

7. OUTDOOR GAMES

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Games play an essential role in the upbringing and educating children and teenagers. In today's every day life, with its business and a lot of stress, games and generally speaking physical activity seem to be a must in order to ensure children's harmonious development.

As we can observe, a lot of children today spend much of their spare time indoors, playing computer games, watching television or surfing the Internet. The problem is that such a way of relaxation may be detrimental to children's health causing obesity, depression, anxiety, attention disorders or problems with social interaction.

One way to combat obesity is to allow children plenty of outdoor playtime. Outdoor play gives children the opportunity to run, jump, climb, swim, dance and more, all of which provide aerobic exercise and strength training. Outdoor physical activity also strengthens the immune system and improves vitamin D levels, which can provide protection from osteoporosis and health conditions, such as heart disease and diabetes. Furthermore, being outdoors may also help children with their vision, as kids who spend more time outside during the day tend to have better distance vision than those who favor indoor activities.

It may be hard to accept that children could experience stress or suffer from conditions like depression or anxiety, but these issues are becoming more common for today's children, who have busy schedules with school and extracurricular activities. Physical activity in the form of outdoor play can help kids reduce their stress. Contact with nature can help reduce stress levels and positively impact conditions such as anxiety or attention deficit hyperactivity disorder. Therefore, outdoor play can help increase a child's ability to socially interact as well as reduce overall stress. Critical thinking skills and standardized test results are often higher in children who spend time outdoors.

Encouraging children to get plenty of outdoor play can provide intellectual stimulation, as well. Outdoor games encourage learning and problem-solving skills, which can help

children perform better in the classroom. They promote creativity, which children can apply to their academic learning, helping them see the material in another way. When youth are allowed to create and explore in the world around them - instead of limiting themselves to indoor activities - they can develop more competencies that lead to enhanced confidence and the ability to meet future challenges. Outdoor activities allow children to work through problems individually as well as in groups. They can share, negotiate, resolve conflicts and learn self-advocacy skills. Thus outdoor games can help children learn how to develop healthy relationships and to become leaders. All these skills help a child not only in the present, but build a good foundation for future endeavors.

All in all, it is difficult to overestimate the benefits of games for children and teenagers. They have a positive impact on the way the youth develop including their physical and intellectual growth. It goes without saying then that different kinds of outdoor activities should be incorporated in the curricula at schools of different level. With a little effort, some games can be adapted to be used during various classes, which will introduce freshness to a sometimes monotonous classroom routine and which will definitely make students more engaged and motivated.

Outdoor games

Semi-structured staged games – social activities and various creativity-based games

- Team games – social, movement, and sport activities
- Simulation games - participation in specific role-play, socio drama activities
- Strategic initiative games - clearly defined physical or intellectual task for a team or an individual.
- Musical, dramatic and creative fine arts games
- Psychological/reflective games – some of which may place a higher emotional demand on participants, for example ‘solo’

Below are some examples of games which can be adapted to different age groups, subjects and can well be conducted outside.

Movie Madness

Age group: all youth

Subjects: all subjects

Brief description:

Divide your group into teams. Make sure each team has an access to a camera or a phone with a camera. Tell each team that they have several hours to make their own movie (an adult or responsible teen can be chosen to film) or help the students make the film during your classes. You can give them a type of movie to make (action, sci-fi, comedy) - most will be comedy, no matter what type is given. They are to come up with the plot, write a script, and film the movie. You can decide together with the students on the length of the film. Then have them meet back to watch. Give bonus points for getting strangers involved, soundtrack, special effects, etc. Give them as much or as little help as you want. For more fun, allow no editing.

Friendly Feud

Age group: all youth

Subjects: all subjects

Materials Needed:

- teacher-prepared questions related to a topic of study or review (See ideas below for adapting this game to almost any curriculum topic or subject area.)

Lesson Plan:

"Friendly Feud" is an adaptation of the Family Feud game show students might see on television. The game is easy to adapt to almost any subject or curriculum topic. Start the game by arranging students into teams of four or five players. Determine the sequence in which teams will play. Determine the sequence in which the players on each team will

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play. Have each team appoint a captain who will act as the team's final-decision maker and spokesperson.

After the teams are organized, prepare to pose the first question of the game. In the first round, the captain of each team will be the only one who can answer the question. Read aloud the first question; call on the team captain who raises his or her hand first to answer the question. To earn a point, that captain must correctly answer the question within 5 seconds. If the captain who was called on does not answer the question within the time limit or if he or she gives an incorrect answer, the next team can "steal" the question. Members of that team can talk among themselves, then they must agree on the correct answer. The captain serves as spokesperson for the team. If the captain says the correct answer, his or her team earns the point. If the answer is incorrect, the next team has a chance to steal the question and earn the point, and so on.

The team that correctly answers the question earns the first chance to answer the next question -- which is posed to the *second* player on the team. An incorrect answer passes the question to the second player on the next team. A correct answer earns another point for the team *and* the first chance to answer the next question, which is posed to the *third* player on the team. The team can keep earning points until team members get a wrong answer or do not respond within the time limit.

At the end of the game, the team with the most points is the winner of "Friendly Feud."

Adapt the Game

This game can be adapted easily to almost any curriculum topic, subject area, or skill. For example:

- If you are teaching grammar, you might provide sentences (displayed on a chart or an overhead transparency) and have students find an error (*Bob and **me** went to the library after school.*), choose the correct form of a verb (*Suzie **was**, **were** the president of the class.*), identify the noun(s) (*She left yesterday for a **vacation** along the **shore**.*), and so on.

- If you are teaching math, questions might involve performing calculations, solving problems, identifying a missing number in a number sequence, solving greater-than or less-than problems, and so on.
- The game easily can be adapted as a spelling game. Simply provide a word and see which team is the first to correctly spell it.
- If you teach history or social studies, students might choose from among three dates the one associated with a famous event in history, match a president's name to a fact about him, identify the capital or continent of a country, and so on.

Assessment:

End the activity with a quiz that includes ten of the questions posed in the game. Students should correctly answer at least 8 of the 10 questions.

Will the Winners Lose?

Age group: all youth

Subjects: all Subjects

Materials needed:

- cards containing game instructions
- prepared cards (or a prepared list) with questions for review and reinforcement

Lesson Plan:

Before the Activity

Prepare two sets of cards in advance of the game:

- Prepare a set of 25 "scoring cards." On each of those cards, write a different instruction, for example:

- * Earn 100 points
 - * Lose a turn
 - * Take 50 points from the other team
 - * Earn 70 points
 - * Double your total points
 - * Take an extra turn
 - * Earn 500 bonus points
- On the other set of cards, write 25 questions related to the topic or skill(s) you want to review and reinforce. (Note: Questions might be created in a list form rather than on cards.)

Introduce the stack of scoring cards to students. Shuffle the cards. Put the stack face down on a desk/ground.

Arrange students into two or more teams. Decide which team goes first, and then pose the first question to a member of that team. If the student answers correctly, he or she draws a scoring card from the stack (or removes one from the bulletin board or chalkboard). The score on the card determines the score the student earns for his or her team.

- If the team has 0 (zero) points and the card selected reads "Earn 50 points," the team has a total of 50 points.
- If the card reads, "Double your present score," the team doubles its score of 0, for a total of 0 points.
- If the card reads, "Deduct 50 points from your score," the team subtracts 50 from 0, for a score of -50.

If the student answer incorrectly, the first student in another team to raise his or her hand earns the right to "steal" the question. A correct answer earns that student the opportunity to choose a scoring card.

Of course, the scoring card could carry a negative message, so answering a question correctly is no guarantee that a team will earn points; as a matter of fact, the team could

lose points! A team could conceivably answer all the questions correctly and lose the game. That's why the game is called "Will the Winners Lose?"

Adapt the Game

- You might have each student track the score for each team. Students track the team scores on their own. At the end of the game, each student who correctly calculated each team's final score might earn 50 bonus points for his or her team.
- You might introduce another rule. Since no team member knows whether the scoring card he or she selects will earn or lose points, you might allow students the option of *not* selecting a card when they answer correctly. If the student thinks the next card in the stack might carry a negative scoring instruction, he or she is free to pass and earn (or lose) no points for the team. Students only learn whether that was a good move or not if the next student to choose a card reveals the scoring instruction on the card.

Assessment:

End the activity with a quiz that includes ten of the questions posed in the game. Each student should correctly answer at least 8 of the 10 questions.

Silence

Age group: all youth

Subjects: all subjects

Brief description:

In Silence, silence *is* the name of the game. Students must arrange themselves in order without uttering a sound. For example, challenge students to silently sequence themselves according to height. The game can be adapted with very little preparation to fit almost any curriculum theme. For example, if the class is studying European capitals, count out

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enough sticky notes for each student. On each note, write the name of a capital. Each student wears a "capital" tag on his or her shirt. The students must silently sequence themselves in alphabetical order. You might make the game even more challenging by asking them to line up according to the country for each capital.

Options:

Students can create their own tags. They might write their birthdays on tags and arrange themselves in order from January 1 to December 31. They might write their seven-digit phone numbers as a seven-digit number and arrange themselves in numerical sequence.

Other categories: The possibilities are endless, but students might include fractions (arrange in order of size), clocks (arrange printed a.m. and p.m. clock faces in order of the time shown), or largest given country populations (arrange tags with the countries and their populations from largest to smallest).

Pass the Chicken!

Age group: all youth

Subjects: all subjects

Brief description:

In this game, nobody wants to hold the rubber chicken -- the game's only prop. To begin the game, all students sit in a circle. Select one person to be It. That person holds the rubber chicken. The teacher or a "caller" says to the person holding the chicken, "Name [five countries in Europe]. Pass the chicken!" As soon as the caller says, "Pass the chicken," the person holding the chicken passes it to the right. Students quickly pass the chicken around the circle. If it returns to the original holder before he or she can name five countries in Europe, the holder is still It. Otherwise, the person holding the chicken when It

finishes listing five countries is the new It. You should prepare the topic cards for this game in advance. Topics can relate to your curriculum or be general information topics. The student who is It must name five items in the called-out category in order to get rid of the dreaded chicken!

Some Suggested Topics:

- authors of children's books
- countries
- sports teams
- things that grow in the desert
- vegetables
- cartoon characters
- musical groups
- rivers
- large bodies of water
- animals
- cities in [your country]

Outdoor play for small children:

The youngest students will particularly appreciate any kind of outdoor activity. Below are some ideas to use while working with Primary School students:

- A nature walk is a great way to enhance children's appreciation of the natural environment. Ask them to tell you what they're seeing, hearing, and smelling. Encourage them to touch – to discover the smoothness of a rock, the roughness of

bark, and the fragility of a dried leaf. For young children, these are science experiences.

- Set up an obstacle course with old tires, large appliance boxes, and tree stumps. Moving through it will teach important concepts like over, under, through, and around.
- A "listening" walk makes for a wonderful sound discrimination activity. As you walk with the children, point out the sounds of birds, passing cars, whistling wind, even your footsteps on the sidewalk. What sounds can the children identify on their own? Which are loud and which are soft? Which are high and which are low? What are their favorite sounds? Bring along a tape recorder so the children can try to identify the sounds at a later time!
- Bring a portable boom box outdoors and let the children experience the joy of dancing in a natural environment!
- Try "water painting," in which children paint the side of a building with a brush and a bucket of water. It exercises arms and upper torso while also teaching about wet and dry, light and dark, and evaporation.
- Chasing bubbles gives children a chance to run. You can discuss the colours of the bubbles and make it a simple science class.

Some ideas for PE classes:

Dragon

Split the group into two parts. Get them into line and have them wrap their arms around the waist of the person in front of them forming a long chain. Stick a rag or handkerchief in the back pocket of the last person. The goal is for the front person of one group to get the "tail" of the other, while the tail of the group tries to avoid getting caught. Can be done indoors as well if you have enough room.

Sharks and Minnows

This game is good for all ages and it takes about 15-20 minutes. Choose a volunteer from the group to be a shark. Then split the rest of the group into two sections. One group lined up 20 metres away from the other group, which is also lined up. The groups should be facing one another and the shark should be in the middle. You should also set up sideline boundaries to prevent cheating. When the shark says swim both groups run across to the other side trying not to get tagged by the shark. If a person is tagged then he/she stops where he/she is and stands still. Now they become the shark's helpers. They cannot move their feet, but they can reach with their arms to try and tag the other minnows (the people running across). Once everybody is either across to the other side or tagged, then the shark says swim again. The shark and his helpers tag more people. This continues until there is one person left. This person becomes the new shark.

Cats in the Corner

Mark off a square playing area with cones, and have one player stand in the middle with a ball. Have the rest of the children spread themselves out between the four corners. When the player in the middle yells, "Cats in the Corner!" the children at the corners must sprint to a different corner of the square while trying not to be hit by the ball. Any player hit with the ball has to sit out the remainder of the round. The last cat left standing gets to be the ball thrower in the next game.

Blanket Volleyball

Divide children into teams of four players, and give each player a blanket. One player can hold each corner. Teams must then use their blankets to launch and catch the ball. Teams must move together to put their blanket in position to catch incoming balls. Use a volleyball, beach ball or playground ball. You can set up the game with two teams like a game of volleyball, or with more teams standing in a circle and simply launching the ball to each other.

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SOURCE:

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