from the set number of turns) is the winner.
- For most class events players will have one round of 20 throws at 15 metres and one round of 20 throws at 20 metres.
- In the event of ties between players for major places (first, second and third) in all competitions have a 'sudden death' throw for the decider.
- If there are several targets available, players may be allocated up to four to a target.
- Players take turns after each other and may use the same or different coloured balls. Collect the tennis balls as required.
- Players not involved in throwing stand 5 metres back and behind a restraining line. These players are involved in scoring.

Scoring

Players score one point for each time the target is hit. The ball must hit the target on the full and be clearly seen to rebound or deflect off the target for a score to count. Special awards may be given to the winners of each round.

Safety

Marking of the area and clear instructions regarding throwing and retrieving balls are important to ensure the safety of the players in the activity.

Variations

- Players throw for distance using a 'ball thrower'. Players have four attempts to throw as far as they can. The throw is made from between two lines, 10 metres apart.
- A useful comparison might be to compare the best throw of the spear without a *woomera* with the distance obtained when using a *woomera*. Allow a run-up and throw area of 10 metres.

Teaching points

- Line up. Ready.
- Arm back, elbow leads. Follow through.
- Watch the target not the ball.

