



We Played AniMAH at NHBâ??s Donâ??t Play Play Media Preview

Description

This is a media invite post. We were invited by the National Heritage Board to attend the Donâ??t Play Play â?? The Games That Shape Us media preview on 13 June 2026. Photos in this post are from Little Big Red Dotâ??s media-preview coverage unless otherwise stated.

Do you remember the satisfying clack of mahjong tiles on a Saturday night, or the quiet concentration of a chess match at the void deck? I hadnâ??t really sat with those memories in a while â?? until we were invited to the media preview of **Donâ??t Play Play â?? The Games That Shape Us**, NHBâ??s brand-new travelling exhibition now on at One Punggol.

Honestly? It brought back so many feelings. And one game in particular completely stole the show for me â?? but more on that shortly.



Punggol Damai Board Games Community

Today, board games thrive at various levels, from clubs to groups playing at your local estate. For example, the Punggol Damai Board Games Community organises weekly game sessions that provide a welcoming gaming environment for both new and seasoned players of all ages.

Members of Damai Board Games Community playing a game of Lightning Train, April 2026
Courtesy of National Heritage Board

(image within)
Members of Punggol Damai Board Games Community attending a Sunday game session that is open to people of all ages, c. 2024-2026
Courtesy of Punggol Damai Board Games Community

Overview of Don't Play Play - The Games That Shape Us at One Punggol. Photo: Little Big Red Dot media-preview coverage.

What Is Don't Play Play?

Don't Play Play is a travelling exhibition by the [National Heritage Board \(NHB\)](#) that celebrates the board games and tabletop games that have shaped Singapore's communities across generations. It's bright, interactive, and deliberately designed so everyone - from your youngest family member to your grandparents - can find something familiar. For the straight event overview, see our earlier guide to [NHB's Don't Play Play exhibition at One Punggol](#).

The exhibition takes visitors through five themed sections:

- **Why We Are All Gamers** â?? How board games from around the world found a home in Singapore and built community here.
- **All Aboard! How Games Arrived in Singapore** â?? Tracing the roots of Congkak, Xiangqi (Chinese Chess), Weiqi, Carrom, and Dum (Checkers) through an interactive quiz.
- **The Games We Grew Up With** â?? The nostalgia section. Mahjong, Monopoly, Snakes and Ladders, Scrabble. Even Monopolyâ??s Singapore edition makes an appearance.
- **Where Singapore Plays Through The Years** â?? From void deck chess games to community centre tournaments, this section traces how the spaces for play have changed.
- **Homegrown Games** â?? Singapore-designed games like Kopi King and The Singaporean Dream, celebrating the local games industry thatâ??s been quietly growing for decades.

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Board-game displays at NHB's Don't Play Play exhibition. Photo: Little Big Red Dot media-preview coverage.

The whole thing is set up so you can wander through in any order, with interactive stops at every section. The curators put real thought into the layout - nothing is behind glass. You're meant to touch, play, and engage.

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**Pelican Game
Outline Stamp 2**

- 1 Align the corners of your activity sheet with corners A and B on the acrylic template, then slide it underneath.
- 2 Check that the stamp is correctly oriented before positioning it above your sheet.
- 3 Press down firmly to ink your stamp!
- 4 Rotate your activity sheet and align the corners with D and C and repeat.
- 5 Return the stamp and ensure it is covered after use.

Counters

How to play

- 1 Each player rolls...

Traditional games section at Don't Play Play - The Games That Shape Us. Photo: Little Big Red Dot media-preview coverage.

The Part That Got Me: Playing AniMAH

Here's what I didn't expect: to genuinely fall in love with a game at a heritage exhibition.

At the media preview, we got to try **AniMAH** by [Growing Up \(growingup.sg\)](#) - Singapore's first animal mahjong game, and honestly the most delightful thing I played that day. Think classic mahjong, but the tiles feature animals instead of the traditional Chinese characters and bamboo suits. It's designed so that children aged four and above can join in alongside adults, which means three generations around the same table without anyone feeling lost.

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ALL ABOARD! HOW GAMES ARRIVED IN SINGAPORE

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Tracing the roots of games played in Singapore reveals a deep, sometimes surprising web of connections and evolutions.

The ideas and traditions shared through games have long been adopted and adapted by local communities and intertwined with our own stories.



Carrom was a game that bonded my family after a long day of work at school. One day, Carrom board was lying idle in the dining table, so we decided to play around it. We played and laughed with our mother.
Liam, 14

What is an example of a game known for shaping minds and character?

Flip up to discover!

Which game is known by more than 3 different names?

Flip up to discover!

I've been playing for years and I learn something new every game. I learn from mistakes that I make and tricks from other players too.
Uncle Tan, 61

An illustration of an hourglass, symbolizing time and learning.

AniMAH animal mahjong tiles by Growing Up at the media preview. Photo: Little Big Red Dot media-preview coverage.

What makes it work is that it keeps the fundamental rules and logic of mahjong — pattern recognition, forming sets — but removes the barriers that usually make mahjong feel intimidating to younger players or newcomers. The animal tiles are immediately readable, even if you have never played mahjong before. I watched a few kids at the event pick it up within minutes, which was genuinely heartwarming to see.

It's rare that something at an exhibition actually makes you want to run out and buy the product. AniMAH did that for me. Don't say I never share!

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Homegrown Singapore games section at NHB's travelling exhibition. Photo: Little Big Red Dot media-preview coverage.

Weekend Programming (Don't Miss This)

Beyond the permanent exhibition, there's programming across two weekends in June that's worth planning your visit around:

Weekend 1 13 to 14 June 2026:

- **#LaiPlayLeow Gaming Area:** Try 15 locally designed games with guided demonstrations from three local game designers.
- **PLAY! Craft Booths:** Drop-in workshops where you can make your own Monopoly-inspired clay tokens and try screen-printing. Suitable for all ages.

Weekend 2 20 to 21 June 2026:

- **Damai Board Games Community Booth:** Learn a new board game or challenge a community member to a friendly match.
- **Singapore Scrabble Association Booth:** Drop in for a round of Scrabble - beginners welcome.
- **Singapore Weiqi Association Booth:** Learn simplified Weiqi, or take on a robot challenger if you're feeling bold.



Visitors trying games at Don't Play Play at One Punggol. Photo: Little Big Red Dot media-preview coverage.

If you're bringing kids, I'd genuinely recommend timing your visit around the Weekend 1 programming. The craft booths in particular looked like they'd be a big hit with younger visitors.

Should You Go?

Yes - especially if you grew up in Singapore and haven't thought about five-stones or congkak in years. This exhibition will catch you off guard in the best way. The curation is warm and accessible, the interactive elements are genuinely fun, and it's free to visit.

For families with children, the AniMAH game alone is a reason to make the trip. For anyone interested in Singapore's social history, the section on how games arrived here and wove themselves into everyday life is quietly fascinating. We also checked out the [Children's Museum Singapore](#) not long ago - if you enjoy this kind of interactive heritage experience, that one's worth adding to your list too.

The exhibition travels after its One Punggol run, so this is your window to catch it at its first stop.

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Entrance to Donâ??t Play Play â?? The Games That Shape Us at One Punggol. Photo:
Little Big Red Dot media-preview coverage.

Official Details

Donâ??t Play Play â?? The Games That Shape Us

Venue: One Punggol, Singapore

Dates: 13 June to 30 June 2026

Time: Daily, 10am to 9pm

Admission: Free

Official NHB website: www.nhb.gov.sg

For AniMAH by Growing Up: growingup.sg

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