



Australian Government
Australian Sports Commission

thurnda-gu

'thur-nda-gu'



SCHOOL
YEARS
4-6

SCHOOL
YEARS
7-9

Background

Rollers (toy cars) are to be found in many Aboriginal settlements in more remote parts of Australia. For example, toy trucks are made of wheel rims and toy cars from wire or twine attached to large tins filled with sand or damp soil.

The tin-can rollers are pushed with handles made of wire or pulled using wire or twine. This game involves doing 'wheelies' and sudden stops and sharp turns. Sometimes groups of children with roller cars and trucks (cans stacked or in line) have races.

When a tyre rim is used as a roller it is propelled with a forked stick held by the 'driver'.

Language

The activity is named *thurnda-gu*, which means 'to roll something' in the Yindjibarndi language of central parts of Western Australia.

Short description

A fun activity using cans to make roller cars to push or pull around.

Players

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

Equipment

- A roller may be an empty food tin (closed at the top with a lid) through the centre of which a wire or string has been threaded from end to end. This wire is wound up tightly (or tied in the case of twine) to make a long handle. The tin is filled with sand or rocks and pulled or pushed to make a track. Tyre 'treads' may be dented in the sides of the roller.

Game play and basic rules

- The skill involved in playing with a roller, especially one that is pushed rather than pulled, is to manoeuvre (steer) it around trees, dogs, people and other players with rollers without bumping into anything. Often the wire threaded through the can is also used to fashion a steering wheel (and even gear sticks) and allow for greater control.
- Some players pretend that the roller is a sports car and sometimes add one or more cans to make a 'road train' truck. This requires greater skill. Car or truck noises usually accompany the activity (for example, starting and changing the gears).

Variations

- Conduct races either along a straight path or an obstacle course.
- Have relay races.

Making a roller

To make a simple roller use a long piece of fencing wire and an empty food can (with a lid on it) or other tin. A hole is punched at both ends of the can and the wire is passed through to act as an axis around which the can rotates like a wheel as it is pushed or pulled along.

Comment

In some places rollers is a 'fill-in' activity that is taken up when nothing more exciting is on offer. Any outdoor area is suitable for this activity.

Suggestion

In some parts of Australia roller races, including sprints, relay and obstacle races, are included as part of school activities such as athletic carnivals. The use of rollers in these events allows for an opportunity to use an activity that has developed an Indigenous Australian identity in parts of the country. Indigenous play culture should be seen as a continuing and dynamic one that has developed its own unique forms of play in particular contexts.

Teaching points

- Line up with rollers. Steer them around.
- Leave other people alone. See how well you go.