



Playground Activity Leaders in Schools

Games

These PALS program resources were created and approved for use only within Ontario, Canada. The resources are developed and distributed by Peel Region, Peel Public Health, Mississauga, ON peelregion.ca/health/schools

Acknowledgement

PALS was originally developed by Peel Public Health in 2003 after a review of existing playground leadership programs and consultations with other health departments.

PALS was adapted from the Recess Recreation Leaders program by Deb Cockerton, Behaviour Therapist and Child and Youth Practitioner. All content has been reproduced with permission.

Since the program's inception, many public health units in Ontario have adapted it for use in partnership with local school board partners. In 2023 a Provincial working group was formed to refresh the PALS program based on current public health evidence and standards for accessibility, equity, diversity and inclusion.

This program has been updated with contributions from:

- Haldimand-Norfolk Health Unit
- Haliburton, Kawartha, Pine Ridge District Health Unit
- Halton Region Public Health
- Hamilton Public Health Services
- KFL&A Public Health
- Lambton Public Health
- Middlesex-London Health Unit
- Niagara Region Public Health
- Niagara Region Program Specialist–Indigenous Health
- Niagara Region Youth Advisory Committee
- Niagara Region Youth Engagement Specialist
- North Bay Parry Sound District Health Unit
- Northwestern Health Unit
- Peel Public Health
- Peel Public Health, Education and Curriculum Consultant
- Peterborough Public Health
- Porcupine Health Unit
- Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit
- Thunder Bay District Health Unit
- Timiskaming Health Unit
- Toronto Public Health

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Tips for fun and safety when leading PALS games



When explaining a game, show instead of tell

One of the most important parts of leading a successful recess game is effectively explaining how to play. Demonstrate the rules of a game to avoid confusion and check for understanding.

Put a stop to conflicts before they start

Conflicts are inevitable during recess. One way to settle disagreements is to make a game of Rock, Paper, Scissors the deciding factor. At the beginning of each recess period, make this rule clear. It's quick, fair, and most importantly, you can't argue with the results of Rock, Paper, Scissors!

Eliminate team captains

Being picked last for a team is not a good feeling. Keep recess fun for everyone by eliminating captains and not letting students make their own teams. Instead, it is the leader's role to create the teams. This way, the teams will be evenly balanced, and no one will feel left out. Make it more interesting by naming the teams after animals (Team Cobra vs. Team Narwhal) or other fun names (Team Snappy vs Team Sizzle).

Map out your play space

People running into each other is one of the biggest causes of accidents on the playground. Reduce these incidents by clearly and consistently mapping out the play space for the players and checking the area for any safety concerns (for example, tripping hazards). Also, check the weather conditions ahead of time to make sure it is safe to play outdoors.

Before playing a tag game, demonstrate and remind players about safety

For example, players are to only use a "light touch" like butterfly wings to tag someone. Unsafe tagging, such as a hard contact, might cause the person being tagged to fall. Refer to school board policies and [Ophea Safety Standards](#) for additional information.

Teach teamwork

Teamwork is important at recess and in all aspects of life! Create a positive climate on the playground. Through organized recess games, students learn to communicate, cooperate, and include others. Encourage students to cheer on their teammates during play and to high-five members of the other team when a game ends.

Make all games inclusive

There's always room for one more! Modifying games to ensure participation of all interested students is important. Refer to the strategies on the next page. Also, whenever possible, modify games to provide a re-entry strategy for students who are "out." Such as, for example, arm circles after being tagged. Doing this provides an extra dose of physical activity and keeps all players engaged. Most games can be adjusted to make them simpler or more challenging by changing the type of movement players are to use (for example, switch from running to skipping, hopping, wheeling, etc.). And always keep an eye out for other students you could invite to join the game!

For more information on [providing inclusive environments](#), refer to Ophea.

Suggested PALS equipment list

The following list outlines basic equipment that is recommended, but not required, to play many PALS games. Most games are simple enough that game modifications and equipment substitutions (based on budget and equipment availability) can easily be made.

- 4 to 6 playground balls
- 4 to 6 foam balls
- 2 soccer balls
- 12 hula hoops
- 15 to 20 beanbags
- 24 pylons (can be different sizes)
- 6 to 8 fairly long skipping ropes
- 15 to 18 tennis balls (or similar items)
- 8 Frisbees or other flying discs in at least 2 different colours
- 4 scarves or bandanas
- A rubber chicken
- Sidewalk chalk



Other items to consider

- Bright vests, T-shirts, or something else to distinguish PALS leaders on the playground.
- A tote or equipment bag clearly labelled PALS to store the equipment.
- Pool noodles (cut in half) to use for safe tagging during games.
- Naturalized items found on your school's playground or naturalized play areas.

Encourage regular hand washing and cleaning of PALS equipment

To help prevent the spread of illness and keep students healthy, encourage them to wash their hands often using proper hand hygiene.

Follow established school board and school procedures for cleaning and disinfecting PALS equipment.

Cultural games and games of Indigenous heritage

Cultural games play a significant role in educating children and youth about the norms and values of a culture. In addition to the games included in this guide, PALS facilitators may extend the program by providing opportunities for student leaders to gain a deeper understanding of the history and significance of games in culture, and in turn to share those learnings with other students.

Schools implementing the PALS program may consider consulting their school boards' Indigenous education leads or inviting representatives from a local Friendship Centre to meet with PALS leaders to discuss the importance and purpose of games in Indigenous culture.

Local Indigenous partners and community members may be willing to introduce the students to new games in a culturally appropriate way, including the background and cultural teachings incorporated into the games. If possible, your school could consider inviting Indigenous education leads, Indigenous partners and/or community members to share the same lessons and game introduction at a school-wide assembly.

School communities are representative of many diverse cultures. Schools may consider inviting students, staff, parents and other members of the school community to share their own ideas for games that celebrate the diversity of culture within your local school community. Consider timing of introducing such games and learning with holy days, holidays, celebrations or days of significance.

Use the templates provided at the end of this guide to “Add Your Own PALS Games.”

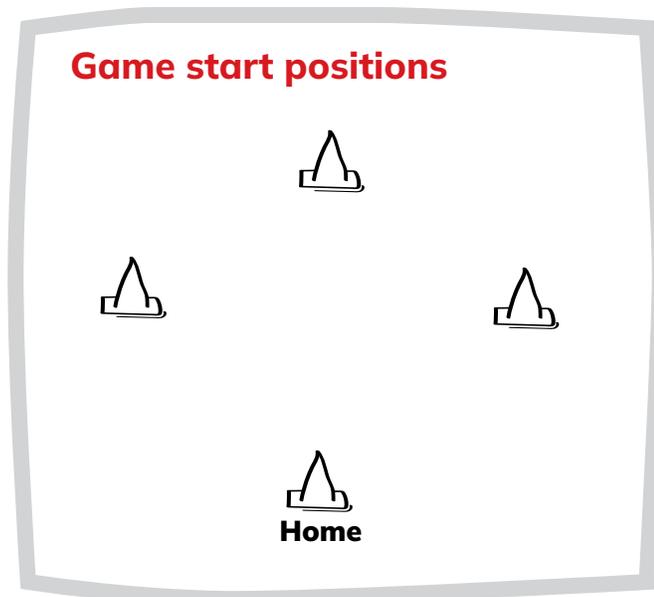
Alaskan Baseball

What's needed

- 2 teams of 5 to 10 players each
- 1 large ball
- 4 pylons for bases and home plate

Set up

- Set up the pylons for the 3 bases and home plate.
- The game is like real baseball. One team is up at bat and the other team is in the outfield.



How to play

Infield Team

- The first player up at bat kicks or throws the ball to the outfield.
- The entire team runs around the bases counting each run until the outfield team yells “**STOP.**”
- When the outfield team yells “**STOP,**” the team adds up the number of runs.
- The team lines up again behind home plate.

Outfield team

- All of the players in the outfield team chase the ball after the infield team throws/kicks it.
- The first player to reach the ball holds it over their head. The rest of the team lines up behind that player.
- The first player passes the ball over their head to the second player who passes it between their legs to the next player. Repeat this until the ball gets to the last player.
- When the ball gets to the last player the team sits down and yells “**STOP.**”
- Teams trade places after three players “**bat.**”

Source: Playground Activity Leaders in Schools (PALS) Games, Peel Region.

Baseball Round-up

What's needed

- 5 or more players
- 1 ball for each player

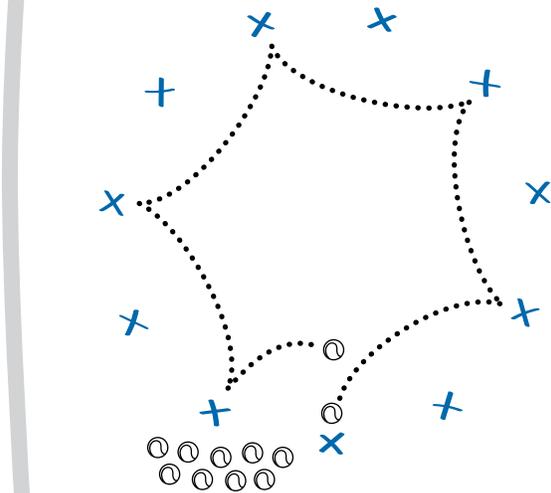
Set up

Players form a circle.

How to play

- Start with one ball. The player holding the ball tosses it to the player two spots to their right (for example, Player One has the ball and passes it to Player Three).
- When the ball gets back to the first player, add another ball.
- Keep adding balls until everyone has one.

Game play positions



Variation

In dry weather conditions, play with a larger ball and roll it or kick it between players.



Source: Canadian Intramural Recreation Association newsletters

Beat the Ball

What's needed

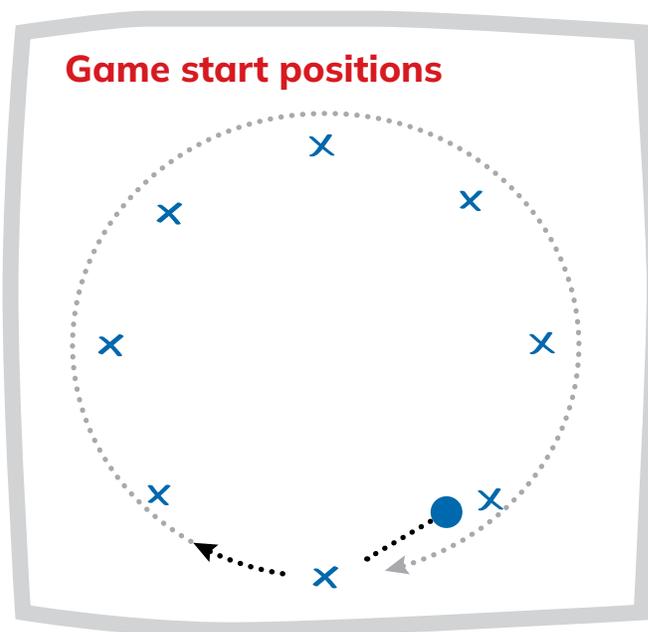
- 5** or more players
- 1** large ball
- 1** open area

Set up

Players stand in a circle.

How to play

- One player rolls or passes the ball to the player next to them and then runs in the opposite direction around the outside of the circle.
- The ball continues to be rolled or passed around the circle as the runner races back to their spot trying to beat the ball.
- Each player takes a turn running around the circle.



Variation

Have players jump, skip, walk or other forms of movement instead of running. Any item can be used to pass around the circle.

Source: Toronto Public Health. Games (Go Play Ball). Accessed August 14, 2023. bit.ly/toronto-go-play-tag

Chain Dodgeball

What's needed

- 10** or more players
- 1** ball
- 1** large playing area

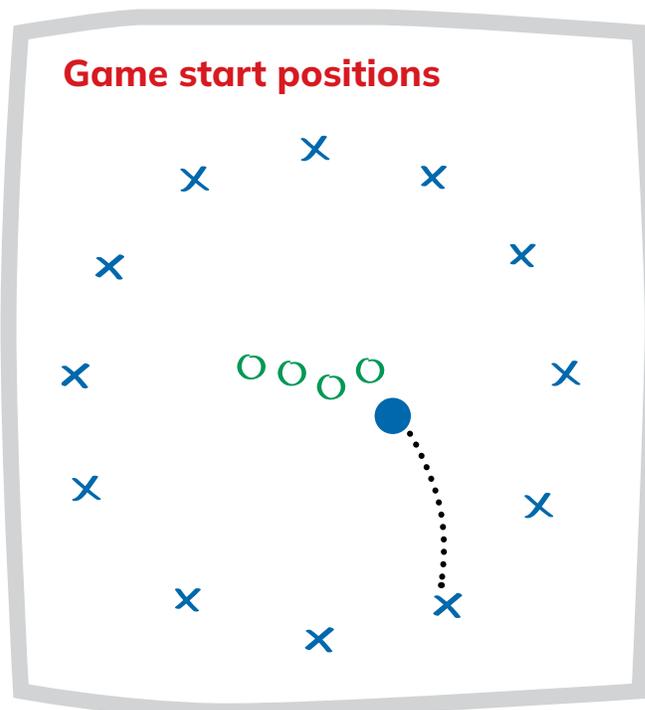
Set up

- Choose 3 to 4 players that will start in the centre of the game. Remaining players, form a large circle. One player in this circle starts with the ball.
- The 3 to 4 chosen players go into the centre of the circle and hold hands to form a chain. Decide on the front and back of the chain.



How to play

- Goal is for the players in the circle to tag the player at the back of the chain below the waist with the ball.
- The other members of the chain try to protect the player at the back of the chain with their bodies while still in a chain (for example, blocking and deflecting throws from the outer circle members).
- If the player at the back of the chain is hit by the ball below the waist, that player joins the outer circle and the player who threw the ball joins the front of the chain.
- The player who was previously second from the back in the chain is now the new back of the chain, and the new target for throws from the players in the circle.



Variation

Add more than one ball.

Source: Adapted from Co-operative Games for People Who Love to Play by Alan Davies.

Crab Soccer

What's needed

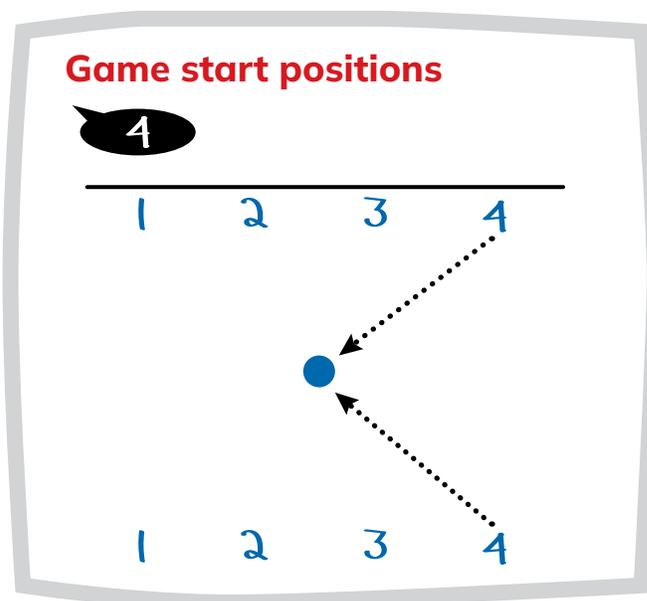
- 2 teams of 4 or more players
- 1 large ball, chalk

Set up

- Divide all players into 2 teams, giving each player on a team a number.
- Draw a goal line for each team on the ground or use existing lines.
- Place the ball in the middle of the playing area and have the teams line up facing each other with the ball between them.

How to play

- The leader calls a number and the 2 players with that number crab walk to the ball and try to move it across the other team's goal line.
- The other players can help their teammates but cannot score. Only the crab can score.
- When a team scores, the ball goes back to the middle and a new number is called.



Variation

Call more than one crab number at a time.

Crocodile Island

☀ Outdoor 🏠 Indoor
Ages: Kinder, Primary, Junior

What's needed

- 6 to 12 players
- 1 soft ball
- chalk, hula-hoops, tape, or long skipping rope
- 1 open area

Set up

- Make 3 islands (circles) on the ground with chalk, hula-hoops, tape, or rope.
- One player stands on each island. They are the Castaways.
- Other players are Crocodiles and stand around the islands.



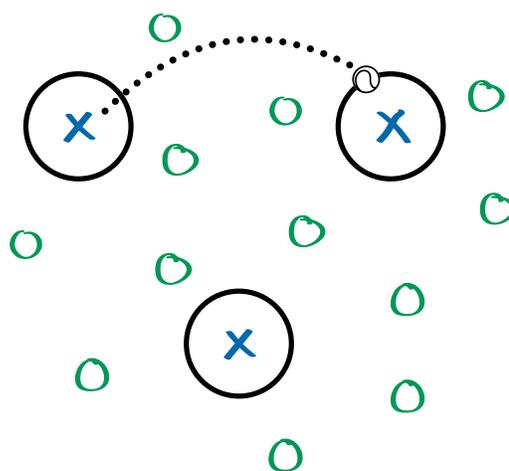
How to play

- The Castaways throw the ball to each other without stepping off their island. The Crocodiles try to get the ball.
- If a Crocodile gets the ball, they change places with the Castaway who threw the ball.

Variation

Change the number of players, size of circles, sizes of balls.

Game start positions



Source: Toronto Public Health. Games (Go Play Ball). Accessed August 14, 2023. bit.ly/toronto-go-play-ball

Elephant Ball

☀ Outdoor 🏠 Indoor
Ages: Kinder, Primary, Junior

What's needed

- 8 or more players
- 1 large ball

Set up

- Players form a circle standing with feet shoulder width apart and their feet touching the person beside them.
- Select someone to be in the middle.



How to play

- The player in the middle tries to roll the ball out of the circle through the other player's legs.
- The players in the circle attempt to block the ball by making a "trunk" (bend at the waist, let arms dangle and cup hands together as if making a volleyball serve).
- If the ball goes through someone's legs, that player goes into the middle.

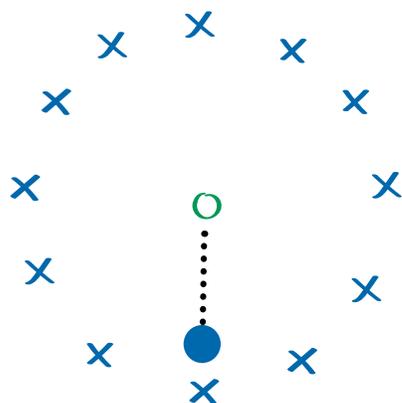
Variation

Have no player in the middle of the circle, just have players in the circle attempting to swing their trunk to hit the ball through another player's legs.

- If the ball goes between a player's legs, they go down to using one arm for their trunk and must put the other arm behind their back.
- If the ball goes between their legs again, they must stand with no trunk.
- If it goes through again, they must turn backwards and make a new 2-handed trunk.
- They would next go down to a one-hand backward trunk and finally stand backward with no trunk.
- If the ball goes through their legs one more time the game is over, and everyone starts again.

Add a second ball into the circle.

Game start positions



Source: Playground Activity Leaders in Schools (PALS) Games, Peel Region

Frozen Corn

What's needed

- 2 teams of 4 or more players each
- 10 to 20 tennis balls (number depends on team size).

Set up

Divide the group into 2 teams and give each team half the tennis balls. Each team starts with 10 points and needs a team name.

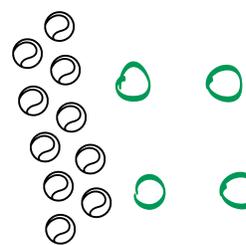
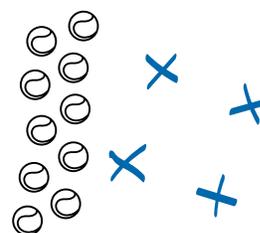
How to play

- The object of the game is for the teams to keep the balls moving only using their feet.
- If the leader spots a ball that is not moving, they yell "**Team Name Frozen Corn 3, 2, 1!**"
- If someone from that team does not have the ball moving by the time the leader gets to "**1,**" that team loses a point.
- The team with the most points left at the end of the time wins.

Variation

- Any size ball will work.
- Allow hands to be used as well.

Game start positions



Guard the Gate

☀ Outdoor 🏠 Indoor
Ages: Kinder, Primary, Junior

What's needed

- 10 or more players
- 1 large ball

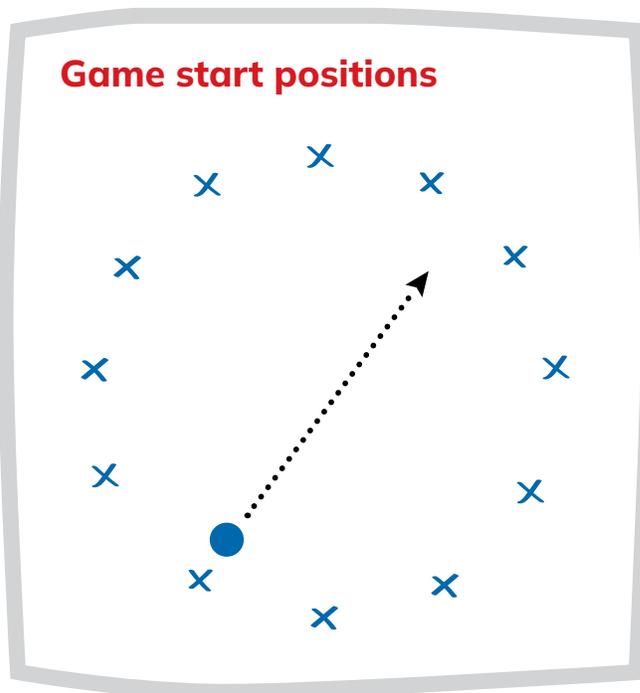
Set up

Players form a circle standing an arm's length away from each other.

How to play

- One player starts by rolling the ball in the circle, trying to send it through any space between players (spaces are gates).
- Each player guards their own gate (the space to their right) to stop the ball from going through.
- Players who allow the ball through their gate must run around the outside of the circle 3 times, then return and continue playing.
- Play continues while players are running.

Game start positions



Source: From Collins Gem Children's Games, The Diagram Group.

Humpty Dumpty

What's needed

- 2 teams of 4 or more players
- 2 pylons
- 2 beanbags
- 1 large ball

Set up

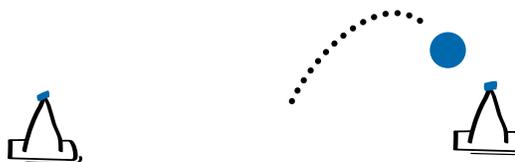
Divide players into teams. Place the pylons at opposite ends of the playing area. Place a beanbag (“**Humpty Dumpty**”) on top of each pylon.

How to play

- Each team tries to knock the other team’s beanbag off the pylon with the ball.
- The ball can be passed, and players can move throughout the playing space, but once a player catches a ball they must stop and cannot run again until after they pass it to a teammate.
- If a player knocks the beanbag off the pylon, their team gets a point. The first team with 10 points wins.



Game play positions



Variation

Add more balls for more activity.

SPUD

What's needed

- 4 or more players
- 1 large bouncy ball

Set up

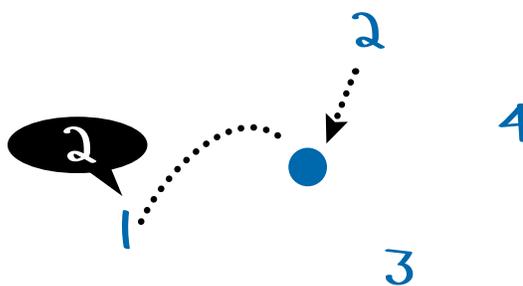
Assign each player a different number.

How to play

- One player tosses the ball into the air and yells a number. That player catches the ball and all the other players run away.
- Once the ball is caught the player yells “SPUD.” All players must stop.
- The player with the ball picks a target and tosses the ball at the player, attempting to tag them. The target must keep their feet on the ground, but they may twist, duck or try to catch the ball.
- If the ball makes contact, the target player receives an “S” (or the following letter in the word SPUD). This player throws the ball in the air and calls a number for the next round.
- If the ball misses the player or is caught, then the player who threw the ball receives an “S” (or the following letter in the word SPUD). This player throws the ball in the air again and calls another number.
- When a player has all the letters to spell SPUD, they are out of the game. The last player wins.



Game play positions



Variation

- The player with the ball can take 3 large steps towards their target before they toss the ball.
- The player gently kicks the ball at their target's feet instead of tossing it.

Source: Playground Activity Leaders in Schools (PALS) Games, Peel Region.

Towers

What's needed

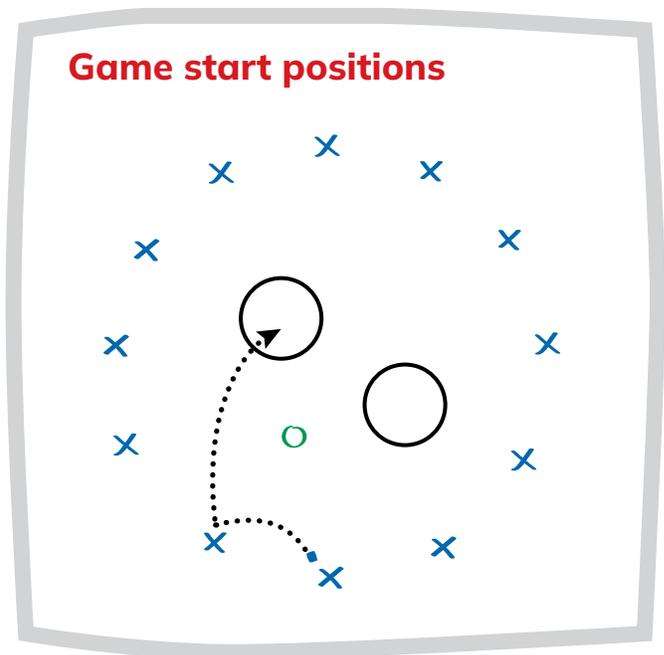
- 10** or more players
- 1** medium ball or bean bag
- 2** buckets or hula hoops

Set up

- Players form a circle standing arm's length away from each other.
- Place the 2 buckets in the circle – about 1.5 meters (5 feet) apart. Players should be about 3 metres (10 feet) from any bucket.
- One player is "**It**."

How to play

- Players in the circle try to put the ball in one of the buckets while "**It**" tries to stop players.
- Players can pass the ball between them to try to get a clearer shot at a bucket.
- The player that gets a ball in a bucket becomes the new "**It**."



Variation

- Change the size of the buckets.
- Change the size of the objects being thrown in the bucket.
- Add more balls/objects.

Ultimate Frisbee

What's needed

- 10** or more players
- 1** Frisbee, or other flying disc, or ball
- 1** large playing area

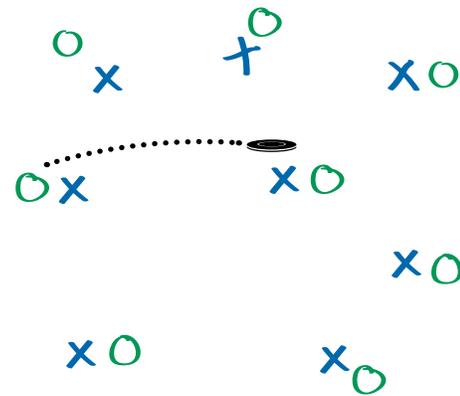
Set up

- Divide the group into 2 teams.
- All players scatter and each player is assigned to guard a player on the other team.

How to play

- The object is for one team to make 5 passes without having the Frisbee or ball dropped or knocked away.
- The player with the Frisbee (or ball) cannot take more than 3 steps and cannot hold the Frisbee for more than 5 seconds. If either happens, the other team gets the Frisbee.
- Five passes between team members equals one point.
- The team with the highest number of points at the end of the time wins.

Game start positions



Variation

Any item can replace the Frisbee to vary the difficulty of throwing and catching.



Four Corners

What's needed

No equipment needed

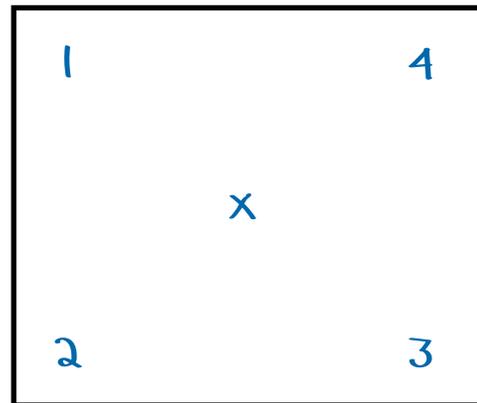
Set up

- Designate each corner of the room or play area with a number (1 through 4).
- Select one player to be the first guesser and have them put their head down on a desk, or just close/cover their eyes.

How to play

- Once the guesser has their eyes closed, the rest of the players quickly and quietly move to any of the four corners while the guesser counts to 10 out loud.
- At the count of 10, without lifting their head or opening their eyes, the guesser calls out one of the four numbers, and anyone standing in that corner is eliminated.
- The guesser covers their eyes and again counts out loud to 10. Players who were in the other three corners can now move to a new corner or choose to remain in the same corner.
- Repeat these steps until only one player remains.
- The last player standing gets to be the guesser for the next round.

Game start positions



Variation

- Have eliminated players make a circle around the guesser and march on the spot while the guesser is counting, to make it harder for them to hear people moving from corner to corner.
- Use different types/levels of movement to get from corner to corner.

Fox and Rabbit

What's needed

- 5 or more players
- 2 playground balls of different colours

Set up

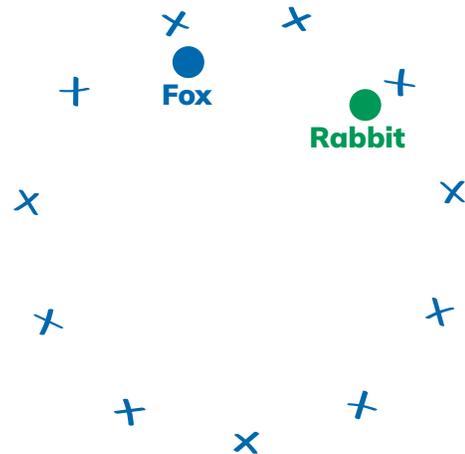
- Have players stand in a circle. Hand the balls out to 2 different people on opposite sides of the circle.
- Designate which ball is the fox and which ball is the rabbit.
- Explain that each ball is like a hot potato and should not be held for more than one second.



How to play

- The object of the game is for the fox to catch the rabbit.
- Both the fox and rabbit move by being passed (not thrown) around the circle in any direction. They can switch direction at any time.
- If a player is holding the **“fox,”** they should pass the ball to the person beside them who is closer to the **“rabbit.”**
- The player holding the **“rabbit”** should pass to someone farther away from the **“fox.”**
- When the **“fox”** catches the **“rabbit,”** start a new round.

Game start positions



Variation

To make the game more challenging, you can have each player take a step back to make the circle larger or pass the ball with their feet instead of their hands.



Hide the Beanbag

What's needed

- 1 beanbag or other similar sized item

Set up

Players scatter around in play area.

How to play

- Select one player to be the 'searcher.'
- While the searcher covers their eyes or leaves the room, another player hides a beanbag somewhere in the room or play space.
- The group jogs in place as the searcher looks for the beanbag. When the searcher gets closer to the beanbag, the group jogs in place faster. When the searcher moves away, the group jogs slower. When the searcher is right by the beanbag the group should be running very quickly in place.
- Once the searcher finds the beanbag, they get to hide the beanbag for the next round and a new searcher is selected.

Game start positions

Searcher



Joggers



Variation

Split the group into 2 and select a searcher from each group. Have the 2 searchers compete to see who can find the bean bag the quickest by following the 'instructions' given by their group's jogging speed.



Higher or Lower

What's needed

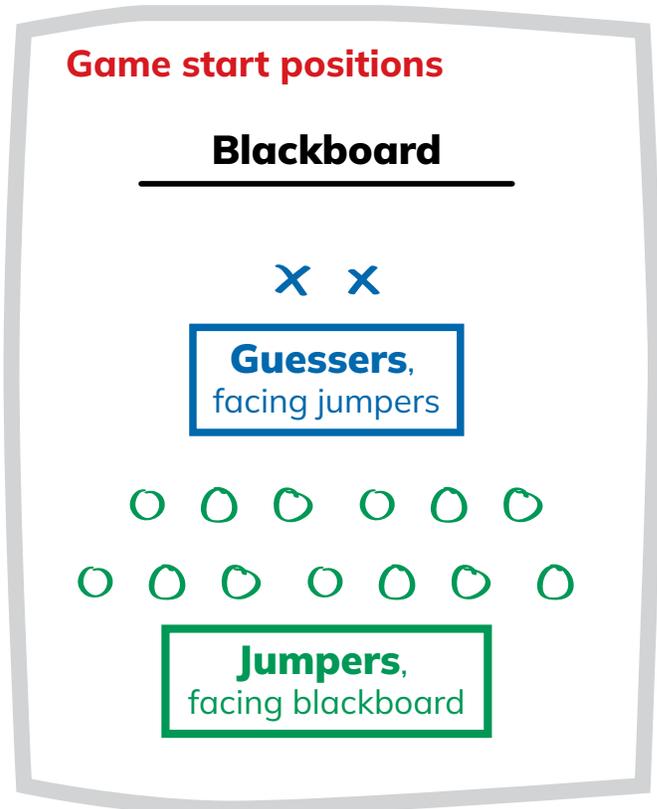
- 1 chalk or dry erase marker
- 1 blackboard, whiteboard, or smartboard screen

Set up

- Select 2 players to be the first '**guessers**' and have them turn their backs to the blackboard or smartboard.
- Write any number between 1 and 100 on the blackboard.

How to play

- After the secret number is written on the board, the 2 players who can't see the number take turns trying to guess it.
- The rest of the class tells the guessers if their guess is too high or too low by jumping in the air to indicate they need to guess higher and touching their toes to indicate they need to guess a lower number.
- Players continue to jump or touch their toes until the next guess is made.
- The guesser who correctly identifies the number gets to write the next number on the board.
- Select 2 new guessers and continue playing.



Variation

Let the winner choose 2 new exercises to indicate higher or lower for the following round (for example bending squats and 'raise the roof' arm extensions).



Human Tic Tac Toe

What's needed

- 9 chairs (or carpet squares, hula hoops, etc.)

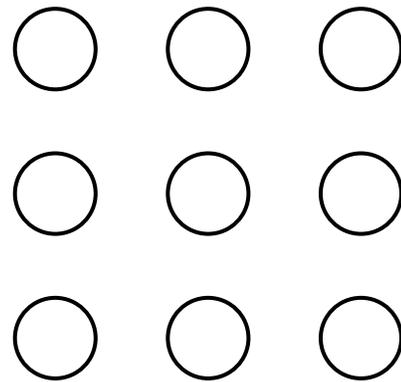
Set up

- Place nine chairs in a 3x3 square formation in the room, leaving enough room to walk between all of the chairs.
- Split the players into 2 teams. One team will be X's and the other will be O's.

How to play

- Without speaking to the rest of the team, players take turns sitting in one of the nine chairs.
- A team wins when they have three teammates sitting in a row.
- Reset the chairs, switch which team goes first, and play again.
- The first team to get 5 wins, or 10 wins (depending on time available) are the winners.

Game start positions



Land, Sea, Air

What's needed

No equipment necessary (can use a skipping rope to make a line on the floor if needed)

Set up

- Have all players stand shoulder to shoulder (with elbow room) on a line on the ground, or in 2 lines if there are a lot of players. Use tape or an existing line on the floor such as the line between 2 floor tiles.
- Identify a spot (for example, another line or a classroom door) in the play area players will have to tag to return to the game if they make mistake.
- Have all players stand with both feet together and their toes behind the line. Players' feet should always remain together.



How to play

- One leader will call out commands—land, sea, or air.
 - When the leader says “**Land**,” players must place their toes behind the line. If they are already behind the line, they must not move their feet. If they are in front of the line, they must jump backward and land behind the line.
 - When the leader says “**Sea**,” players must place their feet entirely in front of the line. If they are already in front of the line, they must not move their feet. If they are behind the line, they must jump forward with both feet landing entirely in front of the line.
- Variation**

Use other calls for different movements, based on the age and ability of the players, such as:

 - Bridge – one foot in the sea, one foot on the land.
 - Pirate – standing/jumping on one foot until the leader calls “**Argh**”.
 - Tornado – spin in a circle one time.
- When the leader says “**Air**,” players must jump into the air and land in the same place they started.
 - Players should always face forward.
 - If players make a mistake, they must go to the pre-identified location and touch it before returning to the game.

Source: Playground Activity Leaders in Schools (PALS) Games Book, Health and Social Services, Haldimand Norfolk.



Night at the Museum

What's needed

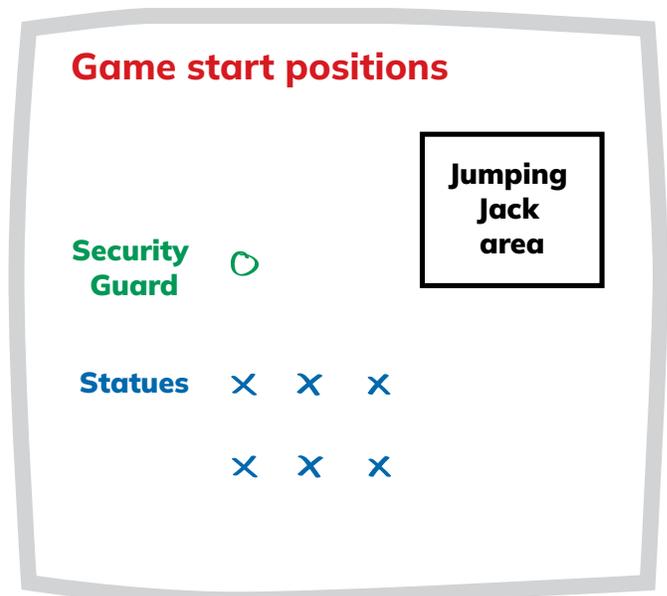
- 4 or more players,
- 1 "flashlight" for the security guard to hold (It can be a cone, rubber chicken, marker, or anything they can pretend is a flashlight)

Set up

- Designate an area where players will go to do jumping jacks when they get caught.
- Choose a security guard.

How to play

- Talk to players about what statues do: "Do they move? Do they touch each other? Do they make a lot of noise?"
- Everyone is going to be a statue, and they can't let the security guard catch them moving.
- The security guard will move slowly around the room, pointing their flashlight at the statues. If they shine the flashlight on a player and that player moves/laughs/etc., they will have to go to the designated area and do 5 jumping jacks (or activity of your choice) to get back into the game.





On the 6

What's needed

- 1 die per group of players
- 1 scrap piece of paper
- 1 pencil for **each player**.

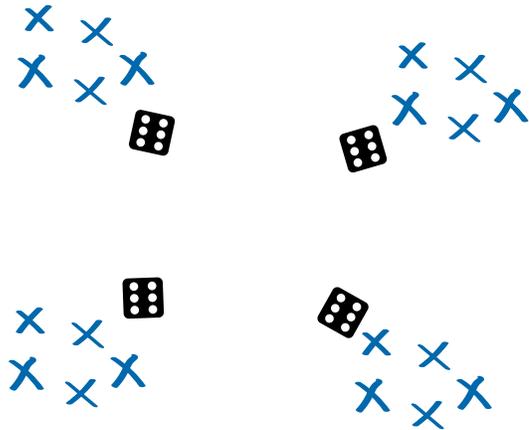
Set up

- Split the group into smaller groups of about 5-6 players.
- Each group sits in a circle on the floor, and each player has a piece of paper and pencil in front of them.
- Have a leader demonstrate what a proper jumping jack looks like.

How to play

- One player starts with a die. The die is passed around the group, with each player getting one roll.
- If a player rolls a 6, they quickly stand up and start doing jumping jacks, counting them out loud.
- While that player is jumping, the other players keep passing and rolling the die until a new player rolls a 6.
- That player yells "SIX!" and the first player stops doing jumping jacks and the new player gets up and starts doing jumping jacks, counting them out loud starting at one.
- The original jumper quickly writes down the number they were at on their piece of paper, so that they know what number to start at the next time they roll a 6.

Game start positions



Variation

- Choose a different action to replace jumping jacks, such as running around the circle, wall push-ups, lunges, squats, etc.
 - Add in a 'back-to-back bonus' – if 2 players in a row roll a 6, they get to keep their accumulated jumping jacks but everyone else has to start back at zero.
- This new player continues to jump while the rest of the group passes the die still trying to roll a 6.
 - Play continues until someone gets to 50 jumping jacks and is declared the winner.

Bandage Tag

What's needed

- 4 or more players, large space

Set up

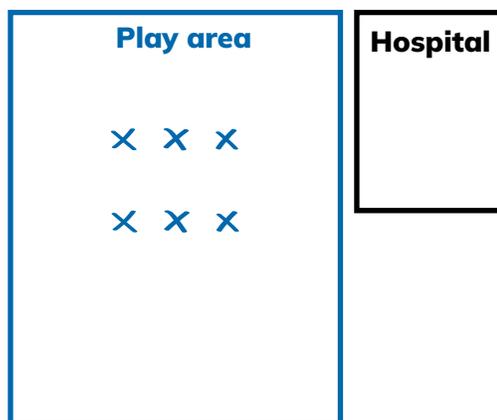
Designate a clear playing area and a “hospital” outside of the playing area.

How to play

- Choose one or more players to be “It.” Any player who is “It” is the tagger and runs around to tag other players.
- If a player is tagged, they must take one hand and put it directly on the place where they were tagged. The hand is a “Bandage.”
- The player can continue to run around and avoid being tagged but they must keep their “Bandage” on, meaning they now only have one free hand.
- If the player is tagged again, they must take the other hand and place it on the second spot where they were tagged. Players can still continue to run around with both “Bandage” on.
- If the player is tagged a third time, they have to go to the “hospital” to be “treated” (for example, do 10 jumping jacks) and can then return to the game without any “Bandage.”
- Let the game continue for as long as it remains exciting and fun. Switch the player who is “It” often.



Game start positions



Variation

Have players jump, skip, walk or other forms of movement instead of running.

Source: Adapted from Playworks Game Guide www.playworks.org.

The Blob

What's needed

4 or more players

Set up

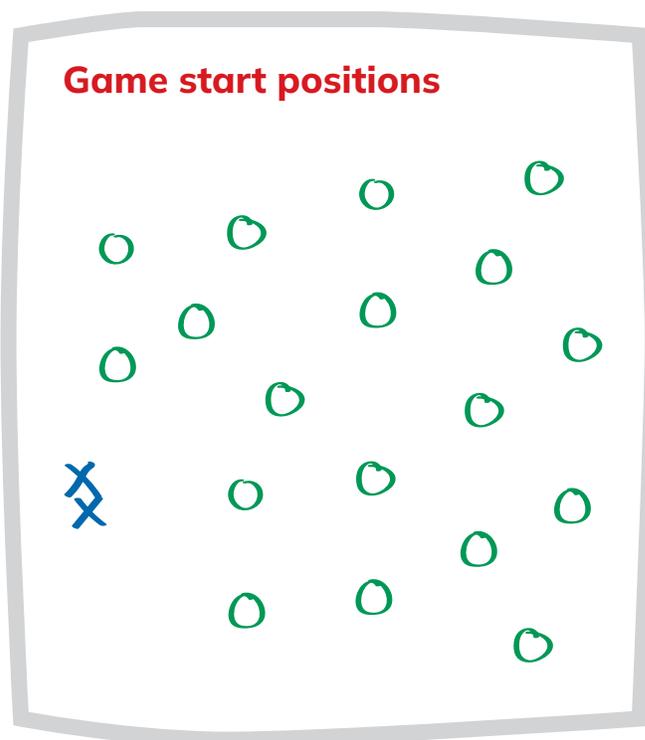
Players scattered around in play area.

How to play

- Choose 2 players to be the “**blob**” and have them join hands.
- The other players scatter.
- The “**blob**” players try to tag the others. When tagged, they join hands with the “**blob**.”
- When the “**blob**” tags four players, they divide in half to make 2 “**blobs**.”
- This goes on until there are only 2 players left.
- The 2 players become the “**blob**” for the next game.

Variation

- If everyone is playing safely, the ‘**The Blob**’ can stay connected and continue to grow bigger and bigger until all the players are tagged. Challenge the class to stay together when they move.
- If linking elbows is too challenging, consider linking hands. (Note: some players may prefer the term ‘linking hands’ to ‘holding hands.’)



Source: Playground Activity Leaders in Schools (PALS) Games, Peel Region.

Butterfly Tag

What's needed

- 4 or more players
- 1 large playing area

Set up

- Demonstrate that when a player is tagged, they must stand with their legs together and arms straight up over their heads (they are the “**caterpillar**”).
- Review the boundaries.

How to play

- Choose 2 or 3 taggers to start, depending on the number of players.
- If a player is get tagged, they turn into a “**caterpillar**.” Any player in this position calls out “**I need wings!**”
- The player remains a “**caterpillar**” until 2 other players come and stand on each side of the “**caterpillar**” to make it complete (caterpillar + 2 wings = butterfly).
- If a player isn't tagged, they are avoiding the tagger and helping those that are “**caterpillars**.”
- Rotate the taggers so that everyone has a chance to be ‘**It**.’

Variation

Have players jump, skip, speed walk or other forms of movement instead of running.



Game play positions

Tagged player
caterpillar



2 players make wings
releases the butterfly



Source: Adapted from Games Book for Playground Activity Leaders in Schools (PALS), KFL&A Public Health.

Cat and Mice

What's needed

- 7 or more players
- 5 hula hoops

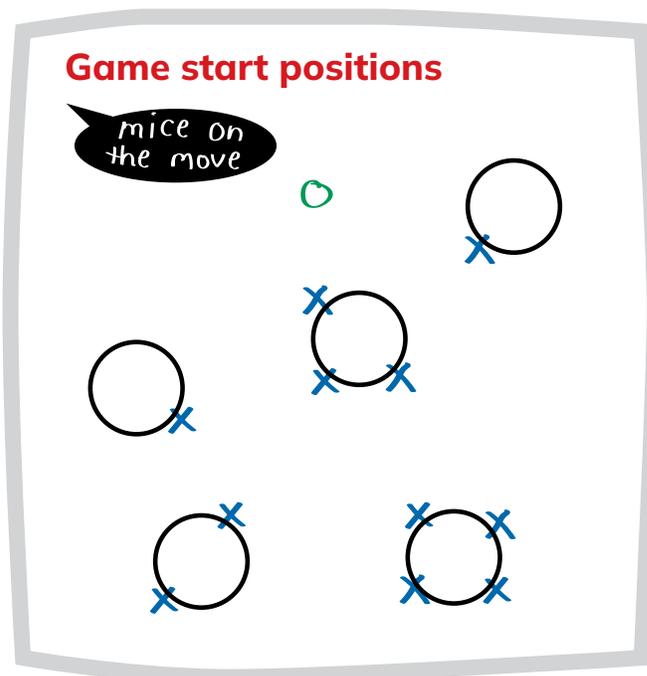
Set up

- Scatter hula hoops around play area.
- Pick one person to be the 'cat.' The other players are mice.

How to play

- All the mice must start the game with one foot in a mouse hole (hula hoop).
- Set a maximum number of mice allowed per mouse hole (for example, 4 players per one hoop) depending on the number of players.
- The game leader then calls out "**Mice on the move!**" and all the mice must move to a new mouse hole (hula hoop).
- While the mice are out looking for a new hole, the cat will try to tag a mouse.
- If a mouse gets tagged, they become the cat and the cat will become a mouse.
- If no mouse gets tagged, the game leader again calls out "**Mice on the move!**" and the game continues.

Game start positions



Variation

- Have mice who are tagged go to a mouse container and have other mice rescue them.
- Tagged mice turn into cats to help tag other mice.
- Tagged mice can do jumping jacks or other tasks to get back in the game.

Cat and Mouse

What's needed

10 to 15 players

Set up

- Pick an object to use for the “**mouse**” (rubber chicken, bean bag, stuffed toy, etc.).
- Choose one player to be the “**cat**” and another player to hold the “**mouse**.”

How to play

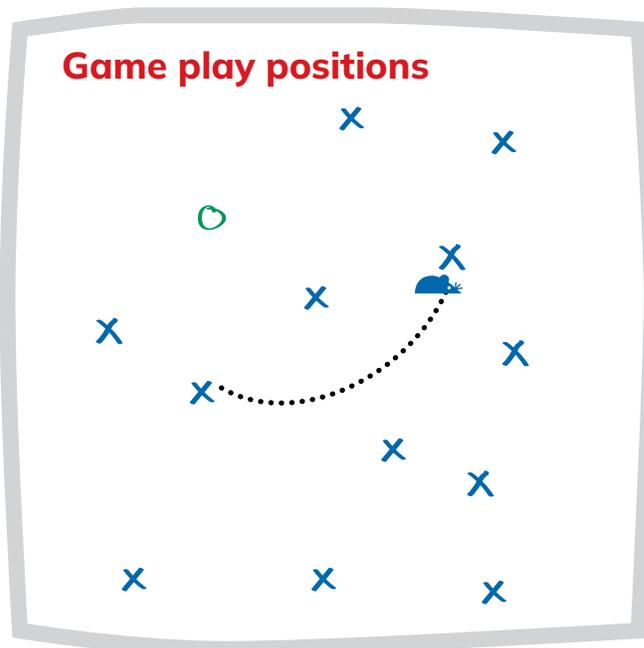
- The “**cat**” runs after the “**mouse**.”
- The “**mouse**” may be tossed to other players by calling the person’s name and adding the word mouse (Anna Mouse or Abdul Mouse).
- The “**cat**” runs after the player who catches the “**mouse**.”
- A player becomes the “**cat**” if they are tagged, or if they drop the “**mouse**.”



Variation

Add more than one mouse.

Game play positions



Source: 100 Best Games, E. Perez & M. Rius (2000).

Dog Pound

What's needed

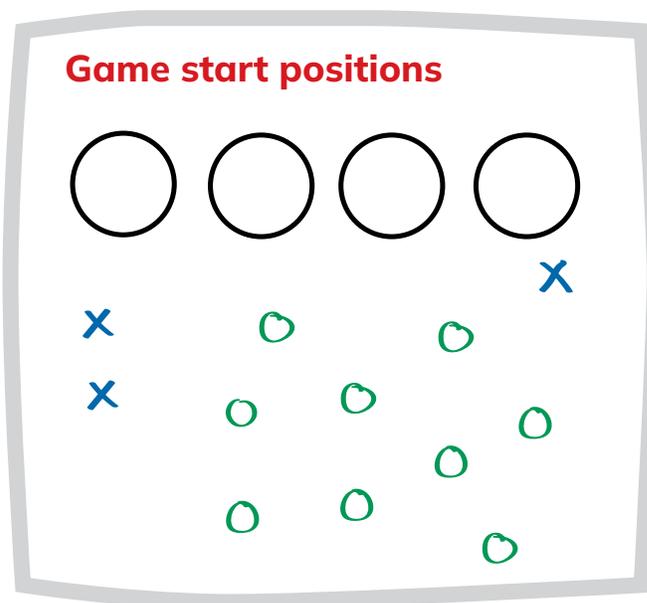
- 10** or more players
- 4** hula hoops

Set up

- Choose 2 to 4 players to be “**dog catchers**.”
- The other players are the “**dogs**.”

How to play

- The dogs are trying to escape the “**dog catchers**.”
- When a “**dog**” gets caught, the “**dog catcher**” takes them to the “**pound**” (any one of the hula hoops).
- “**Dogs**” are freed when a free player lifts the hula hoop up and over the caught player. If there is more than one “**dog**” in the “**pound**,” they can all be freed at the same time.
- After 2 to 5 minutes, have players change roles.



Variation

Have players jump, skip, walk or other forms of movement instead of running.

Dragon's Tail Tag

What's needed

- 6** or more players
- 1** open area
- 1** tag flag, bandana, or similar item

Set up

- Players stand in line and form a Dragon by putting their hands on the hips of the player in front.
- The first player in the line is the “**Head of the Dragon.**” The last player is the “**Tail**” and they must place the tail (tag flag or bandana) into their back pants pocket so it is showing.



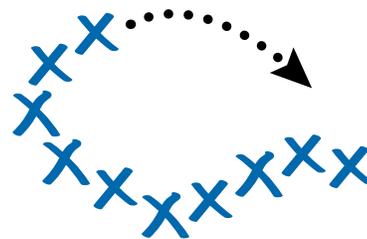
How to play

- The **Head** tries to touch its own **Tail**. The **Tail** tries to avoid being caught.
- When the **Tail** is caught, the **Head** goes to the back of the line to be the **new Tail**. The second player in the line becomes the **new Head**.
- The game continues.

Variation

Have players jump, skip, walk or other forms of movement instead of running.

Game play positions



Fox and Geese

☀ Outdoor ❄ ❄ Snow required

Ages: Primary, Junior

What's needed

- 1 snowy open area or a surface that can have a path marked out
- 1 tag flag (optional)

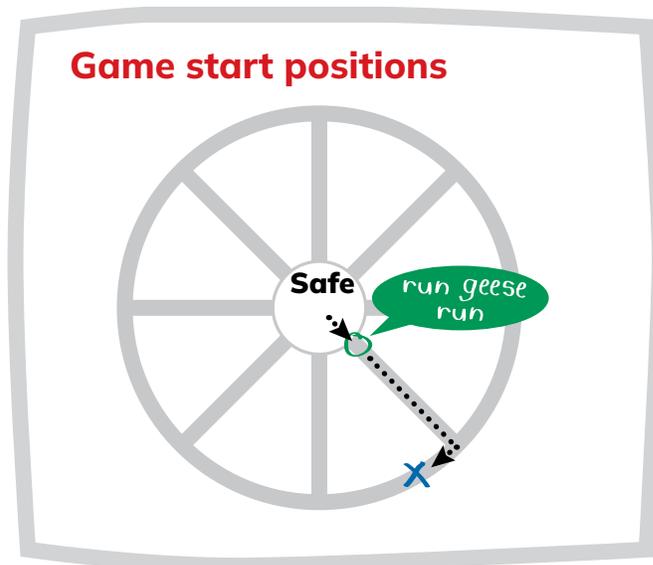
Set up

- In the snow, tramp out a path in the shape of a wheel 4m (18 feet) across with at least 6 spokes leading from a centre point to the outside circle.
- The centre of the circle where all spokes meet is the safe zone.
- The pathways (outer circle and spokes) need to be wide enough to suit the needs of the players.
- One player is the Fox and stands in the safe zone. Other players are Geese and stand on the edge of the circle.



How to play

- To begin, the Fox yells, “**run, Geese, run!**” and tries to tag the Geese as they run away. Everyone must stay on the pathways.
- When a Goose is in the safe zone, they **cannot** be tagged.
- There can be only **1 Goose in the safe zone at any time**. When another Goose enters the safe zone, the first Goose must leave.
- If a Goose steps off the pathways or is tagged, they become the Fox.
- A tag flag can be used. When playing with a tag flag, the other team takes the flag and they become the Fox.



Variations

- Allow as many Geese in the safe zone as there is room.
- For 6 or more players, draw an adjoining wheel for more travel spaces.

Source: Toronto Public Health. Games (Go Play Tag). Accessed August 14, 2023. bit.ly/toronto-go-play-tag

Ghost

☀ Outdoor ❄ Snow 🏠 Indoor
Ages: Kinder, Primary, Junior

What's needed

5 or more players

Set up

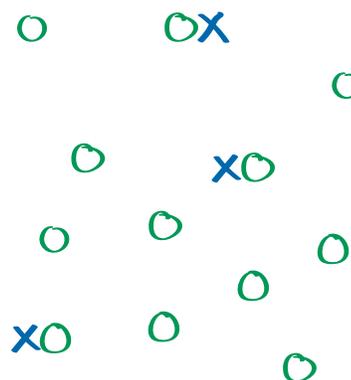
Choose 2 to 3 players to be "ghosts."

How to play

- The rest of the players scatter around the play area, find a spot and close their eyes.
- The "ghosts" roam around and try to "haunt" the other players by standing close behind them for 10 seconds. If the "ghost" can stand there for 10 seconds without the player knowing, the "ghost" taps that player on the head and they sit down.
- If the player thinks a "ghost" is behind them, they say "Is there a ghost behind me?" If they are correct, then they also become a "ghost." If they are wrong, they have to sit down.



Game play positions



Variation

Add a physical activity for the players to do if they are wrong (for example, 5 jumping jacks) to get back in the game.

Source: Playground Activity Leaders in Schools (PALS) Games, Peel Region.

Loose Caboose

What's needed

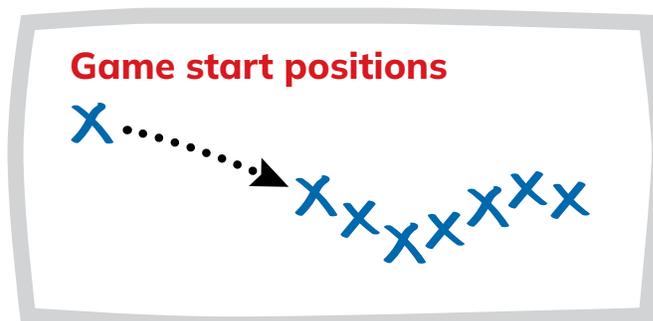
7 or more players

Set up

- Pick one player to be “It.” This player is the “**Loose Caboose**.”
- Divide the rest of the players into groups of three.

How to play

- Each player holds the waist of the player in front of them to make a train. The first player is the “**Engine**.”
- The object is for the “**Loose Caboose**” to find a train. The trains move around the playing area and when the “**Loose Caboose**” attaches to a train, the “**Engine**” becomes the new “**Loose Caboose**.”



Source: Playground Activity Leaders in Schools (PALS) Games, Peel Region

Octopus Tag

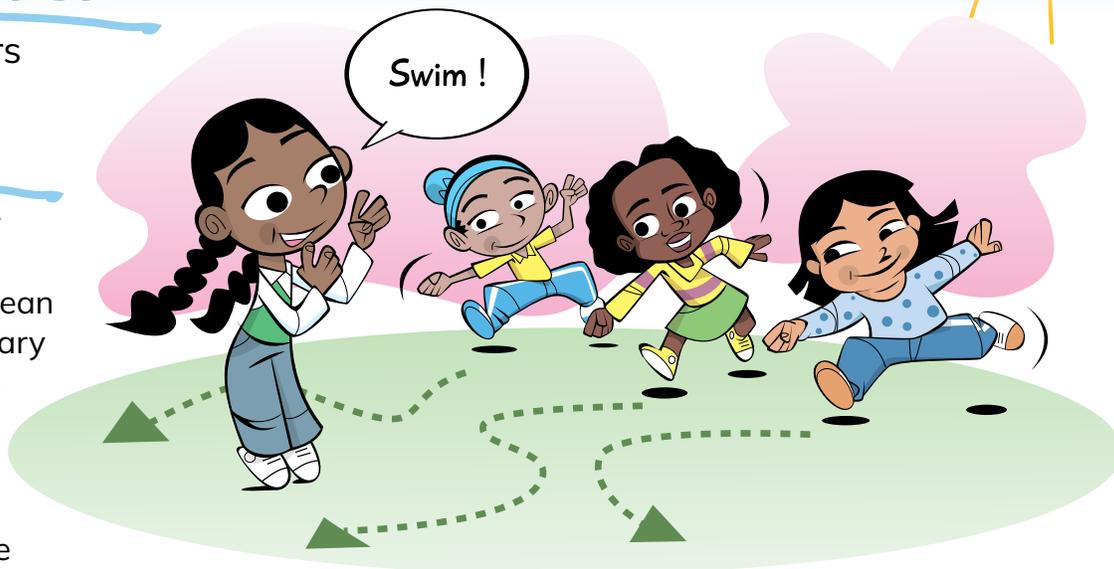
☀ Outdoor ❄ Snow 🏠 Indoor
Ages: Kinder, Primary, Junior

What's needed

10 or more players

Set up

- Choose an area for the game and set boundaries. The ocean is inside the boundary and the 2 end lines are the shores.
- Players stand on one shore. One player stands in the middle of the ocean as the **"octopus."**



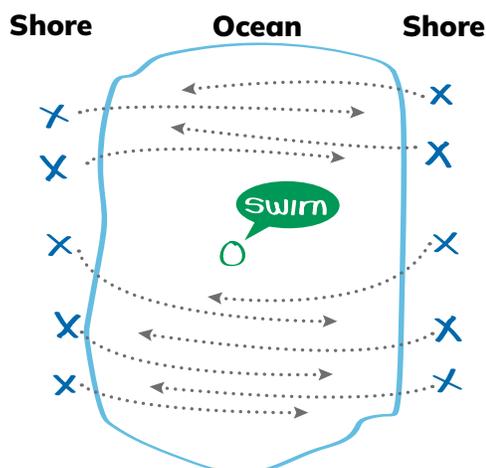
How to play

- The **"octopus"** calls **"Swim!"** and the players run to the opposite shore and the **"octopus"** tries to tag them.
- Tagged players stay in the middle and help the **"octopus"** tag more players.
- The last player tagged becomes the new **"octopus."**

Variation

Have players jump, skip, walk or other forms of movement instead of running. Have any player who gets tagged by the octopus become **'seaweed'** and stand in the spot where they got tagged, wiggling and stretching their arms trying to tag players as they run by.

Game start positions



Source: 100 Best Games, E. Perez & M. Rius (2000).

One Leg Tag

What's needed

- 4 or more players
- 1 sunny day

Set up

Players scattered around in play area.

How to play

- Choose one or more players to be **"It."**
- For a player to be safe, they must stand on one foot. If **"It"** tags a player while they have both feet on the ground, that player becomes **"It."**

Source: Playground Activity Leaders in Schools (PALS) Games, Peel Region.

Shadow Tag

What's needed

- 4 or more players
- 1 sunny day

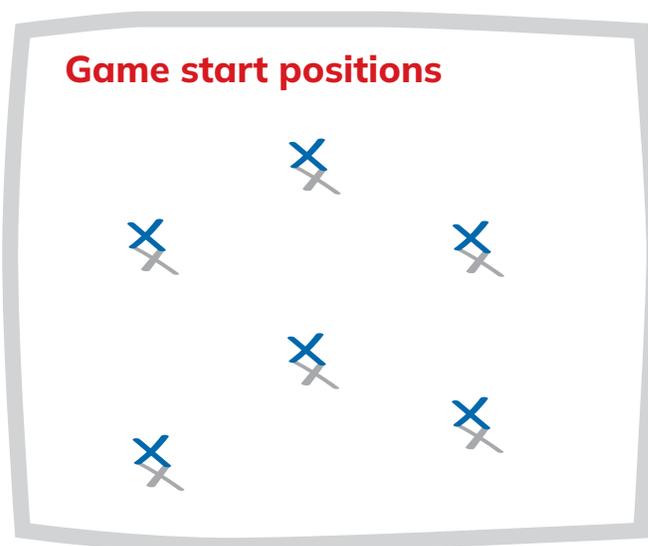
Set up

Players scattered around in play area.

How to play

- Choose one player to be **"It."**
- **"It"** chases the other players and tries to step on their shadows.
- If **"It"** steps on a shadow, that player becomes the new **"It."**

Source: Playground Activity Leaders in Schools (PALS) Games, Peel Region.



Sleeping Giants

What's needed

- 1 large playing space

Set up

Players scattered around in play area.

How to play

- Players move around the activity space.
- When the leader calls out “**Go to sleep, giants!**” the players stop where they are and pretend to be asleep (can lie on the ground or remain standing, depending on the play area).
- While they are ‘**sleeping,**’ the leader will tell them they are dreaming about jumping around like a bunny or kangaroo.
- When the leader calls out “**Wake up Sleeping Giants!**” they get up quickly and do the action they were dreaming about, until the leader tells them to go to sleep again.
- Change what the players are dreaming about each time.

Movement ideas for dreaming giants

- Children skipping all around.
- Birds flying high in the sky.
- Rockets zooming to the moon.
- Frogs hopping around a pond.
- Bees looking for some flowers.
- Children swimming in a pool.
- Soldiers marching all around.
- Snakes slithering through the grass.
- Kangaroos jumping everywhere.
- Ducks waddling in the mud.
- Children climbing a big mountain.
- Bunnies hopping in the field.
- Racoons looking for food.
- Horses galloping down the lane.

Snow Angel Tag

☀ Outdoor ❄❄❄ Snow required
Ages: Kinder, Primary, Junior

What's needed

Snow
 Unlimited players

Set up

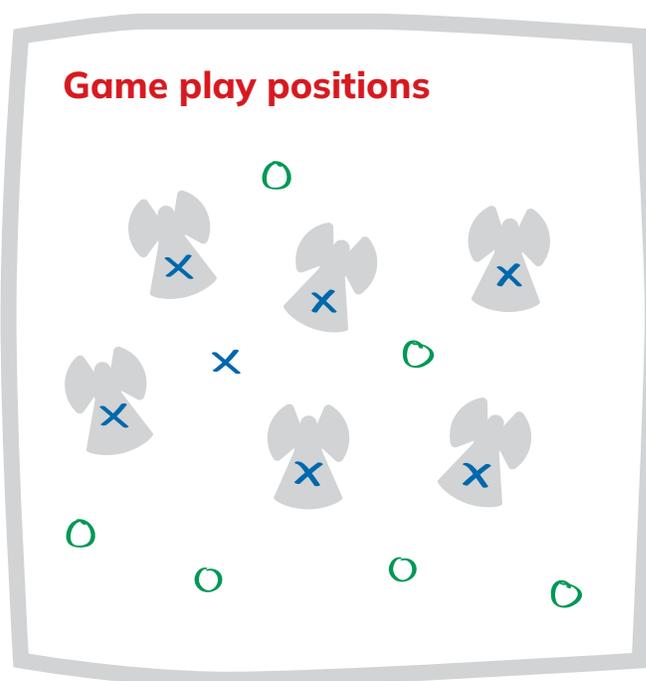
Decide how big you want the play area to be.

How to play

- One player is “**it**” and chases the other players to tag them.
- When tagged, the player must stop and make a snow angel. Once the snow angel is done, the player stands in their angel. They can help “**it**” by tagging other players running by them.
- When everyone has been tagged and has made their snow angel, the game ends.

Variation

Have players jump, skip, walk or other forms of movement instead of running.



Source: Playground Activity Leaders in Schools (PALS) Games, Peel Region.

Squirrels in the Tree

What's needed

Groups of 3 players

Set up

- Choose one player in the large group to be “It.”
- 2 players in each group of 3 join hands to form a tree for the squirrel (the third player) to stand in.
- If there are extra players, they are also squirrels.



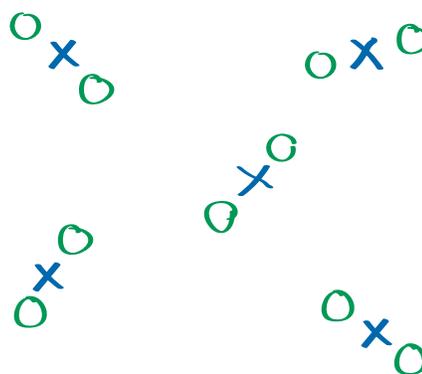
How to play

- When the leader signals, the squirrels leave their tree and run to another tree before “It” can tag them.
- If there is another squirrel already in a tree when a new squirrel arrives, the original squirrel must leave and run to a new tree.
- Once a squirrel is tagged, they become “It” and “It” becomes a squirrel.
- If “It” does not tag anyone, a new “It” may be chosen.
- Take turns being the squirrels and trees.

Variation

Allow the trees to move around the space, making it more difficult for the squirrel to get into a tree.

Game start positions



Statue Tag

What's needed

4 or more players

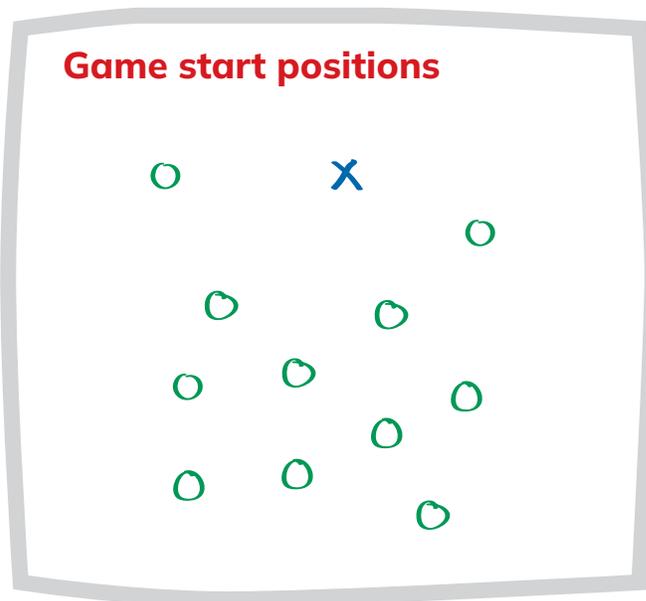
Set up

- Choose one or more players to be “**Statue makers**.”
- Other players scatter.

How to play

- “**Statue makers**” count to five then chase the runners. Players become a statue when they are tagged.
- To get back in the game, a runner must release the statues.
- To release a statue, choose one of the ideas below.
 - Do five 5 jumping jacks in front of the statue player.
 - Give the statue player a “**high 5**.”
 - Run around the statue player three times.
- The number of “**Statue makers**” may be changed to keep the game moving.

Game start positions



Variation

Have players jump, skip, walk or other forms of movement instead of running. If your school has access to pool noodles, whoever is a ‘**Statue maker**’ can be the ‘**magician**’ and use a pool noodle as a ‘**magic wand**’ to make a player a statue. The player remains a statue until 22 other players join hands creating a circle around them and say “**Abacadabra!**” to release the statues.

Treasure Twister Tag

What's needed

6 or more players

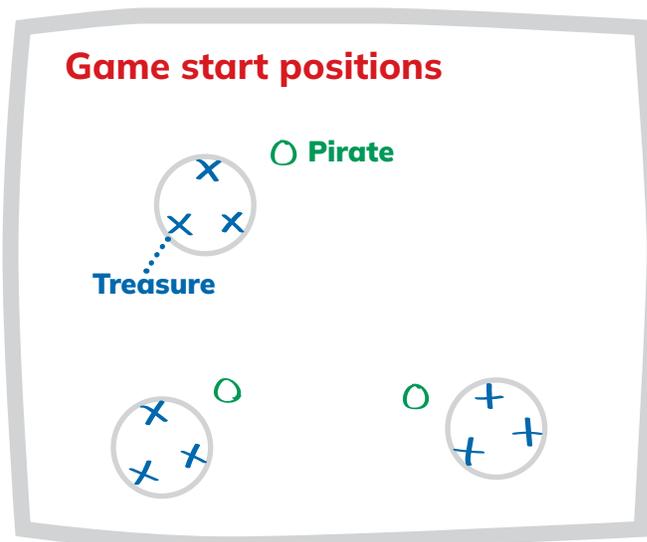
Set up

- Divide players into groups of 4.
- Have 3 of the 4 players form a circle holding hands.
- Have the players assign one of the 3 players holding hands to be the “**treasure chest**.”
- The remaining player outside of the circle is the “**pirate**.”



How to play

- The pirate's job is to try and capture the treasure chest by tagging them.
- The other 2 players are trying to protect the treasure chest by spinning the circle in different directions (clockwise or counterclockwise), without letting go of hands, so that the pirate is unable to tag the treasure chest.
- The pirate cannot go inside the circle or lean on the arms or the people holding hands.
- Once the pirate has tagged the treasure chest, have the players switch positions.



Source: Playground Activity Leaders in Schools (PALS) Games Book, Health and Social Services, Haldimand Norfolk.

Zoo

What's needed

4 or more players

Set up

Players scattered around in play area.

How to play

- Choose 2 to 3 players to be taggers, depending on group size.
- If tagged, a player must go down on their hands and knees wherever they are and pick an animal to act out, making only the sound that animal makes.
- To be freed, another player must come and correctly guess what animal they are. They can take as many guesses as needed.
- Individuals that are guessing **cannot** be tagged.

Variation

Once a player has been an animal, they cannot pick that animal again.

Bird's Nest

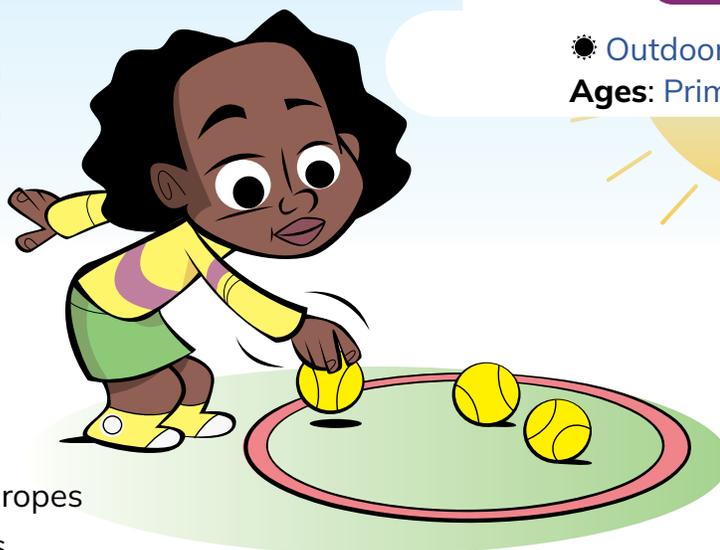
What's needed

- 12** or more players
- 5** hula hoops
- 16** tennis balls

Substitutes

Hula hoops: sidewalk chalk, skipping ropes

Tennis balls: bean bags, sticks, stones



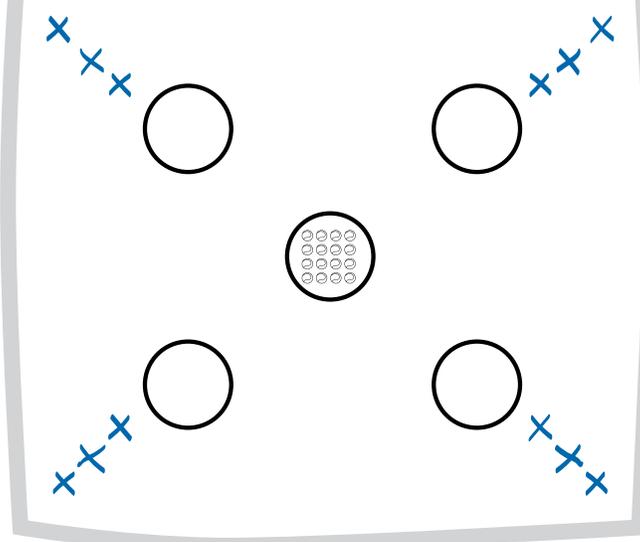
Set up

- Place one hoop or circle in each corner of the play area, and a fifth hoop in the centre.
- Place all 16 “eggs” in the centre hoop.
- Divide players into four equal teams, with each team lining up behind their “nest” hoop.

How to play

- Each team's goal is to get 6 eggs into their hoop.
- On “go,” the first person on each team runs to the centre hoop and takes one egg and returns it to their nest, setting it gently down to make sure it stays in their hoop.
- The next player in line then runs to the centre for an egg and returns it to their nest.
- Players keep taking eggs from the centre until it is empty. The game leader then calls out “**EMPTY NEST!!**” at which point all players can begin to steal eggs from other team's nests to place in their own nest.
- Players cannot defend the eggs in their nest and can only steal one egg at a time.
- If a team breaks these rules, they lose an egg from their nest.
- The game ends when one team has six eggs in their nest.

Game start positions



Variation

- Start the game with more or less eggs.
- Move the nests closer together or farther apart.
- Rename the eggs and bird's nest, such as trees and acorns, or apples and baskets.
- Allow players to defend their hula hoop by tagging opponents. Once tagged, the player must return to their line and the next player may go.

Source: Playground Activity Leaders in Schools (PALS) Games Book, Health and Social Services, Haldimand Norfolk.

Builders and Bulldozers

What's needed

15 to 20 pylons

Set up

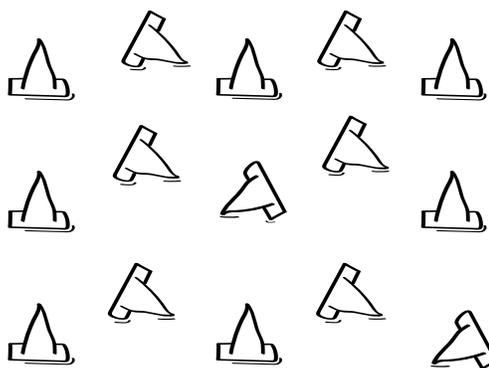
- Spread pylons around the play area, with half of them standing upright and the other half lying on their side.
- Split the players into 2 teams, one team being 'builders' and the other team being 'bulldozers.'



How to play

- On "go," the builders will run around trying to stand up any pylon that is knocked over on its side. At the same time, the bulldozers will be running around trying to knock upright pylons over onto their side.
- Pylons must be tipped over or picked up gently, with one hand. Feet cannot touch the pylons.
- After approximately 1 to 2 minutes, start counting down from 10. When you get to zero yell "**STOP!**"
- Count how many cones are tipped over and how many are standing to determine which team won.
- Switch roles for the teams and play again.

Game start positions



Variation

Pylons can be substituted with Frisbees, plastic cups, or anything else that can easily be identified as "**right-side up**" or not.

Source: Playground Activity Leaders in Schools (PALS) Games Book, Health and Social Services, Haldimand Norfolk.

Dog and Bone

What's needed

- 2 teams of 4 or more players
- 1 bean bag, ball or bandana

Set up

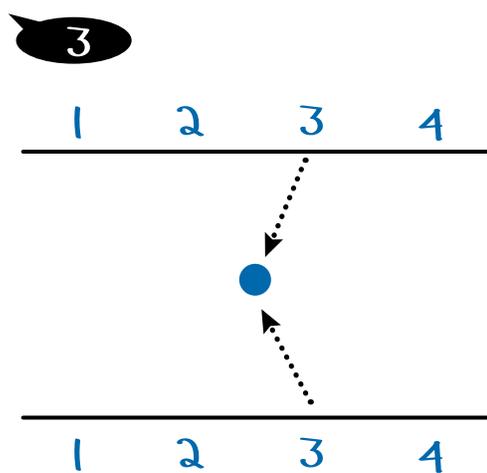
- Teams line up facing each other, about 5 meters (15 feet) apart (players in line should be about 1.5 meters, or 5 feet, apart).
- Start at the right end of each line. Players count off down their line so players with the same numbers are diagonally across from each other.



How to play

- Players work in pairs to try to steal the “**bone**” and make it “**home**” without being tagged.
- Place the “**bone**” (bean bag, ball or bandana) in the centre between the 2 lines.
- To start the game, the leader calls out a number.
- The players who share that number race to grab the “**bone**” and get back to their place in line without being tagged by the opponent. If the player makes it home without being tagged, the team gets a point. If the player is tagged, no point is awarded.
- Keep calling numbers out of order until all numbers are called.
- The team with the most points wins.

Game start positions



Variation

If players are running into each other trying to steal the bone, consider the following options:

- Place the bone on oversized cones.
- Players power walk to the bone.

Find the Stone

What's needed

- 4 or more players
- 1 stone or other small object

Set up

- Designate a 'safe area' the players are attempting to reach.
- Players line up side-by-side with their hands cupped to receive the stone.



How to play

- The object is to have players trick the others into believing they do or do not have the stone.
- The “**protector**” walks down the line pretending to put the stone in each player’s hands.
- Each player pretends they have the stone.
- The “**protector**” continues down the line whether they have already given out the stone or not.
- After the “**protector**” has walked the entire line, all players run to the designated safe area whether they have the stone or not.
- All players try to tag the player they think has the stone.
- Each player tagged must stop and open their hands.
- If a player tags the player with the stone, they become the new “**protector**.” If the player with the stone makes it to the safe area without being tagged, they become the new “**protector**.”

Game start positions

Safe zone



Variation

Change how players get to the safe area (hopping, skipping, etc).

Source: Playground Activity Leaders in Schools (PALS) Games, Peel Region.

Four Square

What's needed

- 1 painted four square or chalk to draw one
- 1 playground ball
- 4 or more players

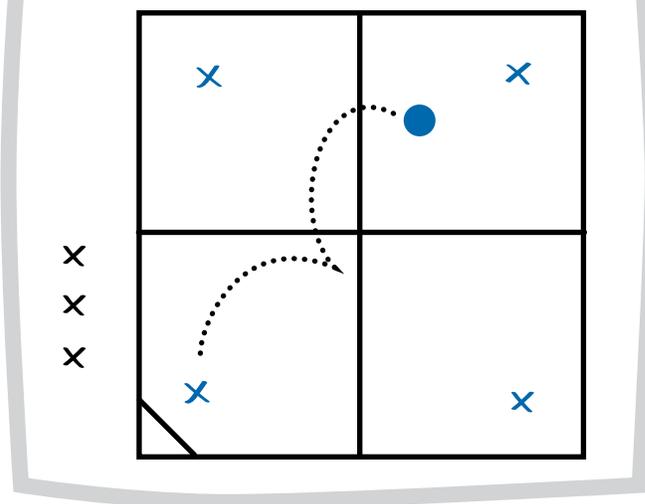
Set up

- Use a pre-painted playground four-square or draw your own. Note: some pre-painted versions will include a smaller box. This is the service box and should be for square 4.
- One player is in each square and the other players wait in line. The player in square 4 is the server, and that player controls play of the game.

How to play

- Play begins when the server drops the ball once into their square and then hits it into a different square. The server must keep both feet in square 4 until the serve is completed.
- The ball can only bounce once in any square.
- When a ball bounces into a player's square, they must hit it (with their hand) into another square after only one bounce. If the ball lands on a line, or goes out of bounds before it bounces, the player who hit the ball is **"out."** That player moves to the end of the waiting line. If a player hits the ball and it bounces more than once in their square, they are **"out."**
- If the ball bounces more than once before it is hit into another square, that player moves to the end of the line for another try.
- If the ball is returned before it is allowed to bounce, the player who returned the ball early moves to the end of the line.
- Players who are **"out"** must go to the end of the line and a new player enters square 1. The remaining players move up (1 moves to 2, 2 moves to 3, 3 moves to 4).
- Object of the game is to move up to and hold the server's position (square 4)

Game start positions



Variation

- Allow more than one bounce.
- Allow the ball to be caught.

Source: Playground Activity Leaders in Schools (PALS) Games, Peel Region.

Human Rock Paper Scissors

What's needed

6 or more players

Set up

- Divide the group into 2 teams and explain the rules for rock, paper, scissors.
- Demonstrate how the teams make the shapes with their bodies:

Rock = Crouch down in a ball

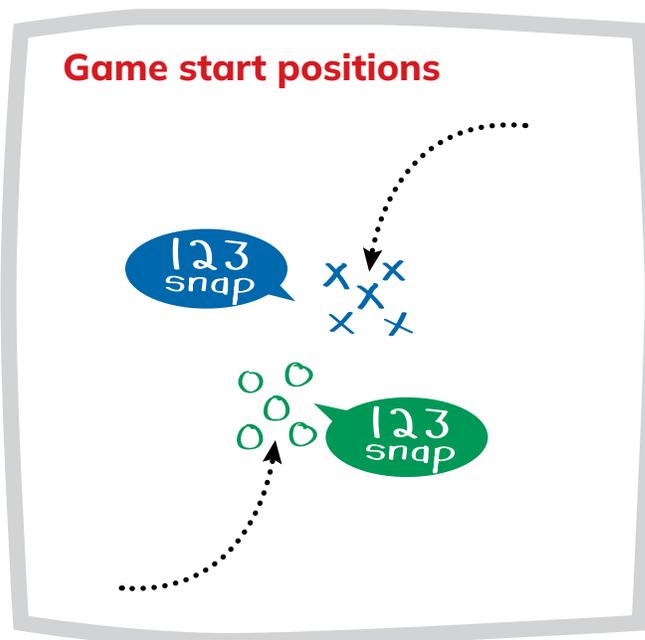
Paper = Stand straight up with arms overhead

Scissors = place arms on hips

How to play

- Have each team go to opposite ends of the play area and huddle together to decide which shape they are going to make. The entire team must be in agreement and make the same shape. Also have each team pick a 'back-up' shape in case the other team chose the same first shape as them.
- On "**GO**," have both teams run to the centre and line up. Then yell "**1, 2, 3 Snap!**" and have the teams make their shapes.
- The winning team adds one player from the losing team and then both teams run back to their separate ends of the play area to start the next round.
- If it's a tie yell "**1, 2, 3 Snap!**" again and have teams use their back-up shape.
- If it's still a tie, have the teams run back to their ends and start over, again picking a first and second shape.
- The game is over when one team runs out of players, or whichever team has more players when the time is up is the winner.

Game start positions



Variation

Modify the actions for rock, paper and scissors if any players are unable to perform the actions outlined above.

Lightning in a Bottle

What's needed

- 2 teams of 5 or more players
- 1 large playing area

Set up

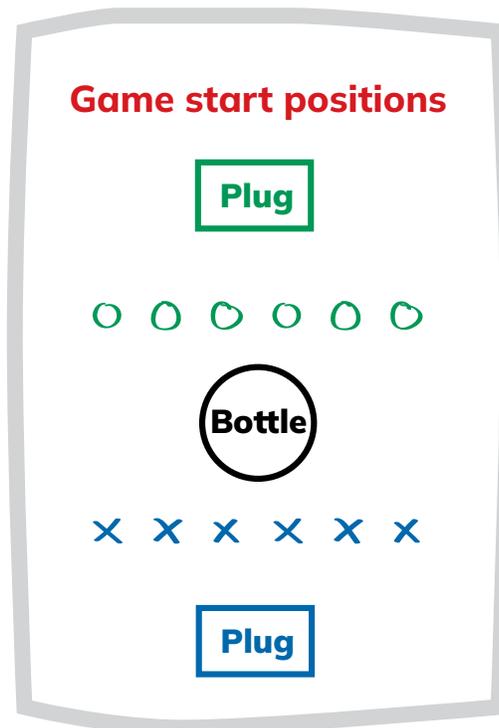
- Divide players into 2 even teams. Have players take a moment to observe who is on their team.
- Each team has a **home base** (or “**plug**”).
- Teammates stand in a row with one player at home base and the rest lining up facing outward, holding hands.
- Pick one area to be the “**bottle**,” which can be designated with existing markings, pylons, trees, skipping rope, hula hoops, etc. Both teams use the same “**bottle**.”



How to play

- The player furthest from home base on each team breaks off the chain and runs into the centre play area, trying to tag the player from the other team.
- When a player is tagged, they go to the “**bottle**.”
- Every 5 to 10 seconds, the game leader will call out “**Lightning strike!**” and the next player at the front of each team’s line breaks away from their team and chases the player(s) from the opposite team.
- Players are freed from the “**bottle**” by being touched by a member of their own team. More than one player can be freed if they hold hands and call out “**Electricity!**”
- The game is over when one team catches all the members of the other team.

Game start positions



Source: Adapted from Playground Activity Leaders in Schools (PALS) Games, Peel Region.

Relieveo

What's needed

- 2 equal sized teams
- 1 post, tree, or pole to tag

Set up

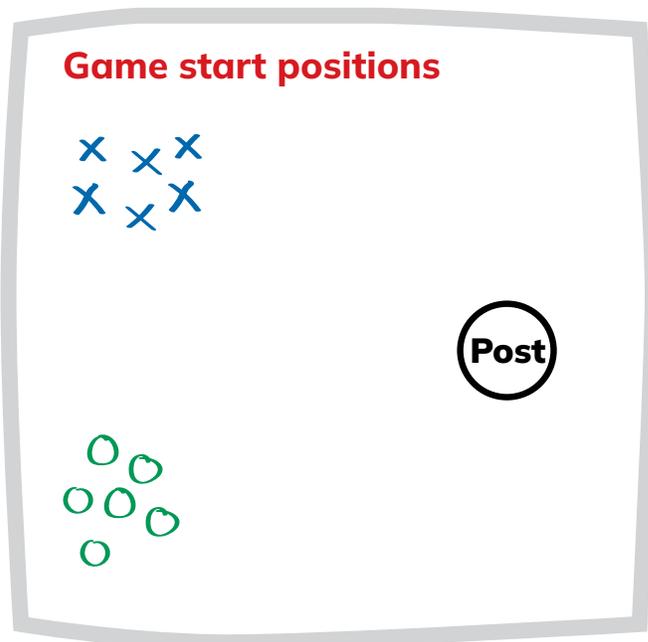
- Divide players into 2 teams. One group will be “**Chasers.**” The other group is chased.
- Assign a tag post (tree or pole).

How to play

- The chasers try to tag other players. If a chaser tags someone, they walk the player to the post.
- The first player to the post holds the post; others begin holding hands forming a chain.
- If a free player can touch anyone in the chain, the entire chain goes free. Or if the chain is able to touch one of the chasers without breaking the chain, they are all free.
- The game ends when the chasing team gets all the other team members into a chain, or if time runs out.

Variation

Instead of running, give other options for how players can move.



Special Delivery

What's needed

hula hoops
bean bags (or similar objects)

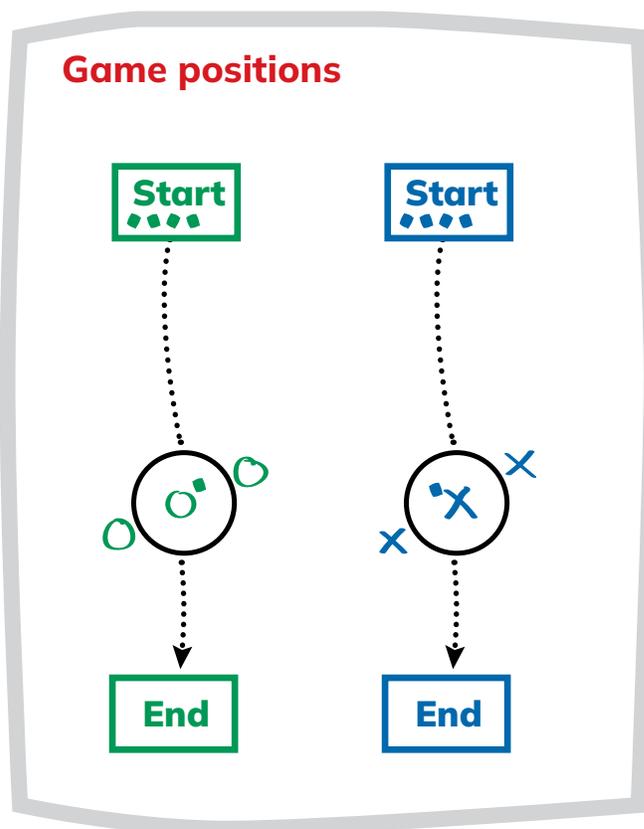
Set up

- Divide the players into groups of 4 to 5.
- Give each group a hula hoop and a bean bag.

How to play

- Start one player as the **"delivery person"** by placing them within the hula hoop with a bean bag.
- Designate a starting point and an **end** point or **"delivery spot."**
- The object is to deliver all the bean bags to the **"delivery spot"** one by one.
- The other players in the group must work together holding the hula hoop and moving the **"delivery person"** to the delivery spot to drop off the bean bag.
- The **"delivery person"** cannot make contact with the hula hoop or the team has to return that bean bag to the starting point.
- After each trip, switch so a new player can be the **"delivery person."**
- The first team to deliver 5 bean bags to the delivery spot wins.

Game positions



Variations

- Have players walk backwards.
- Make the **"special delivery"** balance the bean bag on the back of their arm or hand.

Source: Playground Activity Leaders in Schools (PALS) Games, Peel Region.

Zig Zag Relay

What's needed

2 teams of 6 or more players

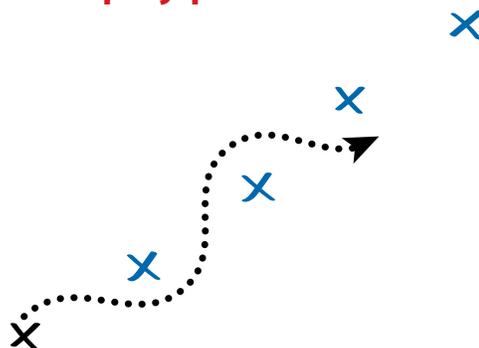
Set up

Players from each team line up in a single line, with space between each player.

How to play

- On signal, the first player on each team turns, runs through their line of teammates in a zigzag, from right to left.
- After completing the run, the player goes to the end of the line.
- The second player runs through the line the same way as player 1 and so on.
- The first team to return to their original order is the winner.

Game play positions



Variation

Change the type of movement players use to move through their line (for example, 2-foot hopping, backward walking, spinning like a tornado, crab walking, etc.). Ask the players for other ideas of types of movement.



Source: Playground Activity Leaders in Schools (PALS) Games, Peel Region.

Ages: _____

What's needed

Set up

Game start positions

How to play

Variation

Ages: _____

What's needed

Set up

Game start positions

How to play

Variation



For additional recess game ideas, check out:
playworks.org/game-library

