

Suggested Recreational Activities



Relays and Other Races

Relays work well when other games may not. They can be quickly set up and can be done on the spur of the moment. Simple relays involve a flag carried around a marker and passed to the next person in line, with one to three equal lines of players. But the relays can become more complicated and made more challenging and interesting. If players are tired, go for simpler relays; if they're full of energy, get creative. In a relay, only one person is running at a time; the others, while excitedly cheering on their teammate, are actually resting. Oftentimes, relays are a good time filler at the end of a session. Here are some relay ideas; you can come up with many more:



- **Balloons.** Batting a balloon around a marker.
- **Tightrope walk.** Lay out a rope (straight or winding) on the ground. Players must “walk” on the rope to the other end and back, and their feet must be placed on the rope. You might use a “crossing” of ropes to make it more interesting. Players who fall off of the rope must start over.



- **Paper airplane race.** Players make paper airplanes and fly them from the starting line to the finish line. It will probably take a number of throws.
- **Spiders.** Players walk on all fours (hands and feet) around the course.
- **Crabs.** Players walk on all fours—belly up—around the course.
- **Inchworms.** A ball is carried around the course and to the back of the line, then passed (alternating) over heads and through legs (over.. under.. over.. under) to the front of the line and the next runner. Or the ball is passed over and under to the back, and the rear person carries it to the front and starts it back again, until the line is back to its original order.

- **Water brigade relay.** Fill buckets by passing water down a line of players with paper cups. The winner needs to have the most water at the end, spilling the least.

Cat and Mouse

Form a circle. Choose two players—the cat is outside the circle, and the mouse is inside the circle. When the cat moves into the circle, the mouse exits, and the cat must follow the same path the mouse takes, weaving in and out of the circle, and tag the mouse. Variations could have the circle with joined hands, opening and closing “mouse holes” by raising and lowering hands with a chant as the mouse and cat scramble through it.

Steal the Bacon

In this game, pairs of would-be thieves try to steal the coveted “bacon” out from under their opponents’ noses and make it home without being tagged. Form two teams with an equal number of players and line up facing the other team. Starting at the right end of each line, the players should count off down their line, so players on the opposite team with the same numbers are diagonally across from each other. The leader places the “bacon” (which can be a flag or ball or stick, etc.) midway between the lines and calls numbers at random. When their number is called, players on each team race to get the “bacon” and return to their line without being tagged by the person on the opposite team who has the same number. If the “thief” makes it back to their place in line with the “bacon,” the team scores a point. If the player is tagged before getting back to their place in line with the “bacon,” no point is scored, and the “bacon” is returned to the middle for the next round of play. The first team to win a predetermined number of points wins the game. This game is very popular with older children and teens.

Games of Tag

Octopus



- I am the Octopus!
- Come swim in my ocean!

Mark the rectangular boundaries of the “ocean,” being sure that the ocean isn’t too wide. (The best way to determine the correct width is to have everyone hold hands and spread out across the field.) To play the game, the “fish” line up at one end of the ocean, with the octopus standing in the middle of the ocean. When the octopus calls “I am the Octopus! Come (swim, hop, walk, run) in my ocean,” the fish must cross the ocean in the manner instructed without being tagged. If the octopus tags a fish, the fish becomes “seaweed.” The seaweed must then keep one foot planted while they try to reach out and tag the fish running by, which turns them into seaweed, too. Once the fish reach the other side of the ocean, the octopus and seaweed call out to the fish again, and the contest starts again. When the last fish becomes seaweed, the game is over, and the last fish tagged becomes the new octopus.

Amoeba Tag

Two people are “it.” They hold hands and chase people; the person they catch joins the chain by linking hands. When another person is caught, they can stay together or split 2 and 2; they must split into even numbers and can link together at will. This game is played until no one is left.

Elbow Tag

Players spread around the field in pairs, with their arms hooked. Someone is “it,” and another player without a partner is the one chased. The one being chased can hook onto one of the pairs scattered on the field, in which case the second person in that pair becomes the new person being chased. When a tagging occurs, the roles simply reverse. No immediate tag-backs are allowed.

Flashlight Tag

This game is played at night and mixes the popular games, hide and seek and tag. The person who is “it” waits at the “jail,” counting to a high number while everyone else hides. Then, armed with a flashlight, this person searches for the others, who may be switching hiding spots. The flashlight must remain on at all times and may not be covered. When “it” spots someone, he or she must use the flashlight to get a close enough look at the person to identify him or her and call out his or her name.



What happens when a person gets caught gives rise to variations of this exciting game. One variation is to pass the flashlight to the caught person, so he or she becomes “it.” Another version is to send each caught person to “jail” to wait until everyone is caught. The first person caught then becomes the new “it.” Another variation is to have more than one person (or a team) be “it.” With this configuration, people who are not “it” can tag other people (or team members) free from “jail.” One of the “its” may stay nearby to guard the “jail.”

Players will find new and interesting ways to improve their play. One such strategy is to watch where “it(s)” has already searched, and then switch to that hiding spot. One might also find success by following “it(s).” For added challenge, players may camouflage themselves with dark clothing and use face paint.



Capture the Flag



Form two teams. Team 1 has the front yard, and Team 2 had the back yard, or a field is split between the two teams. The teams are given a time period, 5 minutes or so, to hide their flag in their part of the yard.

Optional: During this time period, spies are sent out to see were the flag is hidden. “Look-outs” may also be sent out to catch the spies. When the flag is hidden, you call out that you are finished. Then you try to get the other team’s flag. If you get caught and tagged by the opponent on their territory, you go to jail and can only be freed by a teammate who grabs you when your opponent isn’t looking.

The first team to capture the flag wins. In most versions, you have to get the opponent’s flag and bring it back to your side.

Fun with Balloons

Chicken Pops

Make some beaks out of party hats with a pin attached at the end. Then take a balloon bouquet of about 20 balloons for each team and place at one end of the room. Next, have the teams at the other end of the room (when you say “go,”) to walk like a chicken to the balloons, “peck” out a balloon, and then return. Then the next player on the team does the same. This continues until all of the team’s balloons are popped. If a player pops more than one balloon, they get a penalty point for each additional balloon they pop. The team that finishes first and has the fewest penalty points wins.



Balloon Battle

Tie a balloon to one of each player’s ankles. Then everyone has to try to stomp on everyone else’s balloons, while keeping their own balloon from getting stomped on. Players cannot pick up the balloon with their hands. When someone’s balloon is popped, they are out of the game. The last one with their balloon intact is the winner. You might want to outlaw people simply standing and holding their balloon up in the air so no one can get to their balloon. Nine-inch balloons are the best size for this game.

Balloonatic

Blow up two long sausage balloons, and divide the group into two teams. If you have a lot of people, use more teams, with a minimum of four people per team.

Line the teams up in neat rows. Give a balloon to the leader of each row, who must place it between his or her knees, pointing forward.

On the word “go,,” the teams must pass the balloon down their row, from person to person, between their knees, as quickly as possible. The balloon may not be dropped or burst, and hands may not be used. If the balloon is dropped, it must be picked up between the knees. A burst balloon is replaced by a new one at the front of the row.

Miscellaneous Games

Cattle Drive

Form up the children into “cows” (two children, with one being the head [hands forming horns] and one being the rear [hands on other child’s hips]). Cows must walk unless it’s a stampede. Cowboys have one hand on their hip and the other hand twirls a pretend rope; cowboys must skip. There should be at least three or four times as many cows as cowboys. When a cowboy rides alongside a cow and says “Gitalong little doggie,” the cow must move with the cowboy, and becomes part of the cowboy’s herd (which stays together unless there is a stampede—first cow becomes the leader). “Whoa, doggies” stops a herd’s movement. Cowboys try to gather herds and drive them to Dodge. Cows just try to “wander and eat grass.” Cowboys can and probably should work together.

Options (the Game Leader can make some of these calls to make the game harder):

- “Stampede!” All the cows will break free from their cowboys and run until tagged by a cowboy.
- “Rustlers!” The cowboys must change herds, or a cowboy can try to steal another’s herd.
- “Mavericks!” Unescorted herds may reverse themselves (heads become tails) and wander from the herd.
- “River Crossings!” or “Dust Storms!” requires two cowboys per herd to keep the cows together or to cross a line.
- “Night Riders!” Cowboys must circle their herd and sing!

Popcorn

You need a parachute (a sheet will work)—no strings—with a hole in the middle, and 20 or more bouncing balls (the plastic kind you find in a toy store)—one for each player. Number the balls, and assign one ball to each player. Every player places his or her ball on the parachute, and everyone grabs and lifts the parachute with two hands. Then everyone starts (usually after the group leader says “GO!”) pumping the chute up and down to remove the balls. The player with their ball on the chute last, wins.

Resources

www.eldrbarry.net/vbs/games.htm

www.disbelieving.com/Games/gamesb.html

<http://balloons.tzvi.com/popping.html>

4-H Recreation Leaders Handbook



