

# Games for Everyone to Play



playwork  
Partnerships

# Introduction

This booklet gives you a small number of fun games you can use with children in play settings. You can also use these games with adults at training events for ice-breakers and energy breaks.

## Name Games and Ice-breakers

There are various games that involve learning and using names.

- Say your name and pass a ball to someone else calling out their name.
- Say your name and do an action which then everyone copies back
- Say a name and pass an imaginary ball saying "This is a blue ball,.....", the receiver says thank you to the name of the person who threw it to them. You can introduce other colours to make it harder!
- Say your name and something you like and something you don't like.

### Name Train Game (very young and very old)

A great game for becoming familiar with the children's names. First arrange the children in a circle. Then everybody creates a train either by holding around the waist or the shoulders. The train then sets off, choo-chooing with energy, stopping at any particular child to pick them up as a passenger. As each child joins the train, they say their name, which is repeated by everyone as they board the train. You can add a great deal to this game by getting the children to join in with the train noises and by having fun with 'follow my leader' type activities such as going through tunnels (parents could make the tunnel?) and up mountains etc. It is also possible to have two trains running at once.

### Lines

Arrange children in lines according to age, birthdays, height, alphabetically etc etc!



### Shapes

Draw some shapes (e.g diamond, parallel lines, figure of eight etc.) on large pieces of paper and hold them up one at a time. Without talking to each other the group need to make that shape as one group together. Emphasis on co-operation. Can be used with deaf children

### Face to face (all ages)

Everyone finds a partner. A leader calls out actions such as "hand to hand", "back to back", "head to knee", "bottom to bottom" etc. participants have to follow these instructions in their pairs. When the leader calls "face to face" everyone must change partners.

### **Simon says (all ages)**

The leader tells the group that they should follow instructions when the leader starts the instruction by saying "Simon says..." If the leader does not begin the instructions with the words "Simon says", then the group should not follow the instructions! The leader begins by saying something like "Simon says clap your hands" while clapping their hands. The participants follow. The leader speeds up the actions, always saying "Simon says" first. After a short while, the "Simon says" is omitted. Those participants who do follow the instructions anyway are 'out' of the game. The game can be continued for as long as it remains fun.

### **The Holiday (older)**

This game is from Eastern Europe and is another version of musical chairs. Two rows of chairs are placed back to back with one less chair than players. Everyone sits down except the person chosen to be the traveller. Each player is given an item (or chooses one themselves) that is used to go on holiday, e.g. ticket, suitcase, passport, swimming costume, money etc which they have to remember. The traveller then walks around the seated group saying -

"I am travelling to Belgrade and I need my passport, suitcase, ticket etc" As each item is remembered the person called gets up and follows the traveller. When the traveller has all the items they can remember they shout "I have reached Belgrade!" Everyone must sit down on the nearest chair and the person left standing is the new traveller. You will have to prompt the traveller to remember some of the items that are always getting forgotten!

### **What's the time Mr Wolf? (young)**

One person stands at one end and everyone else at the opposite end, the group chants, "What's the time Mr Wolf?" and the wolf replies any time from 1 o'clock to 12 o'clock. The group takes that number of steps forward ie 4 o'clock is 4 steps. If the Wolf says "It's dinnertime" everyone must return to the start before the wolf catches them. If you are caught you become the wolf. If you reach the wolf by taking lots of steps then you take their place.

Another version of this game is Grandmother's footsteps. It involves someone being Grandma and standing with their back to the group who creep as quietly as they can towards her. If she hears anything she turns round and the group have to freeze. Anyone seen moving has to go back to the start. The first to reach Grandma takes her place.

### **Duck Duck Goose (young)**

In this game, kids sit down in a circle facing each other. One person is "it" and walks around the circle. As they walk around, they tap people's heads and say whether they are a "duck" or a "goose". Once someone is the "goose" they get up and try to chase "it" around the circle. The goal is to tap that person before they are able to sit down in the "goose's" spot. If the goose is not able to do this, they become "it" for the next round and play continues. If they do tap the "it" person, the person tagged has to sit in the centre of the circle. Then the goose becomes "it" for the next round. The person in the middle can't leave until another person is tagged and they are replaced. There are many variations on this game, e.g. burger, burger, chips! Or Harry, Harry, Harry, Potter! Let the children make them up!

### **North, South, East, West (all ages)**

Nominate sides of the party room as North, South, East and West. The host then calls out each in turn and the children have to touch that side as soon as possible. The fun comes from starting slowly and then speeding up occasionally changing your mind mid move. You can also add in other commands such as earth or sky with their own actions.

## **Fruit Bowl**

Sitting in a circle, give each child a fruit name going round the circle in sets of four e.g. apple pear banana grape. Then one person stands in the middle of the circle and calls out a fruit. All those who are that fruit run around the circle back to their space and tag the person in the middle. They then are the caller. You can make it more fun by calling 2 or 3 fruit names. If you call fruit bowl, everyone has to run! You can do lots of variations on this game with different themes!

## **Clock in the Tower**

Number the children around a circle, again in lists of 1 to 4 ( or count further if a bigger group!) One child stands in the centre and everyone says “ Clock in the Tower strike the hour!” The “clock” then holds their hands above their head and claps a number. The children who correspond to that number have to run around the circle and back to their seat and enter the circle to tag the clock. They then become the clock and it starts again!

## **Musical Bumps/Statues (equipment – cd player)**

Play music for the children to dance to and when the music stops the children must ‘bump’ to the floor as fast as possible, the last one to sit is ‘out’. You might consider teaching the children a dance to start with; Birdie song or the Macarena.

A safer version of this game is Musical Statues which as the name suggests has the children freeze when the music stops, rather than drop suddenly to a hard floor. Remember the more you dance the more the children will.

## **Red shoes (all ages) (Sun Shines On...)**

Begin with everyone except yourself sitting on a chair facing inwards in a circle. You are standing in the middle of the circle. You start the game by shouting out something the children will have in common such as “all those wearing red shoes” All the children who are wearing red shoes have to leave their seat and find a different one. They are not allowed to return to their own seat. Whilst everyone is moving you find yourself one of the seats leaving one child standing in the middle. He now has to say “all those who.....” Until you have played this game a few times it is not always easy to find something to say so here are a few suggestions “people with blue eyes, all those wearing glasses, everyone who has a pet, everyone who has two ears, all those who like school? Anyone called Doris”

## **Hot Potato (equipment – music, ball or balloon) (younger)**

This is a variation of ‘pass the parcel’ the main advantage being that it is played using a balloon or ball not a parcel. The ‘potato’ is passed around a circle to music but you explain it is a very hot potato, too hot to hold onto for more than a second so they have to pass it round as fast as possible. If they are caught with the potato when the music stops they are out. With a large group you could start with two potatoes going in opposite directions. To make the game really go with a buzz introduce forfeits. Instead of being out the children have to do something silly like “pull a face like a monkey” or “do the first bit of the birdie song”. A tip for this game is make sure everyone passes the potato not throws it.

## **Paper, Stone, Scissors**

Should be played in pairs and on the count of three each player brings their hand from behind their back to make the shape of either a pair of scissors, a sheet of paper or a stone.

Scissors beats paper, Paper beats stone, Stone beats scissors

### **Sleeping Lions (younger)**

Explain that Lions in the jungle have to keep absolutely still...you can't even see them breathing. Even when other animals come right up to them they still don't move a muscle not even their eyes. You then goes around the room and tries to catch to children moving...you can 'encourage' a little movement by the odd noise here and there or possibly the odd tickle or two...last one left is the winner. This is a great game for calming the children down.

### **The mole is in the meadow (equipment – ball of scrunched paper) (all ages)**

One child (the mole) to begin with, curls up into a ball with their knees on the floor in the center of a circle. The other children place their hands palm up on the mole and as they chant the rhyme below they pass round the small ball of scrunched paper which one of them conceals in the palm of their hand. At the end of the rhyme to mole sits up and everyone holds their closed hands out in front of them the mole then has three guesses to decide who has the ball.

"The mole is in the meadow digging underground, he's looking for his ball...oh where can it be found"

### **Fire on the mountain (all ages)**

This game comes from Tanzania and is a good game to calm the children down.....like sleeping lions everyone has to lie down on the floor, which is in effect the mountain. The caller (you) then shouts out a series of announcements which begin "Fire on the....." so for example you might say "Fire on the mantelpiece.....Fire on the moon.....Fire on the floor".....until eventually you say "Fire on the Mountain" which is the signal for everyone to jump up as fast as they can. Either the first one up wins a prize or last one up is eliminated. The way to have fun is speak really slowly and make sure there is silence in between your calls. Anything that begins with a Mmmmmmm builds up suspense.

### **Football cheering (older children)**

The group pretends that they are attending a football game. The leader allocates specific cheers to various sections of the circle, such as 'Pass', 'Kick', 'Dribble' or 'Header'. When the leader points at a section, that section shouts their cheer. When the leader raises his/her hands in the air, everyone shouts "Goal!"

### **Wibble Wobble**

This is a development of the games paper,stone, scissorrs! Everyone starts as a wibble wobble and moves accordingly! When you come across another wibble you play paper, stones, scissors. Whoever wins becomes a prince or princess with accompanying movements and moves on. They need to meet other prince/princesses and play scissors/stones with them, if they win again they becomes even higher status Kings and Queens and hold their hands above their heads like crowns (high status!). They can only play with other Kings and Queens. If you lose at your status you drop back down a level, so eventually people will become Wibble Wobbles again!

### **Smile if you love me**

In a circle one person goes around saying " Smile if you love me". The person responds saying, "I do love you but I can't smile". If they do smile they become the leader and approach other people. This can often end in giggles!

## The Gunfighter Game

Again played in two's it has three actions:

Defending = Crossing your hands over your chest

Loading = putting both your thumbs back over your shoulders

Shooting = pointing your two fingers at your opponent

The two players stand opposite each other. It is played on a beat of three, the first two beats you hit your thighs then perform one of the actions above.

## Whispers

An old favourite this one, and better with older children. You can start it off by whispering a sentence such as “ Floppy fairies fancy fistfuls of fluff for fairy cakes!” to the child next to you. They will then whisper it to the child next to them until it has been passed round the whole group. Each person has to whisper exactly what he or she heard and is only allowed to say it once. The final person speaks the sentence out loud and the originator tells everyone what the original sentence was. The fun is in the corruption of the sentence. This never sounds a good game written down but can be hilarious to play.



## Rabbits

Again this is an old favourite that many of you will know. Someone starts by putting both thumbs up to their ears and wagging their fingers. The people on either side of this person put up one hand only, to the ear nearest the person with both hands up. The person with both hands up then points to another person across the circle (usually whilst still wagging!) then they can relax. The new person now puts both thumbs up to their ears and waggles their fingers. The people on either side have to put up the hand nearest the person with both hands up and waggle their fingers. The game continues in this way until everyone has been a ‘rabbit’.

## I went shopping...

In a circle one person starts and says “I went shopping and I bought.....” This continues around the circle with people adding to the list – and remembering what everyone else bought!

## Mime the lie

The first person starts by miming an activity e.g. brushing their hair, having a shower etc. Someone calls out “What are you doing”. The person responds by telling a “lie” e.g. I am riding a bike”. The other person takes over and does what they have said, but when asked what they are doing, they lie!

## SILLY TASKS!

**Poke your head through this hole** – (need lots of A4 scrap paper)

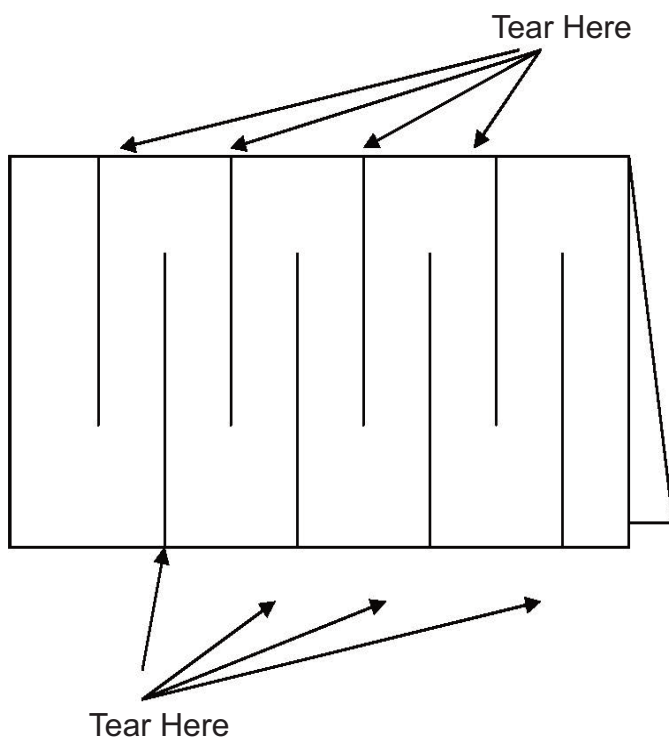
This involves giving the children a challenge of “can you poke your head through this hole” You then tear a small hole in an A4 size piece of paper which you give to them.

Solution – you poke your finger through the hole to ‘poke’ your head

**Climbing through a piece of paper** – (needs even more A4 scrap paper)

Once again you tear a small hole in an A4 piece of paper and challenge the children to climb right the way through it by tearing the hole bigger.

Solution – Fold the paper in two and tear through both pieces as follows:



Then unfold the ‘necklace’ shape carefully, tear through the middle bits and you should be able to slip completely over your body.



# PARACHUTE GAMES

The parachute is a wonderful piece of equipment for large groups and can provide hours of entertainment both indoors and out. As some games can be quite boisterous it does require a high level of supervision, and it is essential that the participants listen to and understand the rules of each game. If used with a mixed age range group ensure that older ones are aware and look out for the younger ones.

## Spinning

With the parachute on the floor ask a volunteer to sit in the middle with their legs crossed and arms raised above their head. The rest of the group stand and, holding on to the parachute, walk around the person gently wrapping them up in the 'chute. It is important that the person in the middle keeps their hands above their head for safety reasons. When they are completely wrapped up, count to three and everyone pulls the chute outwards. This will spin the person in the middle!

## Mushroom

A general practice game in raising and lowering the parachute. Once this is mastered then you can move on to all the other games. Hold the parachute down to the floor and count to three. On three shout "mushroom!" and pull the 'chute up and gently let it come down. Ask the kids not to pull it down sharply as you want to create a billowing effect – like a mushroom shape!

## Trust Games

Everyone holds on to the edge of the parachute. Very gently lean back using the weight of the rest of the group to balance against. When you feel confident try holding on with one hand or bending knees and lowering down.

## Washing Machine

Choose a few children to lie underneath the parachute on their backs with their arms by their sides. The rest of the group hold the parachute to the floor and move their arms from side to side, thus giving them a wash! Then lift the parachute up in a mushroom to give them a tumble dry! If they are very dirty repeat the process a few times. Then swop over and let others have a go!

## Rainbow

Stand and hold the parachute and create a mushroom. As the parachute goes up call out one of the colours around the edge. All those that are holding on to that colour have to let go and run underneath the parachute to the other side before it comes down again. You can select one, two or several colours. You could also ask them to hop, skip or jump etc underneath the parachute.

## Red Shoes

A variation on the last game where instead of colours you could shout out any command e.g. anyone wearing blue, or anyone with a sister etc. The last person to run underneath could call out the next command.





## **Sharks!**

Sit the group down with them holding the parachute over their knees. Choose one person to be the shark ( or more if it is a large group ). The shark goes underneath the parachute. Then select two lifeguards who stand around the edge of the group. The shark is trying to drag people into the sea with him/her ( i.e. under the 'chute ). The Lifeguards are trying to rescue them before they disappear. Start the game by everyone pretending they are sitting on the beach dabbling their legs in the water. Call "Shark Attack!" to cue the shark to begin and let the fun commence! Once everyone has been "eaten", then start the game again!

## **Cat and Mouse**

Choose one person to be the cat who goes on top of the parachute. The rest of the group stand holding the parachute waist height. Select a mouse who goes under the 'chute. The cat has to try and catch the mouse, who is helped by the group shaking the 'chute so as his/her whereabouts are concealed as much as possible. When the cat has pounced on the mouse, start a new game.

## **Spider on the Web**

Choose one person to be the spider and ask them to sit cross-legged in the middle of the parachute. Four other children are chosen and go under the parachute at four points around the spider. The object of the game is for the spider to catch the flies by touching them, unless the flies get to the spider first! The spider can not move from the spot. The rest of the group make waves with the parachute to try and hide the approaching flies. The spider has three lives before they are replaced, the flies must leave as soon as they are tugged.

## **Swamp Creatures**

Magically transforming the parachute into a swamp ask the group to sit around the parachute, holding it over their legs. One person is chosen as swamp creature and slides underneath the 'chute. The rest of the group make 'orrible slurpy swamp noises and move the parachute gently up and down. The swamp creature touches their toes and they slip into the swamp transformed into a creature themselves! Good for lots of noises and special effects!!!

## **Mexican Wave**

Everyone holds onto the edge of the parachute and practices making ripples, big ones and little ones.

## **Adding bean bags, balls and toys...**

### **Round the World**

Following on from the Wave, place a ball at the edge of the parachute and see if the group can roll it around the circle without letting it fall off. See how many times you can go round.

### **Popcorn**

Place some balloons on to the parachute and on a count of three, try and toss as many balloons off the parachute as you can.

### **Bean Bag Toss**

Use bean bags and see how many the group can throw off the parachute whilst they count up to ten (or more!!)

You can also use beanie babies or floppy toys for variations on this game.

## GOAL!

Divide the group into two halves and place a soft ball on the parachute. The two teams have to try and score goals by tossing the ball as designated areas in the other teams half. The other team has to save as many as possible!

## Team Games

There are various team games that can be played with the parachute, using balls/bean bags/balloons of different colours etc.

## Adding songs...

You can use many songs with the parachute; here are a few to try.

### The Grand Ol' Duke of York

Run through the song first by sitting on the parachute. Then holding on to the parachute walk around for the first two lines. Lift the parachute up and down as the song says. Try it faster!

### Hokey Kokey

### Heads, Shoulders, Knees and Toes

### Here We Go Round The Mulberry Bush

## Quiet time and story telling...

### Tent

Make a mushroom and as the 'chute comes down step forward and pull the parachute gently behind you under your bottom and sit down. This should make a tent effect over the whole group. Use this space to tell stories, jokes etc or to chat quietly.

**Whatever you play with children and young people  
remember to adapt according to age, ability and  
experience – and above all have fun!**



# Playwork Partnerships

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