PLAYLAB
GAME LIBRARY

An invitation to play, explore and learn

Funded by
the European Union

EXPERIENTIA DOCET

Welcome to the PLAYLAB Game Library!

This collection of games and playful activities grew out of **PLAYLAB – The Learning Through Play Laboratory**, an Erasmus+ training course bringing together 24 youth workers from eight European countries to explore a simple but powerful question:

How can we use play more consciously to create meaningful learning experiences?

Together, we explored playful methods, experimented with games, practised facilitation and discovered how the magic of play can support connection, cooperation, creativity and learning.

Through sharing games from our childhoods, cultures and youth work practices, we discovered how play can bring us together across borders and open up new ways of learning from one another.

Because play is not just something we do — it can also be an attitude we bring to our work and everyday lives.

Now, we invite you to take these games further, make them your own and keep the spirit of play alive in your work with young people!

How to use this library

These cards bring together childhood favourites, cultural games from our home countries, tried-and-tested activities and new ideas we experimented with and developed during PLAYLAB. You may recognise some of them, perhaps even under a different name or with different rules. That is part of the beauty of play: games travel, transform and take on new meanings wherever they go.

Each card offers practical guidance to help you get started, including **group size, duration, materials, purpose, instructions, debrief questions and ideas for adaptations.** The **tags** make it easier to find activities based on what you need — whether it is an energiser, a team-building challenge or an opportunity to explore communication, cooperation, decision-making or other skills.

But please, don't treat these cards as recipes that must be followed exactly. **They are starting points for your own experiments.** Most activities can be adapted for different ages, group sizes, environments and needs. A game that works beautifully with one group may need a completely different approach with another.

We discovered that **the magic is** not necessarily in the game itself, but in **how we facilitate it: the intention we bring, the story we tell, the space we create, the way we respond to the group and the opportunities we offer for reflection.** A simple game can become a powerful learning experience when we pay attention to what is happening and help participants make sense of it.

The debrief questions on the cards are invitations, not scripts. Stay curious. Observe your group. Notice the unexpected moments, the tensions, the laughter and the discoveries. Let these observations guide your reflection rather than relying only on questions prepared in advance.

So put on your playful, curious, experimental glasses. Try an activity, change a rule, invent a story, explore a new variation or combine ideas. Notice what happens, learn from it and try again. **Think of this library as a living resource that can grow and evolve through your own experiences.**

Above all, remember that **play is not set in stone.** When we approach it with openness, intention and curiosity, new possibilities emerge — for the games, for our groups and for ourselves.

We invite you to explore, experiment, adapt and enjoy. And perhaps, along the way, to bring a little more playfulness into everything you do.

With playful curiosity,
The PLAYLAB team

EXPERIENTIA DOCET

PLAYLAB was developed and coordinated by **Asociația Experientia Docet** and **co-funded by the European Union** through the **Erasmus+ programme.**

We are grateful to our project partners for their collaboration, expertise and contributions to the development and implementation of PLAYLAB. Their involvement helped bring together youth workers from across Europe to explore play as a meaningful tool for learning, connection and youth work.

We would also like to thank the **European Union and the Erasmus+ programme** for their support, which made this international learning experience possible and created space for play, connection and shared discovery across borders.

Asociacija TAVO Europa – Lithuania
Hrvatska škola Outward Bound – Croatia
Kacsakő Közösségépítő Egyesület – Hungary
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TAVO EUROPA

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FREE PLAY LAB

Target group	all ages. with variations	**Materials & Space**	A selection of simple, open-ended materials: paper cups, cones, colourful paper, string, scissors and cardboard. Can be indoor, but preferably outdoor space with natural elements around
Group size	8-30		
Duration	20-30 min		
Tags	#FreePlay #Creativity #Curiosity #Exploration #Cooperation #Playfulness #Imagination #ExperientialLearning		

Purpose

An open-ended activity inviting participants to experience play without predefined rules, goals or expected outcomes. It encourages curiosity, experimentation, creativity and shared enjoyment, offering a starting point for exploring what makes something play rather than a game.

Instructions

1. Prepare the materials
Give each small group the same collection of simple materials.

2. Invite exploration
Give participants 10–15 minutes and one simple instruction:
“You have these materials and some time together. Do whatever you feel like doing with them. Find something you enjoy exploring or creating together.”
Avoid giving examples or suggesting what they should make.

3. Observe and explore
Let the groups play freely. Observe how they interact with the materials, each other and the experience. Avoid intervening unless needed.

4. Reflect together
Invite participants to share what they did and how the experience felt. Use this as an introduction to exploring the differences between play and games.

Debrief Questions

- What did you do?
- Did someone create rules?
- Did competition appear?
- Who started?
- What made you start doing what you did?
- Did you have a goal, or did it emerge along the way?
- When did you experience enjoyment, curiosity or flow?
- What made this feel like play? When did it start becoming “a game”?
- How was it different from being given a task or a game with rules?
- What conditions helped you feel free to experiment?

Facilitator notes, Variations & Adaptations

- Resist directing: Let participants discover their own possibilities. The absence of a predefined outcome is part of the learning.
- Observe play styles: Notice experimentation, repetition, imagination, collaboration and moments when the activity changes direction.
- Add a second round: Invite groups to repeat the activity with a specific challenge or goal. Compare the experience with the open-ended round.
- Connect to theory: After the debrief, introduce a simple distinction between play and games: games usually have agreed rules and clear goals, while play can be more open-ended and self-directed. They can also overlap. You can also talk about the neuroscience behind play and its importance in human development. During PLAYLAB we introduced the triangle of Play - Games - Experiential Learning Activites and their differences and characteristics, this can serve as an introduction to Experiential Learning and Intentional Facilitation using playful methods and games for learning.
- For youth workers: Ask how they could create similar conditions for young people without controlling the experience or prescribing the outcome.

A-GI-KA

Target group 10+

Group size 6-20

Duration 10-15 min

Materials & Space Can be both indoors or outdoors

Tags #Energiser #Focus #Playfulness #Creativity

Purpose

A funny Energiser to test and improve participants' concentration, quick reactions, coordination, and ability to stay focused under pressure.
The game also encourages attention, alertness, and fun interaction within the group.

Instructions

1. Make the teams and introduce the story
Participants divide into two teams and stand facing each other, lining up along the ropes or cones prepared. Craft a storyline including the land of the three magical beings, the Witches, Dwarfs, and Giants. Teach the three characters: Dwarfs crouch down and make themselves small, Witches stand in the middle and cast a spell with their hands, and Giants stretch their arms above their heads and make themselves as tall as possible. The characters follow a rock-paper-scissors style system: Giants beat Witches, Witches beat Dwarfs, and Dwarfs beat Giants.

2. Let the game begin!
Each team secretly chooses one of the three characters and, when the leader gives the signal, both teams reveal their choice at the same time. The winning team chases the losing team, and anyone who gets tagged before reaching the finish line of their territory, joins the other team. The game continues until one team has all or most of the players.

Debrief Questions

As an Energiser, the game doesn't necessarily need a debrief, however we offer some options for reflection below:

- What helped your team make a decision quickly?
- How did you feel when your team won/lost?
- What happened when people from one team joined the other team?

Facilitator notes, Variations & Adaptations

- There can be variation in the moving phase, you can replace running with jumping like a frog, one-leg jumping or crawling, etc.
- The game has other variations, like Prince, Princess, and Dragons, and you can also create your own characters.

ALELE

Target group all ages

Group size any

Duration 2-5 min

Materials & Space Large flat open area, indoors or outdoors; the space to form a circle

Tags #Energiser #GroupEnergy #Playfulness

Purpose

To energize the participants by repeating a funny rhythmic made-up language.

Instructions

Form a circle. The facilitator introducing the rule: Participants repeat what the facilitator says and the movements they do, so the imaginary bean they are holding in their hands can be fertilized and grow bigger and bigger.

Start the Energiser (line after line, leave time to repeat)

a. WOO
b. ALELE
c. ALELE TIKI WOMBA
d. A MASA MASA MASA
e. E TUKA E TUKA E

Start over with bigger movement and louder shouting.

HOW IS THE BEAN?

Target group	all ages with variations	**Materials & Space**	One ball per team; open space with a clearly marked start and finish line.
Group size	max. 30		
Duration	10-15 min		
Tags	#Energiser #BrainTeaser #Concentration #Reaction #Listening #Humour		

Purpose

ERRR

A playful, fast Energiser that develops concentration and active listening, quick thinking and reaction, memory, self-control under pressure, humour and the ability to laugh at one's own mistakes.

Instructions

1. Form a circle and Learn the questions and answers
Everyone stands in a circle. One participant stands in the middle. Each participant in the circle receives a number, counting around the circle from 1. Everyone must remember their own number.

There are three real questions in the game, and each one has only one correct answer:

- "How many is the bean?" → "The bean is... (your own number)"
- "How is the bean?" → "The bean is good"
- "When is the bean?" → "The bean is now"

2. Point and ask!
The person in the middle points at someone in the circle and asks one of the questions. The person pointed at must answer immediately and correctly.
The person in the middle keeps pointing at different people, faster and faster. **Beware of the trick questions!** The leader may ask confusing questions that are not one of the three, to trick the players. When a trick question is asked, the person pointed at must not answer at all. For example, if the question is "How much is the bean?" or "Where is the bean?", the player stays silent.

3. Finish
A player makes a mistake when they give the wrong answer, hesitate too long, or answer a trick question. The player who makes a mistake is out of the round. The game ends after only one bean remains or when the group's energy is high.

Facilitator notes, Variations & Adaptations

- Play a slow practice round first, so everyone knows the three questions and answers.
- For younger groups, use only two questions or a slower rhythm.
- For a stronger challenge, increase the speed, add a fourth question, or have everyone change places and take new numbers.
- Agree beforehand that mistakes are part of the fun and nobody is laughed at.

DWARFS, WITCHES AND GIANTS

Target group	all ages. with variations	**Materials & Space**	Large open space, Ropes or cones to mark the four lines dividing the areas
Group size	10+		
Duration	10-15 min		
Tags	#Energiser #Communication #Cooperation #Teamwork #Movement #Concentration		

Purpose

The playful game to energize the group, bring the concentration to the present moment and the cooperation in the team.

Instructions

1. Make the teams and introduce the story
Participants divide into two teams and stand facing each other, lining up along the ropes or cones prepared. Craft a storyline including the land of the three magical beings, the Witches, Dwarfs, and Giants. Teach the three characters: Dwarfs crouch down and make themselves small, Witches stand in the middle and cast a spell with their hands, and Giants stretch their arms above their heads and make themselves as tall as possible. The characters follow a rock-paper-scissors style system: Giants beat Witches, Witches beat Dwarfs, and Dwarfs beat Giants.

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Debrief Questions

As an Energiser, the game doesn't necessarily need a debrief, however we offer some options for reflection below:

- What helped your team make a decision quickly?
- How did you feel when your team won/lost?
- What happened when people from one team joined the other team?

Facilitator notes, Variations & Adaptations

- There can be variation in the moving phase, you can replace running with jumping like a frog, one-leg jumping or crawling, etc.
- The game has other variations, like Prince, Princess, and Dragons, and you can also create your own characters.

THE OLYMPICS

Target group	all ages. with variations	**Materials & Space**	A large outdoor space; cones/markers for starting and finishing points; tennis balls; small rings with strings attached; a ball for the passing challenge; a loop/target for throwing; wooden poles; score sheet and pen.
Group size	20-40		
Duration	45-60 min		

Tags #Teamwork #Cooperation #Communication #Coordination #TeamBuilding #Competition #FairPlay #PhysicalActivity

Purpose

A playful, energetic and team-based game that develops cooperation, communication and coordination under time and performance pressure, challenges participants to work together and support each other, creates a friendly atmosphere of competition and fair play, develops the team spirit through shared challenges and fun

Instructions

1. Set the tone and divide the participants into four teams.
Create the atmosphere and build anticipation. Bring energy, excitement and a sense of occasion — the more you commit to the Olympic Games story, the easier it is for participants to enter the playful mindset.

Announce the Olympic Games: participants have been training for years, and now they have finally made it to the Olympics! Introduce the four teams and explain that the teams will compete in five different disciplines, one after another. Each discipline has a winning team, and the results are recorded throughout the activity to find the champion.

2. Relay Race
The first discipline is a relay race. Each team has to move from point A to point B using five different ways of moving, one after another (jumping on one foot, jumping like a frog, crawling like a crab, crawling on all fours, jumping with both legs together). The team members complete the course as a relay. The first team to successfully finish the challenge wins the discipline.

3. Ball Passing
In the second discipline, the team has to pass a ball from the first person to the last person without touching the ball with their hands. Participants have to find a way to coordinate their movements and successfully move the ball through the whole group. The first team to complete the challenge wins.

4. Egg Transport
The team has to transport a tennis ball from point A to point B using a small ring with strings attached to it. Every team member holds one of the strings. The participants have to coordinate their movements carefully so that the ball stays on the ring while they move it towards the finish point. The first team to successfully transport the ball wins the discipline.

GRAB IT FIRST!

Target group	10+	**Materials & Space**	Open space, two starting lines, one object in the middle
Group size	6-20		
Duration	10-15 min		
Tags	#Energiser #Focus #Movement #Reaction #Coordination #Balance #Competition #Listening #Fun		

Purpose

A fun and active game that develops listening, reaction speed, coordination, balance, movement skills and quick decision-making.

Instructions

1. Create two teams
Form two teams. In each team give numbers to participants starting from 1. Both teams stand behind their starting lines, facing the object in the middle.

2. Call a number and movement
The Game Master calls a number and a movement, for example:
“Number 3 — frog!”
From each team the person with number 3 must move towards the object using the frog movement, trying to grab the item first and get back behind their team’s line again.
Other movements can be:

- Scissors — cross the legs while moving.
- Frog — jump like a frog.
- Moonwalk — move backwards.
- One leg — hop on one leg.
- Two legs — jump with both feet together.

The other player becomes the **chaser** and tries to catch them.

3. Who wins?

- If the runner reaches their starting line without being caught, **the runner's team gets the point**.
- If the chaser catches the runner before they reach the line, **the chaser's team gets the point**.

The object is then returned to the middle, and a new number is being called.

Facilitator notes, Variations & Adaptations

- Make sure participants only tag/catch gently and do not push, pull or block each other. Clearly mark the starting lines and playing area.
- For younger children, use slower movements and allow more space. For more challenge, change the movement at the moment the object is grabbed or introduce new animal movements.

THE BALL PASS RELAY

Target group	8+ with variations	**Materials & Space**	One ball per team; open space with a clearly marked start and finish line.
Group size	6-30		
Duration	10-15 min		
Tags	#Energiser #Teamwork #Coordination #Communication #Movement		

Purpose

A fun team game that develops cooperation, coordination, concentration, communication and rhythm.

Instructions

1. Create the teams
Make 2 or more teams. Each team stands in a line, with everyone facing backwards toward the finish line. The first person in each line holds the ball.

2. Pass the ball backwards
The first person passes the ball to the person directly behind them, using the movement called by the Game Master.
Examples:

- Between your legs
- Over your head
- Under your right arm
- Under your left arm
- Around your body

3. Move to the back
After passing the ball, the person who was at the front moves to the back of the line. The next person is now at the front and passes the ball backwards. The team keeps repeating this movement while progressing towards the finish line.

4. Reach the finish
The first team to move all the way to the finish line while successfully passing the ball wins.

Facilitator notes, Variations & Adaptations

- Remind participants to pass carefully and communicate with the person behind them. For younger children, use a soft ball and simple passes. For more challenge, change the passing method during the game or call out the method without demonstrating it.

ESTICA - THE THREE LITTLE STICKS

Target group	8+ with variations	**Materials & Space**	3 sticks, flat and non-slippery ground with enough space for jumping
Group size	2+		
Duration	10-20 min		
Tags	#Energiser #Movement #Coordination #ChildhoodGames #Challenge #OutdoorPlay		

Purpose

A simple, energetic childhood game that challenges coordination, balance and jumping skills. As the distance grows, players test their limits, adapt their movements and discover just how far they can go!

Instructions

1. Set up: Place three sticks parallel to each other on the ground, leaving equal gaps between them.

2. Jump across: Players take turns jumping across the sticks. The aim is to land with only one foot in each section between the sticks, without touching the sticks.

3. Increase the challenge: Once everyone has had a turn, move the sticks further apart.

4. Keep going: Repeat, gradually increasing the distance after each round. Players can try again if they don't manage a jump.

5. Finish: Continue until the group reaches its chosen challenge or the distance becomes too difficult.

Facilitator notes, Variations & Adaptations

- Cooperative challenge: Instead of eliminating players, find a distance everyone can manage together. Can the group increase the distance while everyone completes the sequence?
- Personal best: Invite players to discover their own maximum distance without comparing results.
- Change the movement: Try hopping on one leg or experimenting with different jumping techniques.
- Safety: Use lightweight sticks on even, dry ground. Increase the distance gradually and encourage players to respect their limits.

FOLLOW & PROTECT

Target group all ages

Group size 10-40

Duration 5-10 min

Materials & Space Large open space free of obstacles

Tags #Energiser #Attention #Movement #Spatial Awareness #Focus #Playfulness

Purpose

A lively energiser developing focus, spatial awareness, quick decision-making and playful coordination.

Instructions

1. Everyone stands in a circle.
2. Each participant silently chooses one person as their Guide and another as their Guardian. Keep both choices secret.
3. When the facilitator says “Go!”, everyone moves around, trying to keep their Guardian between themselves and their Guide.
4. After 30–60 seconds, call “Freeze!”
5. Check whether participants managed to position their Guardian between themselves and their Guide. Play another round!

Debriefing questions

- Who did you choose as your Guide and Guardian?
- Was it easy to keep track of both people?
- How did others’ movements influence your decisions?
- What was it like protecting someone, or being someone else’s protection?

Facilitator notes, Variations & Adaptations

- Countdown: Count down from 10 to build playful suspense before calling “Freeze!”
- Slow motion: Everyone must move in slow motion, making it easier to observe group patterns.
- Silent round: No talking or signalling allowed.
- Change roles: After each round, participants choose a new Guide and Guardian.
- Safety first: No running, pushing or blocking. Keep movements controlled and leave enough space between participants.
- Smaller space: Ask participants to walk rather than run, or reduce the playing area gradually while keeping it safe.

SWORD & SHIELD

Target group	8+	**Materials & Space**	Open space with clear boundaries
Group size	6+		
Duration	5-10 min		
Tags	#Energiser #Movement #Coordination #Awareness #Playfulness		

Purpose

A lively movement Energiser that develops body awareness, agility, focus and strategic thinking. Players must stay alert, protect themselves and look for opportunities to reach others, all while moving around in a playful atmosphere.

Instructions

1. Get ready: Each player places one hand behind their lower back, palm facing outwards. This is their **shield**. The other hand points forward with the index finger, becoming their **sword**.

2. Start moving: Players move around the space, trying to touch other players' shields with the tip of their sword while protecting their own.

3. Stay alert: If someone touches your shield, you are out of the game and step to the side.

4. Keep playing: Continue until one player remains, or stop after a set time and start another round.

Debriefing questions

- What helped you protect your shield while reaching for others?
- How was your attention divided between attacking and defending?
- How is your energy now?

Facilitator notes, Variations & Adaptations

- **Quick rounds:** Play several short rounds, changing the pace or inviting players to find new strategies.
- **No elimination:** If your shield is touched, freeze for three seconds before rejoining the game.
- **Team version:** Divide players into teams and see how many shields each team can protect.
- **Slow-motion round:** Move in slow motion to emphasise awareness, timing and control.
- **Safety:** Establish clear boundaries and remind players to walk or move at a controlled pace, keep their swords gentle and avoid physical contact beyond touching the shield with one finger. Use a spacious, obstacle-free area.

KNEE ADDICTED

Target group	10+	**Materials & Space**	Open space, enough room for pairs to move safely
Group size	2+		
Duration	5-10 min		
Tags	#Energiser #Connection #Movement #Appreciation #GroupBuilding		

Purpose

A playful, physical Energiser that wakes up the body while building connection and appreciation within the group. Beneath the playful challenge lies an opportunity to notice each other's strengths and offer genuine compliments. A small moment of appreciation can have a surprisingly powerful effect on the atmosphere of a group.

Instructions

1. Find a partner: Stand facing each other, ready for a playful challenge.
2. Protect your knees: Try to touch your partner's knees with your hand while protecting your own knees from being touched. No grabbing or pushing!
3. Share appreciation: Whenever someone successfully touches their partner's knee, they score a point. The person whose knee was touched shares a genuine compliment or something positive they have noticed about the other person.
4. Keep playing: Continue for a minute or two, then invite participants to find new partners and play again.
5. Raise the challenge: In later rounds, introduce another target, such as the shoulders. Players now try to protect both their knees and shoulders while attempting to touch their partner's targets.

Debriefing questions

- How is your energy now?
- How did it feel to give a compliment? And to receive one?

Facilitator notes, Variations & Adaptations

- Make it meaningful: Encourage specific, genuine compliments rather than generic praise. Participants can appreciate a strength, a quality or something they noticed during the training.
- Add new targets: Introduce shoulders or other agreed-upon targets to make the challenge more dynamic.
- Slow-motion round: Play in slow motion to shift the focus from speed to awareness and playful movement.
- Inclusive adaptation: Allow participants to remain seated, use gentle hand movements or choose a comfortable movement range.
- Safety and consent: Keep the game playful, with no grabbing, pushing or body contact beyond a light hand touch. Make sure everyone feels comfortable participating and offer an alternative way to exchange appreciation if needed.

FLAMING BALL

Target group	all ages with variations	**Materials & Space**	Large outdoor open area; soft ball
Group size	10-30		
Duration	15-25 min		
Tags	#Energiser #Namegame #Movement #Reaction #Competition		

Purpose

A playful, active movement game that develops quick reactions and attention, learning each other's names, aiming and spatial awareness, creative use of the environment, humour and the ability to laugh at oneself.

Instructions

1.Form a circle and begin the game
Everyone stands in a circle. One participant starts with the ball. The player throws the ball vertically into the air and calls another participant's name. If that person catches the ball before it touches the ground, they throw it up again and call someone else's name.

2. Run and hide!
If the ball drops on the ground, the named person must run after it and pick it up.
Meanwhile, the rest of the group runs and hides in different directions.
As soon as the named person has the ball in their hands, they shout "Stop!" and everyone must freeze exactly where they are.
The thrower then chooses one person and tries to hit them with the ball from the spot where they picked it up.

3. Hit or miss
There are two possible outcomes:

- Hit: the person who was hit becomes a Column/Statue. They stay frozen in that spot for the rest of the game, and other players may hide behind them as a shelter.
- Miss: the rest of the group agrees on a funny nickname for the thrower.

Then the game starts all over again: the remaining players return to the circle and the thrower throws the ball up and calls a new name. Statues can no longer be called.
The game ends when only one participant has not been turned into a Statue. That person is the winner.

Facilitator notes, Variations & Adaptations

- For younger groups, use a smaller territory or allow the thrower three steps towards their target.
- For larger groups, use two balls.
- Agree beforehand that the ball is thrown below the shoulders only, and that nicknames stay kind and funny. Clearly mark the boundaries and unsafe/out-of-bounds areas.

JOGO DO MATA

Target group	all ages with variations	**Materials & Space**	Large flat open area, indoors or outdoors; 3–5 soft balls; chalk/tape/cones/rope to mark the centre line, the two territories and the two jails.
Group size	10-40		
Duration	20-60 min		
Tags	#Movement #Teamwork #Strategy #Cooperation #Reaction #Competition #Coordination #Communication		

Purpose

A playful, active team game that develops cooperation and team strategy, quick reactions and decision-making, throwing and catching skills, communication under pressure, spatial awareness and fair play

Instructions

1. Set up the field
Divide the field into two equal sides with a centre line. Each side is one team's territory.
Mark a Jail at the far end of each territory, behind the back line.
Place all the balls on the centre line.

2. Form the teams
Divide the group into two teams. Each team stands at the back line of its own territory.
Players must stay inside their own territory and cannot cross the centre line.

3. Start!
On the signal, both teams run to the centre and try to catch as many balls as they can.
Players try to hit members of the opposing team with the ball.
You can run freely inside your territory, but once you have a ball in your hands you cannot move. You must either:

- throw it at an opponent;
- pass it to someone on your team.

4. Go to jail
If a player is hit by the ball, they go to the Jail behind the opposing team's territory.
If a player catches a ball thrown at them before it touches the ground, the thrower goes to jail instead.
Prisoners stay in the game: if a ball reaches the Jail, they can throw it at the opponents in front of them or pass it back to their teammates. A prisoner who hits an opponent is freed and returns to their own territory.
The team wins when all of the participants of the opposing team have been sent to jail.

Debrief Questions

- What strategies did your team develop?
- What made cooperation useful or difficult?
- When did you take a risk? When did you play it safe?
- How did it feel to be in jail? How did you stay involved?
- What helped your team communicate effectively?

Facilitator notes, Variations & Adaptations

- Play 2–3 rounds: give teams a few minutes between rounds to reflect and change their strategy.
- For younger groups, use fewer and softer balls or a smaller field.
- For a stronger challenge, add more balls or introduce a time limit: the team with fewer prisoners wins.
- Agree beforehand that the ball is thrown below the shoulders only; a hit to the head does not count.
- Clearly mark the centre line, the jails and unsafe/out-of-bounds areas.
- The game is known around the world under many names, such as Jogo do Mata (Portugal), Queimada (Brazil) or Völkerball (Germany), and the rules can be adapted freely to the group.

X & O TEAM CHALLENGE

Target group	All ages, with variations	**Materials & Space**	6 balls or similar objects — 3 of each of two colours; a large 3 × 3 grid marked on the ground with ropes, cones or other materials; open space for running.
Group size	6-30		
Duration	5-10 min		

Tags #Energiser #Strategy #Teamwork #Competition #Communication #Movement #QuickThinking

Purpose

A fast-paced team version of tic-tac-toe that develops quick thinking and decision-making, teamwork and communication, strategic thinking, focus and reaction speed
An energetic way to wake up a group, raise the energy or introduce playful competition.

Instructions

1. Set up the grid
Create a large 3 × 3 grid on the ground, with nine squares.
Divide participants into two teams. Each team has three balls of the same colour — for example, Team Blue and Team Yellow.
Both teams line up at an agreed starting point, 4-6 meters from the grid.

2. Explain the challenge
When the game starts, the first player from each team runs to the grid with their team's ball, places it in one of the nine squares, runs back and gives a high five to the next teammate.
The next player can then run and place another ball.
The goal is to create a line of three balls of your own colour:

- horizontally
- vertically
- diagonally

Once a team has placed all three balls, they don't stop.
They can pick up and move one of their own balls to another square on their next turn, trying to create a new line.
A ball cannot simply be removed and placed back in the same square. Players have to change their position and rethink their strategy.
Important: Players may never touch or move the other team's balls.

3. Score!
Set a time limit, for example 2–3 minutes.
Every time a team creates a line of three, they score one point.
The team with the most points when the time is up wins.

Debrief Questions

Usually no debrief is needed — this works primarily as an energiser. If you want a quick reflection:

- What made a team successful?
- Did you have a strategy, or were you mostly reacting?
- How did communication influence the game?
- What happened when you had to change your strategy?

Facilitator notes, Variations & Adaptations

- Keep the energy high: use a countdown, music or enthusiastic commentary.
- For a more strategic version, give teams a short planning time before starting and between two rounds.
- For a harder version, increase the distance between the starting line and the grid.
- For a large group, run several grids simultaneously.

HUMAN FOOTBALL

Target group	all ages. with variations	**Materials & Space**	Large outdoor area, 2 goals made with cones or other materials, markers to divide the field into two territories (best is a rope) and markers, that show clear borders of the playfield.
Group size	10-30		
Duration	10-15 min		
Tags	#Strategy #Cooperation #Teamwork #Movement #Agility #Competition #Awareness #Communication		

Purpose

A fast-paced team energiser that develops teamwork and cooperation, speed, agility and spatial awareness, communication and strategic thinking, decision-making between attacking, defending and supporting teammates

Instructions

1. Story & Setting
Human Football works especially well as an energiser. A simple storytelling layer can be added to connect it to the wider programme. For example, participants can become two clans, each with its own name, colours and identity. Set up the playing area like a football field, with two territories and one goal at each end.

2. Create the teams
Divide participants into two teams. Each team has its own side of the field and a goal at the opposite end. The objective is to enter the opponent's territory and pass through their goal without being tagged.

3. Begin the match
Players can move freely across the field, including into the opponent's territory, and try to reach the opposing goal. If a player is tagged by an opponent while in the opponent's territory, they must freeze where they were tagged. They can only move again when a teammate reaches them and tags them.

4. Score and win
A player scores one point by successfully reaching and passing through the opponent's goal without being tagged. After a goal is scored, everyone returns to their own side and the next round starts from the middle. After the agreed playing time, the team with the most points wins.

Facilitator notes, Variations & Adaptations

- Play 2–3 short rounds and give teams time to adjust their strategy between rounds.
- For younger groups, make the field smaller and use shorter rounds.
- For a stronger challenge, make the field larger or introduce a time limit.

THE RAINFOREST

Target group all ages

Group size 10-40

Duration 5-10 min

Materials & Space Open space where everyone can sit or stand comfortably in a circle.

Tags #GroupEnergy #Listening #Coordination #BodyPercussion #Creativity #Relaxation

Purpose

A simple group activity that develops listening, coordination and collective awareness. It can also be used as an Energiser, a calming activity, or a transition between activities.

Instructions

1. Start the story
Tell the group that a storm is slowly approaching. Everyone follows the Game Master and copies the sounds and movements joining on by one around the circle. Start very quietly by **rubbing or lightly tapping your hands together**, creating the sound of gentle breeze, wind and rain.

2. The storm grows
Gradually make the sound louder:

- Rub hands together for light rain.
- Tap gently on your knees.
- Tap your knees and thighs more strongly.
- Tap your chest gently.
- Stomp your feet on the ground.

The Game Master can say: **“The storm is getting bigger... bigger... BIGGER!”**
Everyone gradually increases the volume and energy until it becomes a powerful storm.

3**. The storm passes**
Slowly reverse the movements. The storm becomes quieter and calmer:

- Stomping becomes gentle steps.
- Chest and thigh tapping becomes softer.
- Knee tapping becomes lighter.
- Hands rub together quietly.
- Finally, return to a very soft sound like gentle rain. and end with a few seconds of complete silence, as if the storm has completely passed.

Facilitator notes, Variations & Adaptations

The Game Master controls the rhythm and intensity, so participants should watch and listen carefully. Make sure the movements are comfortable and safe, especially when tapping the body. Avoid strong hitting or stomping if the space or floor is unsuitable.
The activity can be done **without speaking at all**, with the facilitator communicating only through movements. For a more storytelling-focused version, describe the storm as it develops: *“A little rain... the wind is coming... the storm is getting stronger... thunder!”* and then gradually guide it back to calm.

LITTLE BUNNIES

Target group	young children	**Materials & Space**	Hula hoops or paper circles placed around an open space, with enough room to move safely.
Group size	5-20		
Duration	5-15 min		
Tags	#Energiser #Movement #Listening #Coordination #Reaction #GroupPlay #Observation		

Purpose

A simple and playful movement game that develops listening, quick reactions, coordination, observation and getting to know similarities between participants.

Instructions

1. Create the homes
Place hula hoops or paper circles around the space. Each circle is a bunny's home. One or more bunnies can start in each home.

2. Bunnies leave their homes
The Game Master says: **“Little bunnies, get out of your homes!”**
Everyone leaves their home and moves around the space.

3. Find a new home
The Game Master calls a characteristic, for example:
“Bunnies who were born in April, find a new home!”
Only the bunnies who match the characteristic must quickly find another home.
Other examples:

- Bunnies wearing something blue!
- Bunnies who have a brother or sister!
- Bunnies who like chocolate!
- Bunnies who have a pet!
- Bunnies who have travelled to another country!

4. The bunny without a home
After everyone has found a home, one bunny may be left without a home. This bunny becomes the next Game Master and calls out a new characteristic.
If everyone finds a home, the Game Master can continue with another characteristic.

Facilitator notes, Variations & Adaptations

Bunnies can be played with different storylines and works well also with youth and even adults as a getting to know each other game. Depending on the prompts the activity can be adjusted for different groups.

THE ROPE OF CONNECTION

Target group	10+	**Materials & Space**	A long rope held by all participants, on a safe and accessible hiking trail. Prepared questions
Group size	8-30		
Duration	20-45 min		
Tags	#GettingToKnowEachOther #Connection #Communication #Teamwork #Trust #Reflection #OutdoorLearning #Playfulness		

Purpose

A walking conversation activity combining getting-to-know-you questions with a shared team challenge. Participants build new connections while practising listening, cooperation and collective responsibility during a hike.

Instructions

1. Form two lines
Participants stand in two facing lines, with each person paired with someone from the opposite line. Everyone holds the shared rope.

2. Start walking and talking
Introduce a question for each pair to discuss while walking. Give them a few minutes to share and listen to each other.

3. Change partners
Stop at an agreed point. One line moves forward or backward to create new pairs. Introduce the next question and continue walking.

4. Keep the rope connected
Throughout the activity, the group works together to keep the rope from touching the ground. Participants need to pay attention to the rope and each other while walking and talking.

5. Continue the conversations
Repeat with new partners and questions until the hike or activity ends.

Question Ideas

Light & playful

- What is a tiny thing that makes you irrationally happy?
- What was your favourite childhood game, and who did you play it with?
- What would your superhero power be, and what ridiculous weakness would it have?
- What is your weirdest habit?
- If your life had a warning label, what would it say?
- What is something about you people might not guess at first?
- What is the most ridiculous excuse you've ever used?

Getting to know each other

- Where are you coming from today, geographically and emotionally?
- What is one thing you left behind to be here?
- What brought you on this adventure?
- If we met again in 20 years, what would you hope I remembered about you?

Building a learning community

- What do you hope to contribute to this temporary community?
- What support might you need from others?
- What is one thing your future self hopes you will discover here?
- What might become possible if we trust this process?

Creative conversation

- If aliens landed here, how would you explain humanity to them?
- If our group were an animal, what would it be and why?
- What would you like this group to be able to say about itself at the end of our journey?

Facilitator notes, Variations & Adaptations

- Build the connection gradually: Start with funny, easy questions before moving towards deeper reflection.
- Adapt to the programme: Use questions about expectations, group agreements, learning goals or shared experiences.
- Keep it conversational: Participants do not need to answer every question. Encourage genuine listening rather than rushing to respond.
- Change the rhythm: Alternate short, playful questions with longer conversations.
- Make it inclusive: Allow participants to pass on a question, walk at a comfortable pace or participate in another accessible way.
- Safety first: Use a wide, even trail, keep the rope loose and low-risk, and stop before changing partners. Never allow the rope to restrict movement, create a tripping hazard or pull anyone off balance. If the terrain becomes difficult, pause the rope challenge and focus on safe walking.
- Simplify the challenge: If keeping the rope off the ground becomes distracting, use a rope-free version or give the group occasional checkpoints to check their coordination.

The rope is a shared responsibility, not a competition. The aim is to keep moving together while creating space for meaningful conversations.

BIOMETRICAL LINE

Target group	all ages, with variations	**Materials & Space**	A large indoor or outdoor area and a long rope placed on the ground. The rope should be long enough for all participants to stand on it at the same time.
Group size	10-30		
Duration	10-20 min		
Tags	#Communication #Teamwork #Cooperation #Movement #Strategy #NonVerbalCommunication #Problem-Solving #Observation #Creativity		

Purpose

A playful teamwork activity that develops non-verbal communication, cooperation, problem-solving, observation and quick decision-making. Participants have to communicate and organize themselves without speaking while maintaining physical contact with the rope.

Instructions

1. Prepare the space
Place a long rope on the ground. Make sure there is enough space around it for participants to move safely.

2. Get on the rope
Ask all participants to stand on the rope in a line. At least one foot of each participant must stay in contact with the rope at all times.

3. Explain the rules
The facilitator gives the group a category according to which they have to arrange themselves. Participants cannot speak or make sounds. They can only communicate using gestures, facial expressions and body language.
Examples of categories

- From youngest to oldest
- By shoe size, smallest to largest
- By distance travelled to get here, shortest to longest
- By hair length, shortest to longest

4. Arrange yourselves
Participants have to move along the rope and find their correct position according to the given category. They must cooperate and communicate without words while keeping at least one foot on the rope.

5. Check the result
When the group thinks they are in the correct order, everyone stays in position. The facilitator checks whether the order is correct.

6. Try another round
Give the group a new category and repeat the challenge. Categories can become more difficult as the game continues.

Debrief Questions

- What was the most difficult part of communicating without speaking?
- How did you communicate with each other without using words?
- What gestures or signals worked best?
- Did everyone have a chance to participate and express their ideas?
- How did you decide who should move where?
- How did you react when you made a mistake?
- Which category was the easiest and which was the most difficult?
- Where could you use these communication skills in everyday life?

Facilitator notes, Variations & Adaptations

- The activity can be played with one group as a cooperative challenge or with two groups as a competition.
- For the competitive version, prepare two ropes of similar length and divide participants into two teams.
- Give both teams the same category at the same time. The team that arranges itself correctly first wins the round.
- The facilitator should check both teams before declaring a winner. Speed only counts if the order is correct and every participant is still touching the rope with at least one foot.
- Play several rounds and give 1 point to the team that finishes correctly first.
- For an additional challenge, introduce a time limit, for example 60–90 seconds per round.
- For younger participants, use simple categories such as height, age or birthday month.
- For older or more experienced groups, use less obvious categories such as number of countries visited, number of languages spoken or distance travelled.
- Remind participants that no speaking, shouting or deliberate physical pushing is allowed.

N FEET K HANDS

Target group	all ages with variations	**Materials & Space**	Open, safe floor or outdoor space.
Group size	6-30		
Duration	10-15 min		
Tags	#Teamwork #Cooperation #Balance #Communication #Movement #Problem-Solving #Creativity		
Purpose			

A fun cooperation challenge that develops communication, balance, coordination, creativity and problem-solving.

Instructions

1. Form teams
Create teams of 5-10 participants. The number of participants per team depends on your group and you as a facilitator.

2. Call the challenge
Call a combination, for example:
“4 feet and 3 hands!”
The group must quickly create a position where **exactly 4 feet and 3 hands** are touching the ground.
Other examples:

- 6 feet and 2 hands
- 3 feet and 5 hands
- 8 feet and 4 hands

3. Work together
Participants have to decide how to position themselves and may need to support or balance with each other.

4. Change it!
After a few seconds, call a new combination and the group creates a new position.

Facilitator notes, Variations & Adaptations

- Remind participants to move carefully and never put their full weight on another person's body. Avoid combinations that require unsafe balancing.
- For younger children, use simpler numbers. For a bigger challenge, give the group a short time limit to create the position.

HUMAN KNOT

Target group	8+ with variations	**Materials & Space**	Can be both indoors or outdoors. Open, safe space where participants can stand in a circle.
Group size	8-20/group		
Duration	10-20 min		
Tags	#Energiser #Teamwork #Cooperation #Communication #Problem-Solving #Trust #Coordination		

Purpose

A cooperative game that develops communication, teamwork, problem-solving, trust and patience. The group must work together to untangle itself without letting go of hands.

Instructions

1. Make a circle
Participants stand close together in a circle.

2. Create the knot
Everyone reaches into the middle and takes the hand of two different people.
Participants should not hold the hands of the people directly next to them.

3. Untangle!
Without letting go of each other's hands, the group works together to untangle the knot and form one circle again.
Participants can step over, move under, turn around and carefully move through the knot.

4. Finish
The challenge is completed when the group successfully untangles itself while still holding hands.

Facilitator notes, Variations & Adaptations

- Remind participants to move slowly and communicate rather than pulling or forcing anyone's arm.
- If the group gets stuck, allow them to restart or give a small hint.
- For younger groups, make a simpler knot by allowing participants to hold hands with people next to them.
- For a bigger challenge, before closing eyes, participants can cross their own hands in front of themselves and look for other hands that way.
- You can also create several smaller groups and see which group can untangle itself first.
- Another variation of the game is to give pieces of ropes to the participants as extensions of their hands and play it like that.

THE BAT CAVE

Target group	all ages. with variations	**Materials & Space**	Larger outdoor area with trees, two blindfolds
Group size	10-20		
Duration	60 min		
Tags	#Strategy #Cooperation #Teamwork #Movement #Observation #Competition #Problem-Solving #Communication		

Purpose

A playful, active strategy game based on the traditional game “The bat and the moth” by Joseph Cornell, the game gives participants a simple physical experience of using sound to locate something they cannot see. The purpose is to develop cooperation and team strategy, observation and quick decision-making, communication under pressure, creative use of the environment, adaptation and problem-solving

Instructions

1. Create the story
Create a story about bats in nature. Explain that bats send out high-frequency sounds and they listen for the returning echoes. Use some music in the background, some visuals.

2. Energisers
Use as a warm up - Bat colonies Energiser. People moving/ ”flying” around in a predetermined area with the facilitator saying different numbers, and participants need to connect by elbows forming bat colonies of different sizes. For example, if number 2, two people connect. So by the end you create 2 equal teams which will be used for the main game.

3. Rules
Introduce teams to game rules. Two teams; bats and moths meeting for a playful challenge. Give each team a name and the goal they need to reach. The bats goal is to catch the moth, while the moths goal is to escape the cave through an exit formed by two members of the moth team holding hands high to create an opening in the circle. The circle is created by participants holding hands, all except the two chosen as the first bat and moth. Those two participants remain inside of the circle and they are later blindfolded before the game starts. During the game, team members can help the blinded bat and moth, guiding them with sound signals, but they aren’t allowed to use words. Invite the teams to create a strategy and decide on the signals they will use. After the teams are done strategizing, start the first round. Before starting the sound signals, rotate the circle, thus changing the position of the exit. After each round, participants can be given additional strategy time to adjust their signals. The bat and moth in the circle change after every round, until all the participants have experienced being blindfolded. Then start the reflection.

Debrief Questions

- What was the strategy of the team and what of the bat? How did the strategy change and evolve?
- What made cooperation useful or difficult?
- How did you feel while blindfolded?
- How did you feel while guiding the blindfolded participant?
- How and why did your strategy change throughout the game?
- What helped your team communicate effectively?
- How could this experience help you improve communication skills in daily life?

Facilitator notes, Variations & Adaptations

- For younger groups, use visual materials during the storytelling part
- For a stronger challenge or if the number of participants is smaller, expand the territory by having participants hold a rope
- Trees and such obstacles can be added into the circle
- The position of the exit can be changed during the game, even a second exit can be added
- Agree beforehand to be gentle while catching the moth to avoid injuries
- The story can be adapted freely to the culture and context of the group

THE SLEEPING VILLAGE OF PALERMO

Target group	10+. with variations	**Materials & Space**	Quiet space for sitting in a circle; role cards/papers; optional atmospheric music or lighting.
Group size	10-30		
Duration	30-60 min		
Tags	#Communication #Strategy #Observation #Trust #Teamwork #CriticalThinking #RolePlaying #decision-making		

Purpose

A social deduction game developing observation, communication, critical thinking, persuasion, decision-making and trust.

Instructions

1. Create the story
The village of Palermo is peaceful, but a secret Mafia has arrived. Every night, the Mafia secretly chooses a villager to eliminate. During the day, the villagers discuss and vote to discover who the Mafia are.

2. Give out roles
Secretly give participants roles (by a card chosen by the group or touching the person while the village is sleeping)

- **Mafia:** eliminate one player each night.
- **Villagers:** identify the Mafia.
- **Detective:** investigates one player each night.
- **Doctor:** protects one player each night.

One person is the **Narrator** and guides the game.

3. Night
Everyone closes their eyes. The Narrator wakes the Mafia, Detective and Doctor one at a time so they can secretly perform their actions.

4. Day
Everyone wakes up. The Narrator announces what happened during the night. The group discusses who they suspect and why.

5. Vote
The villagers vote for one person they believe is Mafia. The person with the most votes leaves the game. The game continues with alternating night and day rounds.

6. Finish
The **Villagers win** when all Mafia members are eliminated.
The **Mafia wins** when they equal or outnumber the other players.

Debrief Questions

- How did you decide who to trust?
- What made someone seem suspicious?
- How did you react when you were accused?
- How did the group make decisions with limited information?
- What strategies helped your team?

Facilitator notes, Variations & Adaptations

- For younger groups, use only Mafia and Villagers. Add the Detective and Doctor for more experienced players. Adapt the story and language to the group. For sensitive groups, use “leave the village” instead of “eliminate.” Make sure accusations remain within the game and do not become personal.

NATURE BINGO

Target group	10+	**Materials & Space**	An outdoor natural area, such as a forest, park or garden, where participants can safely explore their surroundings. Printed Nature Bingo cards
Group size	any		
Duration	30-45 min		
Tags	#Nature #Observation #Mindfulness #EnvironmentalAwareness #OutdoorLearning		

Purpose

Nature Bingo is an experiential outdoor activity that encourages participants to explore their natural surroundings and inner world through observation, curiosity and playful challenges.

The activity aims to develop observation skills, environmental awareness, respect for nature, a sense of exploration, mindfulness and personal connection with both themselves and the natural environment. It also encourages participants to slow down, notice details they might usually overlook, and experience nature in a more intentional and playful way.

Instructions

1. Set-up
Prepare a 5 × 5 bingo card with 25 different nature-related challenges. Make sure the challenges are suitable for the location, the weather conditions and the participants.

2. Introduce the mission
Introduce the activity as an opportunity to explore nature, discover new things and connect with the surrounding environment.
“Your mission is to explore the natural world around you and complete the challenges on your Nature Bingo card. Take your time to observe, listen and pay attention to the little details that often go unnoticed.
Each challenge offers a different way to experience nature. You might discover something interesting, notice a sound you have never paid attention to, or find something that reminds you of yourself.
You can approach this as a challenge, but also as an opportunity to slow down, be curious and enjoy the moment. Explore at your own pace, stay open to surprises, and remember to respect and protect the environment throughout your journey.”

Give the participants a bingo card and a pen. Explain that participants can explore and complete the bingo in the given time. Clearly define the boundaries of the area for exploration and remind them that they must not damage plants, disturb animals, destroy nests or anthills, or eat anything they find in nature. Mushrooms and unknown plants should be observed without touching or picking them. Give the teams 30 minutes to explore the designated area and complete as many challenges as possible.

3. Share the experience
Invite participants to share one discovery, challenge or moment that stood out to them.

Debrief Questions

- What was the most interesting thing you discovered?
- Did you notice anything you would normally overlook?
- Which challenge was the most difficult or surprising?
- Was there a challenge that made you see nature differently?
- How did you feel during the activities that invited you to slow down or connect with nature?
- What did you learn about the natural environment around you?
- What is one thing you would like to pay more attention to the next time you spend time outdoors?

Facilitator notes, Variations & Adaptations

- Protect nature: Encourage participants to follow the Leave No Trace, Nature Bound principles and avoid disturbing wildlife, nests, anthills or mushrooms, collecting plants, and never require participants to touch anything they are uncomfortable with.
- Adjust the duration: For a shorter activity, allow 15–20 minutes. For a more relaxed exploration, extend the activity to 45 minutes or more.
- Adapt the activity and make it a competition: it can be an individual competition or a team one.
- Include different types of challenges: Combine observation tasks, sensory experiences, creative activities and reflective prompts to make the activity varied and engaging.
- Focus on the experience, not only the score: The competitive element can motivate participants, but the main objective is to encourage curiosity, environmental awareness and meaningful engagement with nature.

Quest Ideas:

- Identify 5 different smells
- Find a piece of fur.
- Touch some moss.
- Find something that is completely useless in nature.
- Observe ants carrying something.
- Smile at someone.
- Find three different kinds of seeds.
- Find a feather.
- Hear a bird singing.
- Spot three butterflies of different colours.
- Find something that you think is a treasure.
- Hug a tree for a little longer.
- Touch or pick up something that reminds you of yourself.
- Spot three flying birds.
- Find a bird's nest.
- Find an anthill.
- Spot some animal tracks.
- Find something edible in the wild.
- Find three leaves of different shades of the same colour.
- Find something rough and something smooth.
- Find something symmetrical.
- Find something perfectly straight.
- Find a shape on the sky
- Find something in nature that reminds you of your childhood.
- Identify one natural sound that is loud and one that is quiet.

NATURE SCULPTURES

Target group	all ages. with variations	**Materials & Space**	A natural outdoor space with fallen leaves, sticks, stones, pinecones and other naturally fallen materials.
Group size	8-30		
Duration	30-45 min		
Tags	#NatureConnection #Creativity #Cooperation #Exploration #Playfulness #Teamwork #OutdoorLearning #Imagination		

Purpose

A creative outdoor activity inviting participants to explore nature through collecting, building and sculpting. It encourages collaboration, imagination, observation and connection with the natural environment.

Instructions

1. Explore
Divide participants into small groups and invite them to explore the surrounding area for suitable natural materials.

2. Create
Give each group 15–20 minutes to build a sculpture together. Let them decide what to create, how to work and which materials to use.

3. Exhibit
Invite groups to visit each other's sculptures in a forest gallery. Each group can give its creation a name or share the story behind it.

4. Reflect
Discuss the creative process, collaboration and participants' experience of working with natural materials.

Debrief Questions

- How did your idea develop as you worked?
- How did you make decisions together?
- What did you notice about the materials or the environment?
- What was enjoyable or challenging about creating without manufactured materials?
- How could this experience be used in youth work?

Facilitator notes, Variations & Adaptations

- Completely free creation: Give no theme or expected outcome; let groups follow their curiosity.
- Theme-based sculptures: Explore themes such as teamwork, belonging, resilience, freedom, the future or the relationship between humans and nature.
- One-minute sculpture: Give groups a very short time to create something together.
- Crafting through time: Give participants a longer time frame, like throughout the whole program, 3-10 days to craft, build, reshape their sculptures and have the exhibition at the end.
- Collaborative landscape: Each group builds one part of a larger shared installation.
- Nature museum: Invite groups to name their sculptures and create a short story or exhibition label.
- No talking: Groups must create their sculpture without speaking.
- Respect nature: Use fallen or loose materials only. Avoid damaging living plants, disturbing wildlife or leaving non-natural materials behind.
- Keep the process open: Focus on exploration and collaboration rather than artistic skill or making the “best” sculpture.

BROKEN TELEPHONE

Target group	all ages. with variations	**Materials & Space**	Open space for a circle and a straight line; paper and drawing materials for the final round; optional poster showing the communication flow: **Sender → Message → Channel + Noise → Receiver**
Group size	10-30		
Duration	20-45 min		

Tags #Listening #Communication #Cooperation #Teamwork #Observation #Concentration #Creativity #NonVerbalCommunication

Purpose

A playful exploration of how messages change as they move between people and through different communication channels.
The activity develops active listening and concentration, observation and attention to detail, clear communication, non-verbal communication, creativity and interpretation, awareness of how “noise” and assumptions can affect communication

Instructions

1. Layer 1 – Words
Participants stand in a circle. One participant whispers a phrase to the person next to them without anyone else hearing it. The message is passed from person to person in the same way. The final participant says the message out loud.
Compare it with the original message. How much changed along the way?

2. Layer 2 – Dance
Participants stand in a straight line, facing forward.
The last participant creates a short dance move and gently taps the shoulder of the person in front of them. That person turns around, watches the movement, then taps the next person’s shoulder and passes it on.
No speaking is allowed. The movement continues through the line until the final participant performs what they received. Compare it with the original.

3. Layer 3 – Movement & Sound
Participants remain in a straight line. The last participant creates a movement together with a sound. It could be inspired by nature, an animal or a bird.
They tap the shoulder of the person in front and demonstrate the movement and sound.
The action is then passed through the line in the same way.
At the end, compare the final version with the original.

4. Layer 4 – Drawing Instructions
Participants work in pairs, sitting back-to-back.
In the first round, one person receives a picture or image. Without showing it, they give their partner verbal instructions for how to draw it.
The partner tries to recreate the image based only on the instructions.
Afterwards, compare the drawing with the original image and briefly discuss what helped and what made it difficult. Switch roles and repeat.

Debrief Questions

- What changed as the message moved from person to person?
- Where did “noise” enter the communication?
- What made a message easier or harder to understand?
- Was it easier to communicate with words, movement, sound or drawing instructions?
- What helped you understand the other person?
- How did assumptions or interpretations affect the message?
- What is the difference between what we intended to communicate and what the other person understood?
- What can we do to make our communication clearer?
- How does this relate to communication in our everyday lives or youth work?

Facilitator notes, Variations & Adaptations

- Keep the first rounds simple and playful before introducing the communication theory.
- After each layer, briefly compare the original and final message before moving on.
- The activity works particularly well when the facilitator introduces the idea of noise as anything that changes, interrupts or influences a message.
- For younger groups, use simple phrases, movements or pictures.
- For larger groups, create several smaller circles or lines and compare the results.
- For a higher challenge, facilitators can add extra noise to the communication channel by moving around, making distracting noises and movements around the group.
- In the drawing round, choose images with different levels of complexity depending on the group.
- The activity can be followed by a short input on the communication process: sender, message, channel, noise and receiver.

FAST BALL

Target group 8+

Group size 6-20

Duration 10-30 min

Materials & Space One soft ball and enough open space for all participants to stand in a circle.

Tags #Teamwork #Communication #Memory #Concentration #Names #Speed #Coordination #Fun

Purpose

A fast-paced name-learning game that helps participants remember each other's names, improve concentration and coordination, and build group connection. The group works together to complete the same sequence of passes faster and faster.

Instructions

1. Form a circle
Ask all participants to stand in a circle with enough space between them to safely throw and catch the ball. One participant starts with the ball and chooses someone to throw it to. Before throwing, they must say the name of the person they are throwing the ball to. The person who catches the ball chooses another participant and says their name before throwing the ball. Continue until everyone has received the ball once.

2. Remember the order
After the first round, the group must remember the exact throwing sequence.
For example: Anna → David → Maria → Peter → Lucas → Anna

3. Repeat the same sequence
Start again. This time, participants must follow exactly the same order and say the name of the person they are throwing to.

4. Get faster
In each new round, the group tries to complete the exact same sequence faster than before. The facilitator can time each round and announce the group's time.
Continue playing and encourage the participants to beat their previous time. The challenge is not only to throw faster, but also to remember the names and sequence without making mistakes.

Optional variation – Add another ball
Once the group can complete the sequence quickly, introduce a second ball with a new sequence. For an advanced version, add a third ball and challenge the group to maintain the sequences without dropping any ball.

Debrief Questions

- Did you focus more on the name, the person or the ball?
- What happened when the group started going faster?
- Did speed make communication more difficult?
- How did you help each other when someone forgot the sequence?
- What strategy did your group develop to become faster?
- How did the activity change as more pressure was added?

Facilitator notes, Variations & Adaptations

- Make sure participants say the name clearly before throwing the ball.
- Use a soft ball, tennis ball to avoid injuries.
- Start slowly and allow participants to learn the sequence before introducing speed.
- If participants don't know each other's names, start with a short introductory round where everyone says their name.
- For a stronger challenge, introduce a second or third ball, increase the speed, or require participants to throw using a specific hand.
- The activity can also be played as a team competition, with two groups trying to complete the same challenge in the shortest time.
- Fast ball can turned into a longer experiential learning activity, by allowing more creativity into the game through variations of rules. You can list clearly the rules, like the ball has to be thrown, no two people at the same time can touch it; it cannot be passed to neighbours; the names have to be said out loud and the sequence has to be respected. However, you can allow participants to change places and come up with different ways that can reduce their time.

THE MYSTERY HUNTING

Target group	all ages, with variations	**Materials & Space**	Large outdoor/indoor area with multiple locations, rooms, doors, fences, natural hiding places; clue papers; rope; ball; blindfold; 10 small objects; paper letters; pens/markers; prepared task cards.
Group size	5-20		
Duration	60-90 min		
Tags	#Teamwork #Cooperation #Movement #Communication #Problem-solving #Observation #Creativity #Memory #Competition #Strategy		

Purpose

A playful mystery-hunting game that combines movement, teamwork, communication, creativity, memory, problem-solving and observation. Participants work together to discover hidden locations by solving clues and completing challenges. Each successful task allows them to continue their hunt and receive the next clue.

Instructions

1. Create the story
Introduce the activity as “The Mystery Hunting”. Tell participants that a series of mysterious clues have been hidden around the area. Each clue leads them to a new location, where they will have to complete a challenge before they can continue. The group must work together to solve the mystery and complete all the tasks.

2. Prepare the route
Before the game, prepare all the **locations** and place a clue at each location. The clues should lead participants from one location to the next.
Examples:
Parking spot - “Find the blue square where a single letter claims its territory.”
Grill place - “Nothing is cooking now, but this is where the flames are invited when hunger arrives.”
The facilitator can adjust the wording of the clues depending on the actual location and difficulty.

3. Start the hunt
Give the participants their **first clue**. They must read the clue together and decide where they think they need to go. Once they find the location, the facilitator gives them the corresponding task.

4. Complete the tasks
At each location, participants must complete one challenge. The group cannot continue until the task has been successfully completed.

Examples:
Rope Running - Participants must run underneath a rotating rope without being hit. Hint: Start with a small number of people and gradually add more. The group succeeds when everyone has participated successfully.
Human Statue - The group must create a human statue together representing an animal or superhero. They must hold the pose for 10 seconds.

Blindfolded Football - Choose one participant and blindfold them. Spin the participant around three times. The participant must try to score a goal while the rest of the group guides them verbally. The group succeeds when they score.

Charades - One participant receives a word and acts it out without speaking. The rest of the group has 30 seconds to guess the word.

Guess the Song - One participant hums a famous song without using any words. The group must guess the song. The facilitator can prepare a list of suitable songs beforehand.

Plank Challenge - The whole group must collectively complete 5 minutes of plank time. Participants can decide how long each person holds the plank, but everyone must participate. For example, one person can do 30 seconds while another does 60 seconds.

Hint Puzzle - The participants receive another clue, but the clue has been cut into separate words. They must work together to put the words in the correct order and discover the hidden message/location.

Alphabet Challenge - The group must name 7 animals beginning with the letter S. (For other difficulties the letter or the number of words can be changed.) They must complete the challenge together within the agreed time.
Memory Challenge - Place 10 small objects in front of the participants. Give them 20 seconds to memorize the objects. Cover the objects. The group must correctly remember at least 7 of the 10 objects. (For other difficulties the number of objects and duration of the time can be changed.)

Counting Challenge - The group must count from 1 to 20.
Rules:

- The same number cannot be said by two people at the same time.
- Every participant must say at least one number.
- Participants cannot simply go around the circle in order.
- The sequence must be spontaneous and cooperative.

If two people say a number at the same time, they must start again.
Describe the Word - One person receives a secret word and must describe it to the rest of the group without saying the word itself, using gestures, or using parts of the word. The rest of the group has to guess the word within 30 seconds. The group succeeds when they guess the correct word.

5. Continue the hunt
After successfully completing a task, the participants receive or find the next clue. They must then solve the clue, find the next location and complete the next challenge. The hunt continues until all the tasks have been completed.

6. Finish
The game ends when the participants have found all the locations; completed all the challenges; successfully solved the final mystery.
The facilitator can prepare a small final surprise, message, treasure or celebration for the group.

Debrief Questions

After completing the mystery hunt, bring everyone together and ask:

- Which task was the easiest? Which was the hardest?
- What helped you work well as a team?
- Did everyone have a chance to participate?
- Which challenge required the most communication?
- How did you react when something didn't work the first time?
- What did you learn about your teammates during the game?
- If you played the game again, what would you do differently?

Facilitator notes, Variations & Adaptations

- For younger participants, make the clues simpler and reduce the difficulty of the physical tasks.
- For older participants, make the clues more mysterious or cryptic and add time limits.
- If the group is large, divide participants into 2 teams and either give them different routes or let them compete to finish first.
- For a more cooperative version, keep everyone as one team and make the goal completing all challenges together.
- Make sure the route is checked beforehand so that all locations are safe and accessible.
- Clearly explain where participants are allowed to go and which areas are out of bounds.
- For outdoor versions, consider weather conditions and slippery/uneven surfaces.
- The story and clues can be adapted to the location and the theme.

MAGIC GATE

Target group	all ages	**Materials & Space**	Can be both indoors or outdoors. Open, safe space where participants can run. An at least 10m long rope.
Group size	10-30		
Duration	10-20/40-50 min		
Tags	#Energiser #Teamwork #Cooperation #Communication #Problem-Solving #Trust #Coordination #Focus		

Purpose

A playful physical group challenge in which participants must pass through a swinging rope while working together to meet increasingly difficult conditions.

The activity develops cooperation and collective strategy, timing, coordination and body awareness, communication and observation, problem-solving and adaptability, trust and shared responsibility, persistence and learning through trial and error

Magic Gate can also be used as a symbolic threshold at the beginning of a programme, inviting participants to leave everyday life behind and step into a shared learning journey.

Instructions

1. Set up the gate
Two facilitators (or later can be also participants) hold the ends of a long rope and swing it rhythmically from side to side or in a large loop, creating a moving gate.
The participants passing through must cross at the centre of the swinging rope, following different rules.
Important rule: The gatekeepers are very sassy and don't like travellers getting too close! Everyone must keep at least one metre away from the gatekeepers and pass through the centre of the rope's swing.

2. Introduce the story
Bring the activity to life with a playful storyline. For example:
The Magic Gate is very particular about who it allows through. It has its own rules, and it will only let the group pass if everyone respects them. Can you figure out how to get through?

Other possible storylines include:

- The jungle crossing: The rope represents hanging vines. The group must cross without disturbing the monkeys or making them angry.
- The electric wires: The group must cross a dangerous-looking passage, where electric wires are swinging.
- The portal: Participants must pass through a magical gateway to enter a new world.
- The programme threshold: Each participant crosses the gate as a symbolic step into the programme, leaving something behind and entering the shared learning journey.

Adapt the story to the age, context and theme of the group.

3. Explore the challenge levels
Introduce the levels progressively, allowing the group to experiment, make mistakes and develop strategies.

Level 1 — Get a feeling for the gate
Everyone passes through the swinging rope one by one. The aim is simply to understand the rhythm and find the right moment to cross.

Level 2 — No touching!
Everyone must pass through without touching the rope. If anyone touches it, the group repeats the attempt according to the agreed rules.

Level 3 — Keep the gate moving
The whole group must pass through without leaving any empty loops between participants. Once the first person passes, the next person must follow without allowing a full swing to go unused.

Level 4 — Limited openings
The group has a limited number of openings or swings to get everyone through. Start with a generous number and gradually reduce it. The challenge is to find a strategy that allows everyone to pass within the limit.

Level 5 — One swing, one team
The entire group must pass through within a single opening or swing of the rope. Participants need to coordinate their timing, spacing and movement carefully.

Level 6 — The gatekeepers change roles
The group must complete one of the previous challenges while some participants take turns swinging the rope. The team must coordinate both the movement of the rope and the crossing of the group.

Debrief Questions

- What helped you coordinate your movements?
- How did your strategy change as the challenge became more difficult?
- How did you make decisions as a group?
- What happened when someone made a mistake?
- How did you balance individual timing with the needs of the whole group?
- Who took initiative, and how did others respond?
- What did you learn from trying again?
- Where else in life or youth work do you face challenges that require everyone to move together?

For a short energiser, a debrief is not necessary. If you use the activity as a programme threshold or a team-development challenge, allow time for reflection.

Facilitator notes, Variations & Adaptations

- Build the story: The Magic Gate works especially well when the gatekeepers are playful, dramatic and a little sassy. They can invent rules, express opinions about the travellers and create a sense of adventure, as long as the rules remain clear and fair.
- Adjust the difficulty: Change one condition at a time so participants can notice how their strategy needs to evolve.
- Let the group experiment: Avoid giving away the solution too quickly. Allow participants to test ideas, fail safely and learn through experience.
- Make it cooperative: Emphasise that the group succeeds only when everyone gets through. Avoid turning it into a competition based purely on speed.
- Use it as a threshold: At the beginning of a programme, invite participants to cross the gate with a thought, intention or expectation for the journey ahead. You can ask them to silently leave something behind or carry something meaningful into the programme.
- Create new conditions: Participants could cross in pairs, hold hands, move in a particular rhythm, carry a light object or pass through in a specific order.
- Add a communication challenge: Invite the group to complete a round without speaking, or allow only one designated person to communicate.
- Introduce a memory challenge: After a successful attempt, ask the group to repeat the sequence in exactly the same order or with the same movements.
- Adapt for different abilities: Offer alternative ways to participate, including walking, guiding or coordinating the group. Adjust the rope's movement and speed to suit participants' needs.
- Prioritise safety: Use a rope that is light enough to avoid injury, keep the surrounding area clear and swing it at a controlled, predictable speed. Never swing it towards participants' heads or force anyone to run, jump or rush. The one-metre distance from the gatekeepers should be adapted if needed to ensure safe passage.
- Introduce the Experiential Learning Cycle: Magic Gate offers a great opportunity to also bring either as a frontload or at the debrief the Kolb's cycle and better understand how we learn through experiences.

The challenge can be as simple or as complex as the group needs. The real learning lies not only in getting through the gate, but in how participants organise themselves, respond to setbacks and find a way forward together.

THE MIGHTY BATTLE OF NUMBERS

Target group	all ages. with variations	**Materials & Space**	Large outdoor area with trees, bushes and natural hiding places; 2 treasures; 4-digit number cards/banners; markers/pens; natural face/body-painting materials.
Group size	20-40		
Duration	60-90 min		

Tags #Strategy #Cooperation #Teamwork #Movement #Observation #Competition #Problem-solving #Communication

Purpose

A playful, active strategy game that develops cooperation and team strategy, observation and quick decision-making, communication under pressure, creative use of the environment, adaptation and problem-solving

Instructions

1. Create the story
Introduce two teams as two clans/tribes meeting for a playful challenge. Give each team a name, identity and treasure. Invite them to decorate themselves, paint their faces, and create a team strategy.

2. Give everyone a number
Each participant gets a unique 4-digit number displayed on their forehead. Participants may write their own number on their hand to remember it.

The forehead number must always be visible. It cannot be covered with hands, hair, clothing or movable objects.

Players may protect their number by:
standing behind a tree or other stable natural element;
lowering their head to the ground;
cooperating with teammates to create a Shield by positioning themselves together.

3. Hide the treasures
Each team hides its treasure in its own territory. The treasure must be hidden but accessible, clearly visible once someone is looking for it — not buried or completely covered.

4. Hunt!
Each team tries to: find the opposing team's treasure while protecting their own players and treasure, and identifying opposing players by reading their numbers.

To eliminate someone, you must see all four digits and call the complete number correctly. “Seven-two-five-four”
If someone’s number is 3247, you cannot call “3241, 3242, 3243…” until you get it right. You must actually see and identify all four digits.

5. Capture the treasure
When a player takes the opposing team’s treasure, they must take it to the agreed Home Base / Mother Tree.

If an opponent correctly calls out the treasure carrier’s full number, the carrier must drop the treasure exactly where they were caught.
A new player from the same team can then take the treasure and continue.
The defending team cannot pick up and return its own treasure once it has been dropped. Instead, they must protect it where it lies by identifying and calling out the numbers of attacking players.
The treasure can therefore change hands several times before reaching Home Base!

6. Finish
The team wins when it successfully brings the opposing treasure to the agreed Home Base, or all participants of the opposing team have been called out correctly.

Debrief Questions

- What strategies did your team develop?
- What made cooperation useful or difficult?
- When did you take a risk? When did you play it safe?
- How did your strategy change when something unexpected happened?
- What helped your team communicate effectively?

Facilitator notes, Variations & Adaptations

- Play 2–3 rounds: give teams a few minutes between rounds to reflect and change their strategy.
- For younger groups, use 2–3 digit numbers or smaller territories.
- For a stronger challenge, increase the territory or introduce a time limit.
- Agree beforehand that no pushing, grabbing or physical blocking is allowed.
- Clearly mark the boundaries and unsafe/out-of-bounds areas.
- The story can be adapted freely to the culture and context of the group. During Playlab we used a Mother Bear/Mother Sea theme, but any imaginative frame can work.

CUKR, KAVA, LIMONADA, ČAJ, RUM, BUM!

Target group	all ages. with variations	**Materials & Space**	Open space with a clearly marked starting line; an object to represent the “drink” for the advanced version.
Group size	8-20		
Duration	10-40 min		
Tags	#Energiser #Movement #Focus #Observation #Teamwork #Cooperation #Strategy #Playfulness		

Purpose

A Czech version of Green Light, Red Light combining movement, focus and playful suspense. The basic version develops body awareness and impulse control, observation and concentration, playful risk-taking

The team version adds cooperation and collective strategy, communication without giving away information, creative problem-solving, shared responsibility

Instructions

1. Choose the caller
One participant stands at the far end of the playing area with their back turned towards the group.
Everyone else stands behind the starting line.
The caller begins saying:
“Cukr, káva, limonáda, čaj, rum, bum!”
They can say the phrase at different speeds and rhythms.

2. Move! Variation 1 — Who can get there first?
While the caller is saying the phrase, participants move towards them.
When the caller reaches “Bum!”, they turn around.
Everyone must freeze immediately.
If the caller sees someone moving after turning around, that person goes back to the starting line and begins again.
The aim is to reach the caller and touch their shoulder without being caught moving.

Variation 2 — Steal the Drink!
Place an object representing a drink — the **cukr, kava, limonada, čaj, rum, bum!** — on the ground behind the caller.
This time, the group has a **shared mission**: get the drink and bring it all the way back behind the starting line without the caller discovering who has it.
The group can move towards the caller only while the phrase is being said.
When the caller says **“Bum!”**, they turn around and everyone freezes.
Participants can use their bodies and positioning to make it difficult to see who is carrying the drink.

3. “Who stole my drink?”
After turning around, the caller can point at up to **three suspicious participants** and ask them to show their hands.
The selected players must raise their hands and show that they are not carrying the drink.
If the caller identifies the person carrying it, there are two possible rules:

Easy version:
The person carrying the drink returns to the starting line. The caller takes the drink back to its original position.

Challenge version:
The whole group returns to the starting line and the drink is returned to its original position.
The group then tries again.
The group succeeds when they manage to bring the drink safely behind the starting line without the caller identifying the carrier.

Debrief Questions

Usually no debrief is needed.

For the team version, you can ask:

- How did you cooperate without giving away who had the drink?
- What strategies did you develop as a group?
- How did you decide when it was safe to move?
- What made it easier or harder to hide the drink?
- How did your strategy change after being caught?

Facilitator notes, Variations & Adaptations

- The caller should vary the speed, rhythm and length of the phrase to create uncertainty.
- Encourage playful acting and storytelling — the suspense is part of the experience.
- In the team version, participants can experiment with body positioning, decoys and group formations to disguise who is carrying the drink.
- For younger groups, use the basic version first and introduce the team challenge once everyone understands the rules.
- For a shorter energiser, skip the debrief entirely and simply play several quick rounds.
- For the more cooperative version, you can have even more objects, bigger and smaller, like treasures in the Wizard’s or Witch’s garden, the team needs for their journey.
- Make sure the playing area is clear of obstacles, especially if participants are moving quickly.

THE TOWER

Target group	all ages with variations	**Materials & Space**	Indoor space with tables or free floor; 2 sheets of paper per team; a limited number of tapes and scissors placed in the centre of the room.
Group size	8-30		
Duration	30-45 min		
Tags	#Teamwork #Cooperation #Creativity #Problem-Solving #Planning #Communication #ResourceManagement #Negotiation		

Purpose

A hands-on team challenge exploring creativity, planning, communication and problem-solving under constraints. Participants experience how teams make decisions, manage limited resources and adapt when things don't go as planned.

Instructions

1. Form teams
Divide participants into teams of 3–6. Give each team two sheets of paper. Place a limited number of tape rolls and scissors in the centre of the room. There are fewer resources than teams, so participants must negotiate, cooperate or find creative solutions.

2. Introduce the challenge
Each team must build the tallest free-standing tower using only its paper and shared tape. Paper can be folded, rolled, torn or cut.
Give teams 5 minutes to plan, followed by 15–20 minutes to build.

3. Test the towers
When time is up, everyone steps back. Each tower must stand unsupported for at least 10 seconds. Compare the heights and celebrate the results.

Debrief Questions

- How did your team plan and divide the roles?
- How did you manage the limited resources?
- What happened when an idea failed?
- Did competition help or hinder cooperation?

Facilitator notes, Variations & Adaptations

- You can add variations, like silent building, halfway through new constraints, like no more tape.
- No planning: Start building immediately, then compare with a second round that includes planning time.
- Role challenge: Assign roles such as architect, builder, resource manager and observer.
- Beyond height: Award additional recognition for creativity, stability, teamwork or resourcefulness.

SHIPWRECK

Target group	all ages. with variations	**Materials & Space**	A tarp or large groundsheet; open, flat space. The size of the tarp should be adapted to the group size and desired difficulty.
Group size	8-25		
Duration	15-40 min		
Tags	#Teamwork #Cooperation #Problem-Solving #Communication #Coordination #Trust #Leadership #Challenge		

Purpose

A physical team challenge that invites participants to communicate and coordinate under pressure, develop creative collective strategies, practise cooperation and mutual support, adapt when the first strategy does not work, experience how space and constraints influence group dynamics

Instructions

1. Tell the story
Invite the group into the story: You have been travelling together on a big ship, enjoying the sea and discovering beautiful places. Suddenly, a huge storm hits. The ship is wrecked, and you find yourselves in the water! Luckily, you discover a lifeboat — the tarp. But there is one problem... The waters around you are full of sharks!
Everyone has managed to climb onto the lifeboat, but the boat is upside down. Your task is to turn the lifeboat over without anyone falling into the water.

2. Get everyone on board
Everyone must stand on the tarp.
Once the challenge begins, nobody may step off the tarp or touch the ground. The group needs to find a way to turn the tarp completely over while keeping everyone on board.

3. Flip the boat
Give the group time to develop their own strategy, first can be without touching the tarp. Participants may support one another, hold hands, shift their weight and carefully move around the tarp. The challenge is complete when the tarp has been completely flipped and everyone is still on it.

Debrief Questions

- How did you figure out how to turn the tarp?
- What helped the group coordinate?
- How did you react when your first strategy didn't work?
- Who took the lead? How did leadership move around the group?
- How did you make sure everyone was included?
- What does this experience tell us about solving problems together?

Facilitator notes, Variations & Adaptations

- The size of the tarp is the main difficulty control. The smaller the available space, the more coordination the challenge requires.
- Choose the tarp size according to the group and physical abilities. The challenge should be demanding without requiring unsafe lifting or unstable positions.
- Set clear boundaries around safe physical contact before starting. No pulling, throwing or sudden lifting. Also be aware that some participants might be sensitive to close proximity of others, or touches, boundary setting and consent is important before starting the activity.
- For mixed-ability groups, adjust the tarp size and rules so that everyone can contribute meaningfully.
- Variations can include:
- Team Challenge: Use one large tarp with the whole group. The focus is on cooperation and finding a strategy that works for everyone.
- Race: Divide the group into two teams and give each team a tarp of an appropriate size. Both teams attempt the challenge at the same time. The first team to successfully flip their tarp wins.
- Increase the complexity: Add a rule such as no talking, or give one or more participants a specific communication restriction.

THE ELECTRIC FENCE

Target group	15+	**Materials & Space**	Two sturdy trees 3–5 m apart; long rope; open outdoor space on both sides; appropriate safety equipment/spotters for the high section.
Group size	10-25		
Duration	60-90 min		

Tags #Teamwork #Trust #Communication #Problem-solving #Leadership #Decision-making #Challenge #Cooperation

Purpose

A playful physical challenge that develops teamwork and mutual support, communication and listening, creative problem-solving, group decision-making, leadership and shared responsibility, balancing challenge, confidence and safety.

Instructions

1. Set up the fence
Tie a rope between two sturdy trees, lower on one side, around hipline, higher on the other side, around chest, creating three sections of different difficulty: low, medium and high. The rope should be securely fixed and the area underneath and around it checked for hazards.

2. Tell the story
The rope is an electric fence. The whole team has to get to the other side without touching it — with their bodies, clothes or anything they are carrying.

3. Introduce the scoring
The team has to reach a target score together, for example 195 points.
Low section: 5 points Middle section: 10 points High section: 15 points
The higher the section, the greater the challenge and the more points it gives.

4. Plan – 5 min
Give the team time to discuss and develop a strategy. They decide who crosses where and how they will support one another.

5. Cross the fence – 25 min
The team attempts to reach the target score with everyone safely on the other side. Participants may help, lift and support each other, but nobody may touch the rope. If someone touches the rope, the fence is activated: the whole team returns to the starting side and loses the points from that attempt.
The group can then rethink its strategy and try again.

6. Finish
The challenge is complete when the team reaches the target score and everyone is safely across. Celebrate the achievement together!

Debrief Questions

- How did you decide who would cross where? Did everyone feel heard?
- How easy was it to ask for help — and to offer it?
- What happened to the group when you had to start again?
- Did you ever feel pressure to take on a challenge you didn't want? What helped you make your decision?
- How did leadership emerge in the group?
- What would you do differently if you played again?

Facilitator notes, Variations & Adaptations

- Safety first: participants should never be pressured to cross a section they don't feel comfortable with. The challenge should remain within **Challenge by Choice.**
- Check the ground carefully for roots, rocks and uneven surfaces, especially around landing areas.
- Use spotters where participants are being lifted or crossing the higher section.
- Adapt the rope height and scoring to the group, abilities and experience.
- Consider a silent round: no talking during the crossing; participants communicate through gestures.
- Add a role challenge, such as one participant being unable to use their hands, if appropriate and safe.
- If the group gets stuck, pause the activity and invite them to reflect on their strategy before trying again.
- For longer programmes, repeat with a new target or rule and compare how the group's strategy and communication have developed.

THE MISSION

Target group	16+	**Materials & Space**	A sufficiently large indoor or outdoor space where the challenge area can be clearly separated from the participants waiting outside. Number cards containing numbers between 1 and 50, two lengths of rope, stopwatch or timer, score sheet and pen, clearly visible starting line
Group size	10-30		
Duration	60 - 90 min		

Tags #Strategy #Cooperation #Teamwork #Observation #Problem-solving #Communication #Focus #Memory

Purpose

A cooperative experiential activity in which participants coordinate their movements, communication, attention and decision-making to complete a shared challenge as quickly and accurately as possible.
The activity can develop communication and active listening, cooperation and collective decision-making, group coordination and trust, concentration and observation, verbal and non-verbal communication, strategic thinking and problem-solving, adaptability and learning from mistakes, awareness of individual and group roles.

Instructions

1. Set-up
Use the ropes to create two circles next to each other, with approximately 1.5–2 metres between them and distribute the numbered cards on the floor inside the two circles. Position the starting line approximately 5–10 metres away from the circles.

2. Introduce the mission
Set the scene with an imaginative scenario:
“There has been a bomb threat. The bomb is armed, and you have very little time to defuse it. The only way to stop it is to enter the correct numerical code. Your team must find and communicate the numbers in the correct order.
Show the rules on a flipchart paper and explain them clearly.

Rules: Goal: Defuse the bomb as fast as possible, without any mistakes.

- Touch the numbers in ascending order.
- Every participant has to touch at least one number.
- Only one person at a time may enter the challenge area. (leaning over the area also counts as being inside)
- Each person must touch the numbers in the exact same way. (e.g. nose, right index finger, left foot).
- No running or jumping as it can trigger the explosion.

You will have four attempts to improve your performance. You won’t know exactly what you’re dealing with until you enter the area. You need to develop a strategy before you begin, but you won’t be able to see the numbers while planning. Time is running out!”
The scenario should create a sense of urgency without asking participants to handle or physically simulate any dangerous object.

3. Plan the strategy
Give the team a short amount of time (5-7 min.) to discuss and agree on an initial strategy. Participants must plan without being able to see the area and the numbered cards.

4. Complete the challenge
Invite participants to enter the area according to the agreed rules and attempt to identify the numbers in the correct order. The facilitator tracks the time and records the team's performance, listing all the mistakes made during the attempt.

5. Review and adapt
After each attempt, present the results: Time and number and types of mistakes.
Give the team a few minutes to discuss what happened, identify what worked and what did not, and adjust its strategy. You may change the number arrangement or remove some numbers between attempts, if appropriate.

6. Repeat and compare
Play up to four attempts, allowing the group to apply what it has learned. Compare the team's performance across rounds and explore how its strategy and cooperation evolved.

Debrief Questions

- How satisfied are you with the result? What about the process?
- What strategies did your team develop?
- What made cooperation easier or more difficult?
- How did your strategy change when something unexpected happened?
- What helped your team communicate effectively?
- How did you learn from mistakes between attempts?
- What roles emerged within the group? Did these roles change?
- What could this experience teach us about teamwork in everyday life?

Facilitator notes, Variations & Adaptations

- **Allow time for reflection:** Play 2–4 rounds, with a few minutes between attempts for the team to reflect and adapt its strategy. Time pressure can be one of the challenge aspects of this game. Deciding to give shorter or longer times for strategising can lower or increase the level of challenge and bring valuable reflection points for the debriefing. You can even add background sound effects.
- **Adjust the difficulty:** For younger groups or a shorter activity, use a smaller number range or fewer cards. For a greater challenge, increase the territory or introduce a stricter time limit.
- **Make the challenge accessible:** Adapt movement, communication and participation rules to suit the group's needs and abilities.
- **Adapt the storyline:** The narrative can be changed to fit the group's age, culture and context. Any imaginative frame that creates curiosity and a shared mission can work.
- **Focus on learning, not only speed:** The debrief is essential. Encourage participants to notice how communication, decision-making and cooperation evolve, rather than focusing exclusively on the final score.

SCULPTOR AND CLAY

Target group 14+

Group size 10-20

Duration 25-35 min

Materials & Space Open area indoor or outdoor, depending on the group

Tags #Cooperation #Communication #Empathy #Adaptation #Expression #Trust #BodyAwareness #Creativity

Purpose

A non-verbal creative activity exploring how we express ideas, emotions and experiences through the body. Develops empathy, trust, observation and awareness of different perspectives.

Instructions

1. Find a partner
One person becomes the Sculptor, the other the Clay.

2. Create the sculpture
The facilitator gives a prompt, such as an emotion, event or abstract concept. In silence, the Sculptor gently guides the Clay into a frozen pose using agreed, respectful gestures or touch. The Clay holds the position. For reflecting on shared experiences use prompts such as “teamwork,” “overcoming a challenge,” “our expedition” or “what support looks like.”

3. Visit the gallery
When time is up, Sculptors walk around and observe the different statues.

4. Switch roles
Partners swap roles and create a new sculpture using the same or a different prompt.

FROZEN SCENE

Target group 14+

Group size 10-20

Duration 25-35 min

Materials & Space Open area indoor or outdoor, depending on the group

Tags #Cooperation #Movement #Observation #Reflection #Storytelling #NonVerbalExpression #Communication #Improvisation #Creativity

Purpose

Frozen Scene is a creative, embodied activity in which participants build a shared image using their bodies, gestures and physical positioning. Starting from a simple prompt, the group develops a frozen picture into a collective story through spontaneous improvisation.
Inspired by Theatre of the Oppressed, the activity explores how images can communicate different meanings and perspectives. It encourages participants to observe, interpret, respond to others and contribute without needing to plan everything in advance.

When used after a shared experience, such as an expedition, youth exchange or camp, Frozen Scene becomes a playful reflection tool. Participants can revisit significant moments, explore group dynamics and express shared experiences in ways that go beyond verbal discussion.

The activity develops creativity, imagination and spontaneous storytelling, non-verbal communication and observation, cooperation and collective expression, adaptability and responding to others' ideas, awareness of different perspectives and interpretations, reflection on shared experiences, emotions and group dynamics.

Instructions

1. The first scene
Explain that participants will create a series of frozen images together, using their bodies as if they were actors in a photograph or a theatre scene.
Encourage them to focus on body position, facial expressions, gestures and spatial relationships. There is no single correct interpretation, and participants do not need acting experience.

2. The Prompt

- Give the group a prompt, for example "The moment we realised we were lost" or "A team facing a challenge.", "The moment we realised this was going to be an adventure.", "Our first big challenge.", "The kind of team I want to help create."

Two participants enter the space and create a frozen image inspired by the prompt. They hold their positions without speaking or moving.

3. Build the image
One by one, the remaining participants enter the scene. Each person observes the existing image and chooses a position or gesture that adds something to it. Participants can represent people, objects, emotions, elements of nature or abstract ideas. They should build on what is already there rather than simply creating a separate scene. Continue until everyone has joined the picture.

4. Bring the scene to life
Once the image is complete, invite the group to bring it to life. Participants can begin moving and speaking, improvising a short scene inspired by the final picture. Allow the story to emerge spontaneously. It may be realistic, funny, symbolic or completely unexpected.

5. Observe and reflect
After the scene, invite participants to share what they noticed, what they intended to express and what they interpreted differently.
If using the activity to reflect on a shared experience, connect the scene to the original prompt and allow time for a short debrief.

Debrief Questions

- How did you feel at the beginning, when you received the first prompt, compared with the end? Did anything change?
- Did you enter the scene with a clear plan, or did you react to what was already happening?
- What was it like building on each other's ideas in the moment?
- What helped you jump into the action without overthinking?
- Did your interpretation of the scene change as others joined?
- What did you notice about the way people positioned themselves in relation to others?
- How can this experience help you when joining a new group or facing an unfamiliar situation?

For a reflection-focused session, choose questions connected to the experience and prompts you used rather than asking all the questions at once.

Facilitator notes, Variations & Adaptations

- Create a safe atmosphere: Remind participants that there is no right or wrong way to express an idea. Nobody needs to be a good actor. Encourage participation without pressure: Allow participants to choose a comfortable way to contribute. They can represent an object, an emotion or an abstract idea instead of acting as a person.
- Give enough observation time: Encourage participants to look at the whole image before entering, noticing spaces, relationships and possible meanings.
- Make room for different interpretations: A scene that looks like a celebration to one person might represent exhaustion or chaos to another. These differences can become valuable reflection points.
- Watch the group dynamics: Notice who tends to enter first, who waits, who takes up space and who builds on others' ideas. If useful, bring these observations into the debrief without labelling or judging individuals.