

Cooperative Games

Cooperative games focus on participation, challenge, and fun rather than defeating someone. They emphasize play rather than competition, though competition may be involved, but the outcome of the competition is not losing and sitting out rest of the game. Instead they may involve switching teams so that everyone ends up on the winning team.

The Whip

Have participants form a circle. Ask a question, the person to your left will say an answer, and then the person on their left and so on until it gets back to you. Great introducer for everyone to share their name, and favorite ice cream, or whatever the question may be.

I'm Seeking Common Ground

Have the group sit in a circle of chairs or bases with one person standing in the middle (there should be no empty chairs or bases). The person in the middle says "I seek common ground with people who were born east of the Mississippi!" Anyone who was, including the person asking the question, must get up and run across the circle to find a new seat. You cannot take the seat of the person next to you. There will be one person left in the middle who must ask the next question. Possibilities include: people who wear glasses! Likes vanilla ice cream better than chocolate! You can also guide the questions a little deeper; "I seek common ground with people who have worked with the homeless." The facilitator may choose to ask the first few questions to get the game going and set the tone.

Name Swap

Participants move about the group and introduce themselves to each other by shaking another's hand and saying "Hi, my name is ____" and the other says "Hello, _____, my name is ____." They then swap names and find someone else to introduce themselves to. So if Billy and Susan shake hands, Susan becomes Billy, and Billy becomes Susan. Players cannot shake the same person's hands twice, and the goal is for them to try to get their name back.

Peek-A-Who Name Game

Form two teams. Have two people who are not on either of the teams hold the blanket up by the ends so that it is vertical or perpendicular to the ground. The teams gather on opposite sides of the blanket. One volunteer from each team crouches behind the blanket. When the blanket is dropped, each player tries to say the other person's name first. Whoever loses joins the other team. Eventually everyone will be left on the winning team.

Feet Tag

Seat everyone in a circle with feet facing in and one person in the middle. Holding the play sword or rolled newspaper, the middle person should be able to reach the feet of everyone in the circle. The game begins with one person saying the name of another. The middle person tries to hit the feet of the named player before the named player can say someone else's name. The game continues until someone gets caught, at which point that person goes to the middle.

Circle Delight

Two teams stand alternately in a single circle formation. Each team has a ball. At the signal the balls are thrown in the same direction from person to person belonging to the same team. The balls start moving from opposing players standing opposite each other in the circle. The purpose is to see if one team can move its ball from player to player at such a speed that it overtakes the ball from the opposing team. If this happens one point is scored and the game begins again. The first team to score three points wins. Note: The ball must be relayed between players of one team as they are positioned in the circle while not hindering the opposing team.

Sardines

This can be played anywhere, indoors or out. The goal is similar to "Hide and Seek" except that "it" hides first. Everyone else then tries to find "it." When someone finds "it," they hide with "it" in the same spot. The game ends when everyone finds the hiding spot of "it."

Blob Tag

One person begins as "it," the participants who are caught join hands with "it" to form a blob. As more people are caught, they join the blob, which becomes larger. Participants can only be tagged if the blob is intact, if the blob is broken, it must pause to reform itself.

Splash Tag

This version of the classic game requires a large sponge and a pail of water. Players try to run away from the person who is "It" while "It" tries to tag them by throwing a wet sponge at them. Once that person is tagged, they become the new "it."

Flip Me the Bird

A variation of tag, where a participant can not be tagged if they are holding the rubber chicken. People can toss the chicken to each other to help protect each other from being caught. You can have as many "it's" as you think are necessary. The "chicken" can be a knotted towel or some other soft object suitable for throwing.

Giants, Wizards, and Elves

This game is just like Rock/Paper/Scissors, but totally different. The playing field is set up like a football field; each team has their own end zone. The end zones need to be clearly defined. To begin the game, each team huddles and decides which play to run, giants, wizards, or elves. Giants beat Elves because they stomp them, Wizards defeat

Giants as they blast them with their spell, and Elves defeat Wizards because they sneak under their magic. Then the two teams meet in the playing area. If your team's symbol wins, you chase the other team back to its end zone, trying to tag the team members before they get there. If you lose, you must dash to your own end zone before you're caught. Those people who get caught change to the other team. The game ends when everyone is on the same team.

Walking Statues

Two teams start from opposite ends of the play area. The leader stands in the center of the playing area. The goal is to reach the leader first. Teams can move only when the leader is facing the other team. If participants are caught moving, they must go back to the start.

Positive Reinforcement

One person is selected to leave the room and should be out of earshot. The rest of the group chooses some action it would like the absent person to perform. When ready, the group calls the person back in. The means of reinforcement is clapping. By clapping louder or softer, the group influences the subject to do whatever action the group wants.

If You Love Me, Won't You Please, Please Smile?

Everyone stands in a circle with a volunteer standing in the middle. The volunteer stands in front of a person of his or her choice, looks them in the eyes and says, "If you love me, won't you please, please smile?" The person responds by saying "You know I love you, but I just can't smile." This must be said without smiling. If the person does smile, he or she becomes the person in the middle.

Botticelli

One person is "it." "It" must think of the name of a person or fictitious character. This character is referred to by the initial of his or her last name (e.g., Mr. F.). The players, in turn, ask "it" yes or no questions to discover the name of "its" character. However, they must earn the opportunity to ask each question by asking "it" to name a character with the same initial in response to their questions. For example, "it" begins play with the statement, "I am thinking of a Mr. B." A player then asks "it" a question such as, "Was Mr. B. a president?" If "it" cannot name a president whose name starts with B, the player has earned the right to ask "it" one yes or no question for a clue to the character's identity. However, if "it" is able to name a Mr. B. who was president, that person forfeits the opportunity to question "it." The player who correctly guesses the name of "its" character is the new "it."

People To People

Have participants form pairs facing each other. A single player at the end of the line is designated the "caller." As the caller yells "toe to toe," "knee to knee," "elbow to foot," etc., the pairs perform the described connection. On the call "people to people" the players switch partners. The player without a new partner becomes the new caller. You cannot have the same partner twice, unless it is a small group. Try to think of a new combination every time

Human Knot

Have the group form a tight circle. The members of the group then reach in with their right hands and grasp one of the right hands available. Repeat with left hands. Then ask them to unravel the knot. People may not let go of the other participant's hands. The circle of hands is to remain unbroken. However, it may be necessary to change grips due to the angle of arms and bodies. One variation is for the group to stay silent during the entire activity. *Participants must be extremely carefully not to injure themselves or another participant.*

The Clock

Define a large circle by having the group join hands. Mark one spot inside the circle as "12 O'clock" and another as "6 O'clock". Have the group rotate in one direction, returning to the start position, in as little time as possible. After discussing strategies, the group can try to improve its previous record.

Black Knight, White Knight

Everyone is a knight. Appoint one person to be "The Black Knight". Tell the knights that they can move like a knight in chess (define if necessary). Allow the white knights to move the black. If the black knight tags a white knight, the white knight becomes a black knight. The playing area depends on the number of participants. Note: At the end of the game everyone will be a black knight.

The Lava Pit

Tell a story that the group is being chased and they need to get across a field of hot lava. Give each group paper plates explaining that when they step on these plates they will not sink into the lava. (Give each team about 1/3 the number of plates as people.) The group must figure out how to get the entire group from point A to point B (both marked by scotch tape on the floor), from one side of the Hot Lava Pit to the other. Only one person can be on a plate at a time, and the plates may be picked up and moved. The key to the game is that only part of the team will be able to cross the field at a time and one person will need to work their way back across the field to help the rest of the team across. A time limit can also be placed on this game.

Blooop

Break out large group into small groups of 4-6, and give each a balloon to inflate. In small group, join hands to and form circle. The objective is to keep the balloon off the floor by batting it, without letting go of hands. If the balloon touches the floor, the group loses its hands, meaning they can't let their hands touch the balloon; as balloon keeps hitting the floor, they lose elbows, shoulders, heads, thighs, etc.

Pass The Toxic Waste Can

The group must form a circle, with each person spread about a foot apart. Introduce "The Toxic Waste Can" The challenge is for the group to pass the can around the circle without using their hands or dropping the "toxic" content in the can that will spill out if it is dropped.

Everybody's It

Everybody is it. All participants can tag anyone. If you are tagged you must freeze in place. Anyone can free a tagged person by 'high-fiving' them. It is the participant's choice together tag people, free people, or try a combination of both.

Welded Ankles

Have participants stand together side by side in a line. Their feet should be comfortably spaced about shoulder width. Each foot must be touching the foot of the person on each side of them. The problem is to move together, as if their ankles were welded together with the ankle of the person on each side of them. The group has to walk to the finish line about 8 meters away without separating their feet from their partner's. If the facilitator sees that happen, the group has to stop and walk back (separately) to the starting line and start over again." This is surprisingly difficult, but very inspiring when the group together figures out how to solve the problem.

Hoopers

On the ground, place 1/2 as many hoops as the number of children. Children stand outside the hoops. On the command "Run" the children run from one side of the playing area to the other without touching anyone or the hoops. On the command "Hoopers" each child must find the nearest hoop to jump inside. Vary the actions outside the hoops, e.g., gallop, turn, jump, or skip.

Catching the Dragon's Tail

Have 10 or more children form a line. Each person places hands on the shoulders of the person in front of them. The first in line is the "head" of the dragon; the last is the "tail." The head tries to catch the tail by maneuvering the line around so he can tag the tail player. When the tail is tagged, the tail player moves to the front of the dragon to become the new head. The old head is now in second.

Huckle, Buckle, Beanstock

Select an object to hide and designate a home base where all of the children can gather at once. A player is designated to hide the object without the others peeking. Then everyone searches. When anyone finds it, they run to home base shouting, "Huckle buckle beanstalk!" They continue until everyone has found it.

Cookie Monster

All children line up along a wall, fence, or demarcation line. They are cookies. One child is the Cookie Monster who stands some distance away. The children chant, "Cookie Monster, Cookie Monster, what time is it?" The cookie monster responds with a clock time, choosing any number he or she wishes, e.g., "Eight o'clock." The 'cookies' then count out loud together as they take large steps toward the Cookie Monster, "One, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight." The 'cookies' repeat their 'what time' call. The cookie monster continues to respond with time numbers until he or she decides to answer, "Cookie time!" whereupon the Cookie Monster chases the cookies back to the wall.

Crossover

Place the cardboard pieces end-to-end on the floor. Have two groups of 4-6 kids line up on each end. The challenge is for each group to cross to the other end of the "bridge" without anyone stepping off the boards. (Provide ground rules so children know they have to work around each other.) If you have a gym available try lining children up on lines and have them cross over without stepping off the line.

Transformations

Divide the participants into two groups. The object is for the players to form as quickly as possible into human representations of whatever you describe. They must link together to form that object. Example: Helicopter, Waterfall, Bus, Toaster, Bridge.

Aura

Have participants find partners. Have the partners face each other with their arms out and palms touching, then close their eyes. After feeling the cosmic energy between them, they take two large steps backwards, and spin in place 3 times. Keeping their eyes closed they then try to rejoin hands.

Elephant Walk

Have participants form a straight line. Everyone should bend over putting right hand down between your legs, then with your left hand grab the right hand of the person in front of you. Now everyone slowly walks backward. The last person lies down, as the elephant continues back the next person lies down, until all are head to toe on the ground.

Psychic Numbers

Everyone in the group decides to be either 1, 2, or 3. Don't tell anyone your number. Now without speaking the group walks around and shakes hands with one another. The object is to find everyone else that has the same number as you. This is done by pumping your hand as many times as the number you are thinking, as you shake hands. Therefore if you are thinking of a 2 then when you shake hands with another person you pump your hands twice.

Artist Relay

Give each participant in the group a piece of paper. Give them a couple of minutes to draw anything they want. After a couple of minutes have them pass the picture to the person to the right. Continue so that every person in the group has had a chance to add to each of the masterpieces.

Magazine Scavenger Hunt

This can be done in small groups or individually. In advance, prepare a list of items that could be found in magazines. Players are given 10 to 15 minutes to cut out pictures of items listed on scavenger hunt list.

Drip, Drip, Splash

This is a variation of the classic game “Duck, Duck, Goose.” The person who is “it” walks around the circle with a cup of full cold water. Instead of calling “Duck,” the person says “Drip,” as they let a drip of water fall on the participant’s head. Again instead of calling “Goose” the person says “Splash” and dumps the water on their head before being chased around the circle.

What Am I?

One person leaves the group while the rest of the participants decides what animal he/she will be. Upon returning, he/she tries to learn their identity by asking yes or no questions. Maybe set a time limit or limit to the number of questions.

Hog Call

Have participants in the group find partners. Each partner will take a part of a two part phrase. For Example: Boston – Redsox. Take each group of partners to opposite ends of a field. Have them close their eyes and have them find their partner’s by only saying their part of the phrase. Person 1 – Boston, Person 2 – Redsox.

Juggling Groceries

Give each participant a plastic bag and have them find a partner and a safe space in the playing area. They are to stand facing their partner approximately 5 feet from each other. On the facilitator’s signal, both partners toss their bag into the air by throwing the bags into the air using both handles. Their job is to move in a predetermined way by their facilitator and catch each other’s bag before it hits the ground. If they are successful then they start again, but this time they must each take a step back from where they originally started.

Sharks in the Water

This game operates on the same premise as Cooperative Musical Chairs. Outline a large square on the floor with either masking tape or chalk. This area is the safe island and the area surrounding the square is the ocean. When the music begins children “swim” around the island. The stopping of the music indicates that sharks are coming and all players must retreat to the safety of the island. With each round the lines are altered making the island smaller and smaller. Players must make work together to make sure everyone has a safe place to get away from the sharks.

Mirror Mirror

This is a game that can be played with partners or with a larger group. A leader is chosen to initiate movements the others are to try to mimic as quickly as possible so that it appears they are a mirror image of the leader. A more challenging version for older children is to eliminate the leader. Players are to both move and simultaneously mimic each other.

Gathering the Treasure

Set-up four hoops in the four corners of the activity area. At each hoop there are 3-4 participants, and inside each hoop there are the same number of bean bags as there are participants at that hoop. On a signal from the facilitator, all the participants begin to travel to other hoops and pick up bean bags (one at a time) and place it in their "home" hoop. No guarding of hoops is allowed. On a stop signal from the facilitator, all participants return to their "home" hoop and a count may be taken of bean bags at each hoop (scoring is optional). You could have two or more games going on at once.

Ha, Ha, Ha

Participants sit in a circle. Have the first person say "Ha", the second in turn says "ha, ha", the third, "ha, ha, ha", and so on around the circle. The ha's must be said without laughing. Those laughing while uttering their ha are out. The one staying the longest wins.

Vortex

Have participants form a circle by holding hands. One person drops one set of hands, as to make a line. The leader starts to slowly spiral inside the circle until the circle cannot go any further. The leader then turns around and walks in the opposite direction to the starting circle position.

Angels Dancing on the head of a pin

We may never know how many angels can dance on the head of a pin, but your challenge is to balance these 14 angels on the head of this pin.

Supplies:

- * One 4 inch nail, with a head on it, nailed securely into a 4 inch or larger square block of wood.

- * 14 additional nails of the same size.

The angels are common nails with heads, about 4 inches or so in length. All should be the same length.

The goal is to figure out how to balance all 14 nails on the head of the one that is already secured in the wood block.

The solution:

(1)lay one nail down on the table.

(2)take 12 nails and lay the heads across the shaft of the first nail in alternating directions, with the nail heads resting against the shaft of the first nail.

(3)lay the final nail across the 12 nails, in the same direction as the first nail.

(4)pick up the entire nail sandwich by the first and last nails and balance this nail sandwich on the nail in the wood.

Triangle Tag

Put the participants into groups of four or five. Two or three people link hands to form a circle and one stands in the middle. The person on the outside is to try and tag the person in the middle. Those forming the circle are trying to protect the person in the middle.

Cat and Mouse

Form a circle and pick two people, one cat and one mouse. Everyone else forms a circle with a space between members (enough for a person to get through safely). The people in the circle have formed a trap. Play begins with the cat on one side and the mouse on the opposite side outside the circle. The cat chases the mouse. Each time either the cat or mouse runs between two people in the circle, ONLY those two people link hands and close that entrance/exit. Play continues until, 1. the cat catches the mouse, or 2. all of the entrances/exits in the circle have been closed.

Elbow Tag

Everyone gets a partner and links arms. Two people are chosen, one to be “it”, and one to be chased. They unlink arms and play begins. The “it” begins chase by trying to tag his/her counterpart. The person chased can be chased indefinitely until they are caught, or they link up with someone who is already in a linked pair. When they link with someone, the person on the other end of the link detaches and becomes the “it” and begins chasing the person who was previously the “it”. Sounds a little confusing, but once play begins, it’ll become clear.

Push and Pull

Divide the group into pairs and ask each pair to face each other and to reach out their right hands. Each person grab’s their partner’s hand by making a C shape with their fingers and hooking hands with their thumbs loose. Tell the group the object is to touch your partner’s right shoulder with your hands that are connected without letting go. Tell the group the way to win the game is to have the most touches, try not to let on that the two people are a team until the end. Most people will think that they are going against their own partners and will be pushing against each other, but really the team with the most total touches wins.

Twenty-One

Divide the group into teams of 3 to 9. Each team appoints a counter who will add up the number of fingers held up by the group. Let the group know who will add up the number of fingers held up by the group. Tell the group there is no talking allowed for the remainder of the activity, with the exception of the counter. The counter may participate or watch. Each team stands in a circle, facing each other, with their hands behind their backs. The leader counts to three, on “three” each person holds out 0-10 fingers. The counter adds them up, if all the fingers together equal exactly 21 the team has won the round. If no one 21 everyone immediately puts their hands behind their backs and continues to play until one group reaches 21. Remember no talking.