

CHALLENGE INITIATIVE GAMES

WHAT ARE INITIATIVE GAMES?

Initiative games are fun, cooperative, challenging games in which the group is confronted with a specific problem to solve. In Exploring we use initiative games for two reasons: The games demonstrate and teach leadership skills to Advisors, which helps to promote the growth of Explorers; and the games demonstrate a process of thinking about experiences that helps Explorers learn and become responsible citizens.

Here are a few suggestions. Begin by clearly explaining the game. Make sure the rules are understood, including that everyone must complete the activity for the group to be successful.

Don't offer ideas for solving the problem. Stand back and let the group work and play with it even if the group has a difficult time. Don't interfere unless something is unsafe or the group has fallen apart.

Reflect on the activity. Spend a few minutes afterward talking about what the participants learned. This is most effective when you use the principles of reflection discussed in the *Explorer Leader Handbook* (page A-9). Talk about how effectively and efficiently they accomplished the task and how well they got along with each other. Ask open-ended questions to help the group talk about the issues. Don't be judgmental. In asking questions, first help the participants focus on what happened, then ask them to decide if what happened was good or bad. Finally, ask them to set some goals for the future.

The best impact that initiative games can have on your post program is for you to use the initiative games leadership style and the reflective methods in your post program. While initiative games are fun and meaningful lessons can be learned, a lasting impact will be achieved only by using the principles behind the games in the complete post program. As an adult leader, you help the youth learn to make decisions and solve problems in everything you do in Exploring. Teach them the skills they need and let them do it. As someone once said: "Train them and trust them!" Use reflection during and after post activities and experiences to help the youth learn. Get them in the habit of thinking and sharing together as a group.

If a game is too easy or if you have other motives, you can vary the skills of the participants by not allowing some to talk, by blindfolding, by not allowing the use of various limbs, etc. You also can create a story line to go with the game.

See the reference list if you are interested in getting more games. Happy playing!

TRUST CIRCLE

The group forms a tight circle with six to 10 people standing shoulder to shoulder with arms out and palms up. One person stands in the middle with arms folded over chest and eyes closed. This person then falls in any direction, keeping the body stiff. The group's responsibility is to catch the falling person and push the person gently upright.

There should always be more than one person catching. After a few tries, the center person can direct the group to take a step backward and try again.

PEOPLE PENDULUM

Form two parallel lines with at least 10 people in each line. Each person in one line faces someone in the other line with about two feet between them. The two people standing side by side in the center of one line place a sturdy pole on their outside shoulders, with their counterparts in the line across from them shouldering the other end of the poles. In other words, there will be two poles, one shouldered by each facing pair in the center. These poles should be strong enough to support group participants who stand on them.

One group participant is hoisted onto each pole. They face each other and hold hands or wrists. When they are ready, they let go of each other and fall back into the arms of the remaining people in the row on each side. It is important that the people falling stay very stiff and either hold onto their pant legs or fold their arms across their chest. It also is important that the catchers catch the people in "trust-fall style," alternating arms down the row with the people across from them and standing very close together. Another method is to grasp wrists with the person across from you. It is important when using this method that the catchers give a little as they catch the person.

After catching the people, you can push them back up. It is important that you learn this activity slowly and do it in a safe place. A soft lawn is best. Begin with smaller people and work your way up.

—from *The Second Cooperative Sports and Games*

GROUP JUGGLING

Materials: tennis balls or bean bags, or have each person take off one shoe

Begin with everyone in a circle and one object to be thrown. The first person throws the object across the circle to someone who then throws the object to someone else. Everyone should catch and throw the object just once, remembering whom they received from and to whom they threw. The first person to throw should receive the ball last. Begin the sequence again, continually adding objects so that the group is juggling as many objects as possible.

PEOPLE PASS

There are two ways of doing this activity. The first is to have everyone lie down on their back, alternating the direction of their feet, and with their heads in a straight line. In other words, even-numbered people will have feet facing west and odd-numbered people will have feet facing east. When you look down the center of the row, you should see a straight line of heads. After everyone gets lined up, they should put their arms straight up in the air with their hands flat (palms up). One person will then stand at one end of the line with the body stiff and arms either folded across the chest or holding onto pant legs. You will lower the person, back first, onto the row of arms and they will gently pass the body to the other end. Someone should catch the person as he or she comes off the end.

The second way is to split into two standing rows of people, facing forward in a double line. Again, everyone puts their arms up with palms flat. You will need several people to help hoist the person to the top to be passed at this height.

—from *The New Games Book*

EVERYBODY UP

This activity begins with everybody in pairs and gradually expands to include everyone at once. Each pair sits on the ground facing each other, with each person's feet against the other's feet and holding hands. The goal is to pull each other to a standing position.

When two people accomplish this task, continue to try it with more until everyone is in one group. It has been suggested that with more than eight people it is impossible to do in a circle, but that it is possible to do with another configuration.

Variation: The goal is the same except that in this version participants sit back to back. All other rules apply.

HOG CALL

Materials: one blindfold for each person

This is a good warm-up activity. There are several variations, but all of them involve blindfolded individuals yelling a name or animal sound to find their group or partner. In one variation, everyone privately receives the name of an animal. The goal is to find everyone else who has that same name by milling about "mooing" or "oinking" or whatever it is that their animal does. Another variation has half the group line up on one end of an open area and half line up on the other. Each person is given half of an opposing word or phrase, like "salt and pepper" or "light and dark." The folks on the other side of the field get the other half of the phrase. When everyone is ready, each side walks toward the other and tries to find their particular partner by yelling their particular word.

HAVE YOU DONE THIS?

Each player thinks of something about himself or herself that does not apply to anyone else in the group. Each individual shares their idea. If someone else shares that characteristic, that person must find a new one. Play continues until everyone has shared something unique about themselves.

—from *Games*

QUESTIONS

This is a get-acquainted activity in which each individual has a predetermined time period during which anyone in the group can ask that person any question about any subject (within the bounds of good taste).

—from *Games*

COOKIE MACHINE

The group forms two parallel lines of people standing shoulder to shoulder. Each line should face the other about two feet apart. Players put their arms out in front of them with their elbows bent and palms up. The arms of the persons in each of the two lines should alternate with those across from them. You've just built a cookie machine.

One person stands at one end of the cookie machine and announces a preference for a type of cookie; for example, chocolate chip. The cookie machine then bounces the "chocolate chip cookie" (who keeps his or her body stiff and arms straight out) from one end to the other while chanting "chocolate chip, chocolate chip." When the cookie gets to the middle, it ought to be turned over so it doesn't burn. Some people might feel more comfortable with their arms folded over their chest.

—from *More New Games*

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