

INITIATIVE GAMES

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How to Conduct Games

Be Prepared. Familiarize yourself with the activity. Know how the game is played, what the objectives are, and how its parts lead to the learning objective.

Plan a strategy ahead of time so you can help your Scouts if they get into trouble with the game.

Check out space and equipment requirements. Plan ahead to avoid last-minute snags.

Review the questions you will use in leading the reflection following the activity. You may want to jot down some notes while the activity is in progress. If you are so tied up in the nuts and bolts of making the activity work, you'll miss many important interactions. The key to good listening is the development of empathy, where the critical eye and ear are connected to a sense of caring. Take time to prepare in terms of the youth involved.

Presenting the Game

Make the rules clear. Be sure the Scouts understand the problem they must solve or the skill to be learned before they begin. Emphasize that there should be no put-downs or harassment during the activity.

Stand back. Let the Scouts solve the problem themselves. Even though you may know a better solution, let them figure it out for themselves. They will learn the most from an experience they've worked through on their own. During some of the activities, you may be an active participant. This gives you an opportunity to be on common ground with your youth leaders, to be able to lead and to participate at the same time. There doesn't have to be a loss of credibility or authority. You are the leader, but can still convey the message that you are part of the group.

TANGLE KNOT

Procedure. Ask a group of 10 to 16 people to form a tight circle. Have everyone close his eyes and extend both hands into the center of the circle. With eyes closed, ask each person to grasp the hand of another person in each of his hands. When each hand is grasping another hand, tell participants to open their eyes and listen to the explanation of the objective.

Object. Without letting go hands, the group is to unwind, freeing themselves from the seemingly impossible Gordian Knot and forming into a circle.

Rules.

1. Physical hand-to-hand contact may not be broken in unwinding the knot. Grips may change and palms may pivot on one another, but contact must be maintained.
2. When the group is finally arranged in a circle, some individuals' arms may be crossed. This is part of an acceptable solution.
3. If time is running out, the problem can be simplified by breaking one grip and asking the group to form a single line instead of a circle.

ALL ABOARD

Object. The entire group of 12–20 people must board a 2-foot-square platform without anyone touching the ground around it.

Rules.

1. Each person must have both feet off the ground.
2. Everyone must remain on the platform for at least 10 seconds.
3. Do not stack participants more than two high.

Outcome. This exercise stimulates good discussion about team effort, group and individual commitment, leadership, compassion, and group problem-solving dynamics.

THE MONSTER

Object. The entire group of 8–12 persons forms a monster that must move a prescribed distance of 15 to 20 feet.

Rules.

1. No more than half of the legs of the group and half of the arms of the group, plus one, may touch the ground.
2. All group members must be connected to form the monster.

TROLLEY

Object. Using two rope-festooned lengths of 4" × 4" × 12' beams, the entire group must move a prescribed distance (15–25 feet) without anyone touching the ground or falling off.

Rules.

1. If someone falls off the trolley, a time penalty is added each time a member of the crew touches the ground.
2. Trolley sections may not be placed end to end or atop one another.

Variation. An obstacle or two may be placed along the course of the trolley to increase the challenge of this activity.

FRANTIC OBJECT

Object. Keep several tennis balls in constant motion for as long as possible.

Procedure. Everyone in the group is given a worn-out tennis ball or two. On a smooth flat surface that is bounded by walls, the group attempts to keep every tennis ball in motion. The activity starts upon a given command.

Referees are used to spot balls that have stopped moving.

Variations.

1. During the activity, additional tennis balls may be added, increasing the difficulty.
2. The activity may be allowed to continue until the referees have spotted three balls that have stopped moving.
3. The activity can be repeated to see if the group can improve by keeping all balls in motion for a longer period of time.

INVENTOR'S MACHINE

Object. The group is organized into smaller groups of three persons each. Each group of three people is to devise a machine to move a prescribed distance (15–20 feet). The object is to accomplish this as quickly as possible.

Rules.

1. Only two legs and two arms of the three persons may touch the ground at any time.
2. Once a machine has covered the prescribed course that team has a patent on it and no other group may duplicate it.

PUNCTURED DRUM

Object. Given a multipunctured, 55-gallon drum, a bucket or large pot (or other container), and a fast flowing or easily

attainable source of water, the group is to fill the drum to overflowing.

Rules.

1. Only portions of the participants' anatomies may be used to keep the water from escaping through the holes.
2. The 55-gallon drum may not be moved.

Considerations. The number of holes must vary with the size of the group. For a group of 12, use a large nail to puncture 120 holes in the drum. For smaller groups some of the holes may be plugged with tape. Note: Make holes small enough so small fingers and toes are not inserted. Also, eliminate jagged and sharp surfaces.

HEIGHT ALIGNMENT

Object. With each member blindfolded, the group is instructed to align themselves according to height.

Rules.

1. No one in the group may talk.
2. Blindfolds must remain in place throughout the activity.

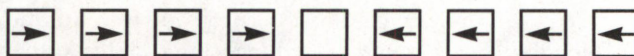
TRAFFIC JAM

Object. Have two groups of at least four persons each exchange places on a line of squares. Have one square more than the number of persons in both groups. All members to the left of center are to end up on the right and all members to the right of center are to end up on the left.

Setup. In the straight line, mark one place more than the total number of participants. Places can be marked with chalk, masking tape, picnic plates, or anything handy. They should be placed one easy step from each other.

Divide the group into two smaller groups of four to seven persons.

To begin, one group stands on places to the left of the middle place; the other group stands to the right. Both groups face the unoccupied middle place:



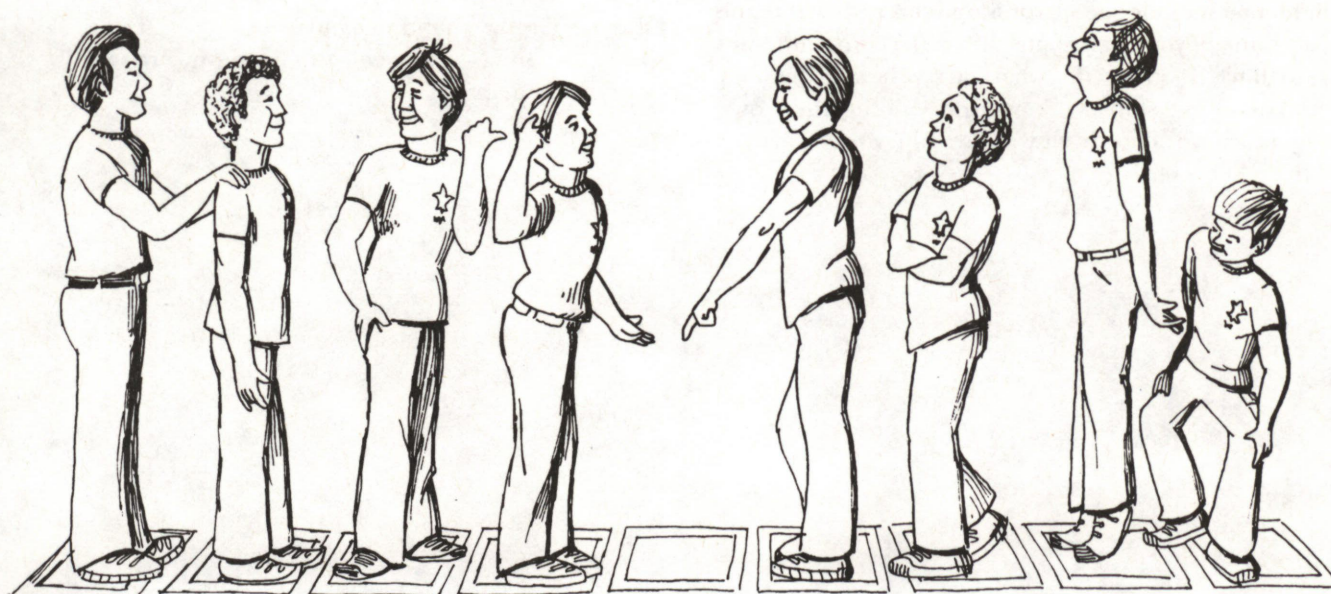
Using the following moves the two groups must change sides.

Legal Moves.

1. A person may move to an empty space in front of him.
2. A person may move around a person who is facing him into an empty space.

Illegal Moves.

1. Any move backward.
2. Any move around someone facing the same way the mover is facing.
3. Any move that involves two persons moving at once.



CARABINER WALK

Procedure. Have each person tie a sling rope into knots around each of his wrists. Have participants form a circle and, using their carabiners, clip into the wrist loops of the persons on each side.

Object. The entire group is to make its way from point A to point B as quickly as possible.

Rules. Participants must remain clipped together.

Variations.

1. Establish the prescribed course in a thickly wooded area or up a steep incline or through some other physical obstacle to increase the challenge.
2. Use waistbands instead of wrist loops.

THE BLIND SQUARE

Object. While blindfolded, a group of any size is to form a perfect square, triangle, pentagon, etc., using a 75- to 150-foot length of rope.

Rules. Each participant must have at least one hand on the rope at all times.

Procedure. Use a large, relatively flat, cleared area for this activity. Ask participants to form a circle and put on blindfolds. Ask each person to grasp the rope and then, as a group, form a perfect square. When they believe the task is accomplished they are to stand in place and remove their blindfolds.

LOG PULL

Object. The group is to pull a heavy log up to a pulley (through which the rope runs) and lower it again, as many times as possible in 2 minutes.

Rules.

1. The log may not be dropped from the top of the pulley.
2. A safety area is drawn on the ground 6 feet around the log and no one is allowed to enter it.

Leading the Reflection

Lay the ground rules for discussion. Have Scouts sit so they can see one another and ask them to agree not to interrupt or make fun of one another. Let them know they are free to keep silent if they wish.

Facilitate the discussion. As a leader, avoid the temptation to talk about your own experiences. Reserve judgment about what the Scouts say to avoid criticizing them. Once you've gotten the discussion off to a good start, let the Scouts take over with limited guidance from you. Avoid the temptation to jump in with both feet. Often we are so excited about the insight we've developed that we can't stop ourselves from sharing our wisdom. Give the group the opportunity to come up with it. Often a well-placed question can crack a deadlock and get the juices flowing better than any enlightened monologue would have. Remember that the Scouts think of you as an expert. If you step in, they don't have to think. If you describe what you saw, be sure that your comments don't stop the boys from adding their own thoughts. Above all, be positive. Have fun with the activity and the reflection.

Discuss what happened. Direct open-ended questions toward specific incidents. For example, you might ask, "Who took leadership?" "What did they do that made them a leader?" "How did decisions get made?"

Make a judgment. Ask the group to decide if what happened was good or bad. Try to focus on the good things first. Direct the group's attention toward specific skills. For example, you could ask, "What was good about the way decisions were made?" Then you could ask, "What didn't work so well about the way you made decisions?"

Generalize the experience. We want to try to get Scouts to see the connections between the game and regular troop experiences. You could ask, "How could we use the ideas we learned today in our troop?" Or you can be more specific: "How can we use what we learned about decision making on our campouts?"

Set goals. Begin with the positive. Ask Scouts what skills they used today that they would like to keep using. Then ask what things they need to change in order to work together better.