

Bumpity Bump Bump Bump

Props: None
Space: Limited

Activity Level: 3
Difficulty Level: 3

Story: Circle the group with you, the facilitator, standing in the middle of the circle. Point decisively at one of the circled folks and say “Bumpity Bump Bump Bump”. The person you pointed to must say “Bump” before you finish. If not, they are in the middle. If they get their “bump” in, then you must go in search of other prey.

Pretty easy, right? Now, we need to add a variation: If you shout “Left Bumpity Bump Bump Bump.” The person you pointed to must respond by saying the first name of the person to the left, before you finish exclaiming, “Bumpity Bump Bump Bump.” If they flub the name or completely forget who’s who, that person takes your place in the center, and subsequently attempts to trap someone else.

It obviously pays to know who is on your left, unless the person the center exclaims “Right!” before pointing and saying, “BBB,” then you must name the person to your right.

Variations: For added fun, you can call out other things that involve three people to complete the shape. These shapes include:

Elephant The person pointed to crosses their arms, bends one elbow and grabs their nose (this is the trunk). The people on either side make half circles with their arms to become ears.

Elvis The person in the middle shouts, “A hunka, hunka burnin’ love!” while swiveling their hips. Those on either side becoming swooning fans.

Hawaii The person pointed to becomes a palm tree. The people immediately to the left and right become hula dancers.

Monster The middle person lies down and flat on their back. The person to the left shouts, “It’s alive! It’s alive!” The middle person begins to sit up stiffly (like Frankenstein) while the person to the right shouts, “Yes Master! Yes Master!”

Monster Truck The person in the middle shifts gears while screeching loudly. The people on the left and right spin in circles like wheels.



Make up your own. There are, at last count, 20 trillion different shapes you can make. Be creative and have fun!

Divide and Conquer

Props: None
Space: N/A

Activity Level: 1
Difficulty Level: 1

Story: None.

- Rules:**
1. Figure out the number of teams you need to have (i.e. six).
 2. Tell the large group to break into groups of ___ (in this case six). This is their chance to form a team with their best friends! When their group is together, have them stand, shoulder to shoulder, in a straight line. Have another group line up behind them in the same fashion.
 3. Now, you have to view the group instead of rows of friends, as columns of people. Take the people in the left column off to the side. They are now a team.
 4. I know it's sneaky, but it causes groups to interact more with others, especially with people they may not know all that well.
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Ducks and Water

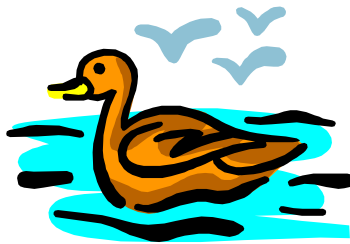
Props: Plastic ducks / glass of water
Space: N/A

Activity Level: 1
Difficulty Level: 5

Story: None.

- Rules:**
1. Have everyone take a duck. Place the water in the middle of the group.
 2. Ducks represent the responsibilities of the group. Everyone must carry their responsibilities. You cannot hide from them (put them down), hide them from the people around you (put them in pockets, etc.) or pass them off to other people.
 3. Water represents the goals of the group as a whole. You never want to set your goals off to the side, they need to be with you at all times.
 4. Throughout the day, the group needs to all have their ducks and the water, even during meals. At no point can the group ever set these aside.

Processing: Communication. There is an interesting phenomenon that sometimes happens: one person has an idea (i.e. tie the duck into their shoelace) and, without speaking, others will follow suit. This gives you an interesting chance to process non-verbal communication.



Group Yell

Props: None **Activity Level:** 1
Space: N/A **Difficulty Level:** 1

Story: We are going to do something that requires stamina, skill, strength, concentration and that each of them will have to pay me a million dollars for the sheer honor of being able to attempt (I can dream, can't I?). We are going to yell...

Ready? Yell! Come on! My grandmother can yell better than you! Yell! Can't you hold it any longer? Yell! I bet I could out-shout you! Yell! Okay, now let's get to the serious work...

Handshakes

Props: None **Activity Level:** 3
Space: Limited **Difficulty Level:** 2

Story: None.

- Rules:**
1. Go up to someone in the group that you do not know all that well and introduce yourself.
 2. Tell them one interesting thing about yourself that they would not know by looking at you.
 3. Now, make up an interesting "secret" handshake.
 4. When everyone is done, repeat this cycle two more times.
 5. Now, when you say "go" (this is a timed event), they must run to the first person they met, do their secret handshake, run to the second one... Well, you get the idea. To indicate that they are finished, have them place their hands on their knees.
 6. Feel free to give them a couple of runs at breaking their own record! ☺

House / Star

Props: Large Ropes **Activity Level:** 1
Space: Middle **Difficulty Level:** 3

Story: None.

- Rules:**
1. Circle the group.
 2. Hand the group the large rope and have the spread out so that everyone is at different points on the rope. (In other words, don't let everyone stand in a straight line, two inches apart with a great deal of slack lying on the ground.)
 3. Once their hands are on the rope, they cannot slide their hands!
 4. Now, without letting go of the rope, have them find a way to lay it down so that it forms the shape of a house (or star). If anyone slides their hands or lets go, the whole group starts over.



I Like People Who... / Some of My Friends

Props: Place markers
Space: Medium
Activity Level: 3
Difficulty Level: 1

Story: This is one of those “the facilitator should participate” activities. It doesn’t require much effort on your part, and is a very nice “mixer” (literally) activity for a group. Lay the carpet squares on the ground in a circle, making sure to leave a few feet of space between each. Have each person stand on a carpet square in a circle around you. You stand in the middle with no carpet square beneath your feet. *Sniff* Do you feel left out? That’s okay, your situation will change in just a second...

Looking around the group, you make the statement, “I like people who _____.” The blank can be anything (e.g. shave, comb their hair, have black on their clothes, brush their teeth, are alive, etc.). When you complete your statement, the people in the group who match the criteria you set must leave their carpet square and run for another one. At the same time, you, stuck in the middle, must try to get to a carpet square. The person left without one is the new “it” and must go to the middle.

Note: This game is a very good way to get to know people and tends to be very non-threatening for most groups. The running isn’t very much, and so can be enjoyed by people of all ages and skill levels. This can also be adapted to work anywhere. You don’t even need carpet squares, you just need to mark the floor somehow, though preferably in a non-permanent fashion.



Janepaulsuefrediradavepeggy or Hustle Handle

Props: None
Space: Limited
Activity Level: 2
Difficulty Level: 2

Story: I bet you I can make at least one of you forget your name. Want to bet? 😊

This is a very unique name game. It doesn’t do a whole lot for groups trying to learn and remember each other’s names, but it requires participants to at least know their own name, and that’s a start...

Rules:

1. Circle the group.
2. Starting with yourself, say your name.
3. The person to your right says their name and so on until it gets back to you again.
4. Now, you are going to do this as a race. As soon as you say your name, the stopwatch begins; it stops when the person to your left (the final person) says their name.

Processing: How well did your group do? Can you do better? Of course you can! Try it again. Is there any way you can think of which might allow you to go faster? How? Does the group care to try it?

Mixer

Props: None **Activity Level:** 2
Space: Middle **Difficulty Level:** 2

Story: None, really. Just something to get you all moving.

- Rules:**
1. Have the group stand in a large blob in the middle of an open area.
 2. Tell the group you are going to ask a question. They must decide how they would answer the question and then, as quickly as possible, need to form into groups with other people who answer the same way.

Sample Questions:

What do you like to drink in the morning: orange juice, milk, coffee or other?

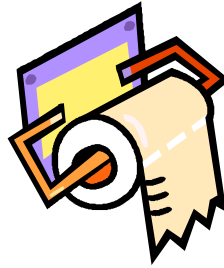
What state were you born in?

What color are your eyes?

What is your favorite meal: breakfast, lunch or dinner?

What is your favorite television channel: ABC, CBS, FOX, NBC, PBS or other?

When you reach for toilet paper in the bathroom, are you a folder or a scruncher?



Orange Teeth

Props: Oranges, plastic knives **Activity Level:** 1
Space: Limited **Difficulty Level:** 1

Story: Tyme-Warmer, the megalithic movie corporation, has a problem: their new movie, “Alien Dentists From The Great Beyond”, is waayyy over budget. The script has called for the roughly 3,400,192 pairs of artificial teeth and so, after looking through a few hundred reputable special effects dentists (none of which they could afford) they gave you the contract.

(Hand out an orange and a knife to each student.) You each have before you an orange. These oranges represents the state-of-the-art, movie magic, artificial denture product and you must create a pair of false teeth. The group, as a whole, will decide whether or not they think your design is movie-quality or whether you should go back to the drawing board. You will have five minutes to create your teeth. Begin...

Note: Barring an EXTREME lack of creativity (e.g. setting the orange down and refusing to do anything), all entries should be judged “acceptable”. Encourage the group to point out the positive things about each set of fruity dentures. Have them leave their teeth in as you process this activity or consider having your actors/actresses perform a small dialogue. It makes people laugh and it tends to lower defenses to the point that the group has fun and feels very much un-threatened!

Scream Run

Props: None
Space: Open

Activity Level: 5
Difficulty Level: 1

Story: None.

- Rules:**
1. Mark a line on the ground and have your group stand behind it.
 5. One at a time, a participant begins to run, screaming at the top of their lungs.
 6. When the participant runs out of breath, they stop and stay where they finished to mark the total distance they covered while screaming.
 7. Please note, you only get one breath for the run, not multiple! 😊
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What's Your Sign

Props: None
Space: Limited

Activity Level: 1
Difficulty Level: 1

Story: None.

- Rules:**
1. Circle the group.
 2. I, the Facilitator, state my name loudly for the group and then make a (polite) gesture that indicates something that represents me. (In my case, I have a baby boy and another one on the way, so I make a "cradle" motion.)
 3. The group says my name and then makes the sign.
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World Map

Props: One large cone
Space: Open

Activity Level: 1
Difficulty Level: 1

Story: None.

- Rules:**
1. Place a cone on the ground in the middle of a wide-open area.
 2. Tell the group that this cone represents the town that we are in right now. Point out which direction is north and then have everyone stand near the cone.
 3. Have everyone move to the area, based on the location of the cone that represents the place where they were born.
 4. Then have the group find their favorite vacation spot, the place they would love to live, etc.
 5. Stress that they need to communicate so that they end up in the appropriate location.



Wordles

Answer Key



1. Just between you and me.
 2. Side by side.
 3. Banana split.
 4. Once upon a time.
 5. Lazy afternoon.
 6. Open Season.
 7. Misunderstanding between friends.
 8. Three blind mice. (No eyes.)
 9. Scrambled eggs.
 10. Forum.
 11. Added.
 12. Quit following me.
 13. Low income.
 14. You're confused.
 15. Paradise.
 16. Split second timing.
 17. A bad spell of weather.
 18. Apartment.
 19. One on one.
 20. It's a small world after all.
 21. Ants in your pants.
 22. Tennis Shoes.
 23. Surrounded by enemies.
 24. H₂O. (Water.)
 25. I understand.
 26. Long time no see.
 27. Blanket.
 28. Absentee ballot.
 29. Oh gross!
 30. Paradox.
 31. Jack in the box.
 32. "I" before "E" except after "C".
 33. Backward glance.
 34. Long ago.
 35. Half an hour.
 36. Incomplete pass.
 37. Mothballs.
 38. Mom breaking dishes.
 39. All mixed up.
 40. Tuna fish.
 41. Three degrees below zero.
 42. He's beside himself.
 43. Hang in there.
 44. Tricycle.
 45. Circles under the eyes.
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Wordles

Props: One large cone
Space: Open

Activity Level: 1
Difficulty Level: 1

Each of the following represents a word phrase. Working as a team, figure out what each Wordle represents.

- | | | |
|--|---|---|
| 1. YOU / JUST / ME | 16. TIMING TIM ING | 31. BJAOCKX |
| 2. SIDE SIDE | 17. WHEATHER | 32. IECEXCEPT |
| 3. BAN ANA | 18. ME NT | 33. ECNALG |
| 4. ONCE
A TIME | 19. ONE
ONE | 34.  |
| 5. NOON LAZY | 20. ALL WORLD | 35. HO |
| 6. SEA SON | 21. YOUR PAANNTTSS | 36. PAS |
| 7. F F
R R
I STANDING I
E MISS E
N N
D D
S S | 22. ISSUE ISSUE
ISSUE ISSUE
ISSUE ISSUE
ISSUE ISSUE
ISSUE ISSUE | 37. MOTH
CRY
CRY
CRY |
| 8. MCE
MCE
MCE | 23. NME NME NME NME
NME SURROUNDED NME
NME NME NME NME | 38. M
DISOHES
M |
| 9. GESG | 24. HIJKLMNO | 39. LAL |
| 10. 2 UM
+2 UM | 25. STAND
I | 40. NAFISH
NAFISH |
| 11. ED
+ED | 26. 
ABDE | 41. 0
M.D.
Ph.D.
L.L.D. |
| 12. ME QUIT | 27. _____ IT | 42. HE'S / HIMSELF |
| 13. COLOWME | 28. Ballo-t | 43. THHAENRGE |
| 14. YOU'ER | 29. O – 144 | 44. Cycle Cycle Cycle |
| 15. DICE
DICE | 30. DOCTOR
DOCTOR | 45. ii ii
O O |

Group Challenges

Balance The Egg

Props: Eggs, flat table (or floor, etc.) **Activity Level:** 1
Space: Limited **Difficulty Level:** 5

Story: Very simply put, you have one egg, a long, flat, hard, unmovable surface and your brain power. All you have to do is balance the egg on the point without using anything other than the egg and the flat surface.

Rules:

1. The egg must remain “intact” (e.g. no messy egg innards leaking all over the floor).
2. You cannot hold the egg.
3. You cannot use anything other than the flat, smooth surface to balance your egg on.

Note: There are no real tricks to this activity. It is very straightforward.

Solution: If you want the solution, read the next words from right to left:

.talf si tniop eht taht os gge eht paT

If done carefully, you won’t have innards becoming “outards” and the “point” is now very, very easy to balance the egg on! ☺

Balance The Nails

Props: Block of wood with a nail in it, 12 other nails with large heads **Activity Level:** 1
Space: Limited **Difficulty Level:** 5

Story: Every thousand years, the test is given to a new group of adventurers; you have been chosen! Now is the time to pass the test, prove your worth, earn fame and fortune, make your mark in history, win every major sporting event, free Han from Jabba’s palace and, once and for all, prove that Elvis is still alive! (No small task, earning fame and fortune, that is.)

The object of this activity is to balance all twelve nails (or any even number of nails) on the single nail pounded into the block.

Rules:

1. You are only allowed to use the materials provided (no glue, rubber bands, etc.).
2. All nails must balance on the single nail, not being propped up or supported by any means.
3. No nail is allowed to “lean”, all must be suspended.
4. The nails must remain balanced for at least ten seconds.

Note: This activity, while possessing no immediate physical threat, can lead, quite rapidly, to conflict. Different people, different ideas and a lack of communication and cooperation skills can quickly tear a group apart. Do NOT use this as a, “Hi! Welcome to Low Ropes!” activity! Use this after you have done some communication training first!

Processing How many sat back and observed? Who were the leaders? Who had the most constructive ideas? Why? Was anyone intimidated by this activity? Why? (Usually it’s because they tend to hang back while the more aggressive types battle over the nails!)

Bridges

Props: Sunday newspaper, tape
Space: Limited

Activity Level: 2
Difficulty Level: 5

Story: Assemble the group in a circle and have them sit down. Set down an entire Sunday newspaper section and the roll of tape in the middle of the group. The group must build a structure capable of supporting one of its team members. For an added challenge, have them build a structure spanning a set distance (say three feet) that is strong enough to allow a person to walk across.

The average time limit for this should be a minimum of ½ hour. (That's just a humble suggestion on my part.) If you are working with a group for an extended period of time, I would recommend posing the problem to them during one of the sessions, allow them time to think about it and have them attempt it during a following session.

Note: I know you're asking yourself, "Why is this an activity level of 2?" Wait until you see how hard the group has to work to roll and/or fold the sheets of newsprint in a desperate attempt to complete their structure within the time allotted.



Build A Boat / Sled

Props: Large boxes (2), duct tape (1 roll), garbage bags (2), oar
Space: Open

Activity Level: 3
Difficulty Level: 3

Story: Give the materials to the group. Depending on the time of year, they must either build a boat that will safely carry one of their teammates across a small body of water (pool, river, etc.) or a sled which will hold up as two of their teammates sled downhill.

The usual time limit for this activity is fifteen minutes for adults, thirty minutes for children. Good luck and happy sailing (or sledding)!

Note: Groups that just randomly begin end up on a random swim (or sliding on their backsides)! Cooperation is key because the time limit requires that everyone be involved, otherwise the craft will not be ready in time.

Egg Landers

- Props:** Eggs, soda straws, tape, napkins (optional) **Activity Level:** 1
Space: Limited **Difficulty Level:** 5
- Story:** NASAL, the National Air and Space Administration, Ltd. is looking for a top notch team to help them land an astronaut on Mars. They scoured the world to find the best, the brightest (the cheapest) people they could. They found you.
- You need to use the top-quality materials they provide to build a lander. The items you have to work with are twelve Stress-Transfer Reduction/Absorption Wires (“STRAWs” for short), two six-inch pieces of Translateral Adhesive-Propertied Edification (“TAPE”), one napkin (“padding” for short) and one EGG (“egg” for short).
- The goal is to build a lander that will allow your egg to survive a fall from 5’, 10’ and, the supreme test, 30’ up in the air!
- Note:** Don’t let one person in the group dominate the whole process!
- Also:** Place a garbage bag below the “landing site” to speed up clean up. 😊
- Variations:** Have the Landers constructed on a time basis. Whoever has theirs done first gets “bonus points” if their egg can survive. If it dies, then the groups egg that survives the fall and took the least amount of time wins. You can also base it on the amount of materials. Whoever uses the least and still has their egg survive, wins! (Play around with what criteria you want to determine a winner or if you even want one at all.) Also, just because the egg is broken, it doesn’t mean the team has lost. If their egg is the most intact out of a bunch of smashed eggs, they win anyhow!

Hammeroids

- Props:** Carpenter’s hammer, one 12” ruler, 14” section of nylon cord **Activity Level:** 1
Space: Limited **Difficulty Level:** 5
- Background:** First of all, I would like to deny anything to do with the naming of this activity. The guy who created it, a man from Project Adventure New Zealand, created the name and the game. For all of the overly sensitive youth and adults that you work with, feel free to change it. Names such as “Hammer, Ruler and Rope” are more aesthetically pleasing, but lack the flair of the original. (Do with it what you will; you are going to anyhow...)
- Story:** Using only the materials that have been provided, suspend all the objects in mid-air. Only the last inch of the ruler is allowed to touch the top of the desk, table, etc. That means the ruler must be on the top of the desk, not jammed into a drawer or other sneaky Initiative stuff like that.
- Note:** If this is to be done with “At-Risk” youth, offer them a pizza party if they can solve the puzzle. It provides added incentive to accomplish the task and helps to unify the group toward a common goal. (These are ALWAYS good things!)
- Also:** If this is done over a long time, say in a classroom, allow the group to use any resources at their disposal. This can include asking teachers (other than you), looking up the answer in a Physics books (like this will happen), or any other idea they can use to accomplish the task.

Marshmallow Bridges

Props: Marshmallows, toothpicks, two blocks of wood **Activity Level:** 1
Space: Limited **Difficulty Level:** 1-5

Story: Well, ladies and gentlemen, it has finally come to this: the city is broke. We promised the voters more; a bigger, better city of Hudson, and that's what we've done. There are more taxes, bigger debts and better ways to take your money. Unfortunately, the only campaign promise we weren't able to deliver on is that new bridge we were supposed to construct over the mighty "St. Croix River" which flows by YMCA Camp St. Croix. Gee! How can we fulfill our promise to the voters?

That's where you come in! You, the engineers who designed the Lander (if you haven't done that obstacle, this is pointless reference...) have now been commissioned to create the utmost in modern structures! It must be big! It must be breathtaking and, most of all, it must be cheap! (The operative word in any Low Ropes manual.) We scrounged around the City Hall cafeteria and discovered a case of unopened marshmallow and a box of toothpicks.

However, since we are on a deadline, here, you will be given all the materials you need but will only have 15 minutes to do it in! (Half an hour is acceptable if you have time...) You must build your bridge ONLY out of the toothpicks and marshmallows. The bridge must be strong enough to hold its own weight up. The way you prove this is by setting the blocks one inch from each end of the finished bridge. If the middle sags to touch the ground, the bridge does not pass inspection and must be rebuilt.

Note: The longest spans we've ever had in half an hour were approximately 18 inches. Some schools have reported very large bridges, but have worked on them for months on end. Have fun!

The Straw That Broke...

Props: Soda straws (100), scotch tape, scissors, 10" cardboard circle. **Activity Level:** 2
Space: Limited **Difficulty Level:** 4

Story: Give the group 100 straws and tell them that they must build a platform that will support the weight of a teacher (adult-type person). Good luck and may the force be with you.

- Rules:**
1. You need to build the platform out of the soda straws.
 2. It must be tall enough to hold an adult off the ground at a height of at least 4 inches (a soda straw bent in half is 3.75 inches) and not more than 7 inches (a soda straw unbent is 7.5 inches). The reason for the height restrictions is to prevent the group from just binding 100 soda straws together, slapping the tape around it, placing the cardboard circle on top and saying ta-da! It also prevents them from bending all of the straws in half and doing the same thing. (The goal is to make them work, not make it easy.)
 3. The adult must be able to stand on the platform unsupported, no weight being taken off by leaning against something.

Group Games

Alaskan Baseball (Chuck the Chicken)

Props: Rubber chicken or other throwable, paper, pencil

Story: The legend goes that Alaskan baseball was invented as an alternative to regular baseball because of all of the snow in Alaska! What color are the bases? White! What color is the bat? White! What color is the ball? White! What color is snow? White! Yeah, so it's hard to play baseball in Alaska.

So, how do you play? Split the group into two even teams and have them choose a team name. It's great to include the adults in this activity. They love to play and they help keep the kids honest! Also, you should play if it will make the teams even. After that, explain how the game is played.

Team 1 will get the chicken first. One person is chosen to throw the chicken, then that person runs around all the members of team 1. They usually figure out quickly that it's easiest to do a giant group hug so the team member doesn't have as far the run. That person counts how many times s/he runs around team 1 and continues to run until team 2 yells, "Stop!"

And when does that happen? Well, as the first team is trying to rack up points, the second team runs to the chicken. The first person to get there grabs the chicken and passes it back through his/her legs to the second person who grabs the chicken and passes it through his/her legs to the third person, and so on until it reaches the last person. That's when the last person can yell, "Stop!"

At this point, team 1 tells the facilitator how many times the person who chucked the chicken ran around their team and this total is recorded. That is their point total for the first inning. Now the roles are reversed, with the second team having the chicken and a chance to score points just as the first team did, and the first team passing the chicken through their legs and yelling, "Stop!" Each person on both teams will get a chance to chuck the chicken, so if there are seven people on each team, then there are seven "innings" in the game. After all of the innings have been completed, the point totals are added up and the highest score wins.

Rules:

1. Each person gets a chance to chuck the chicken.
2. The chicken chucker must run around ALL members of their team.
3. The chicken passers must pass the chicken through every person's legs. Watch out as they often try to get away with passing around the back instead of through the legs!
4. The chicken cannot be thrown into a tree or onto a road.

Dakpanay

Place five rope circles on the ground, spread out far enough so that when people are running at full speed, they won't collide with each other. (In general, I usually make a circle with mine, each hoop spaced about 20 feet from the next one. This is a good configuration for a group of 30+.) Have everyone go and stand with their foot inside one of the circles. Once everyone is there, the game is ready to begin.

Rules:

1. By way of a short explanation, this is simply a wild version of tag.
2. One person (usually the Facilitator) starts out by being "it". When they shout, "go", the rest of the people leave their circles and run for another one. When they reach a new circle, they can rest for a second or they can continue on. (They don't have to wait to be told to "go" again.)
3. If they make it to all five circles, congratulations! Just keep right on going. (Their goal is not to run to all of the circles. It is simply to not be tagged.)

4. If they have a foot (or, if they slip, a hand) inside one of the circles, they cannot be tagged. If they are tagged outside of a circle, then they are also “it” and must run to try to tag others.
5. Once everyone has been tagged, restart with the last person tagged as the first person who is “it”.

Notes:

1. “Baby-sitting” is allowed, but no one who is tagged can ever step back into a circle.
2. Tags should be in appropriate places and should be soft and gentle.
3. If someone is standing outside of a circle and chasing after those who have not been tagged, it can probably be assumed that they are “it”. If you’re not sure, walk up and just gently tap them.
4. If people are not running, tell the group that you are going to count to three. On three, those who are “it” must spin around once in a complete circle and those who are in the circles must run. If someone in a circle doesn’t run, they are automatically “it”.

Dragon’s Tail

This is a game that requires a LOT of open space to play. I usually don’t even recommend playing this in gymnasiums due to how much movement this involves! Divide the participants up into groups of ten. Have them line up in a straight, single-file line. Have each line place their hands upon the shoulders of the person in front of them. They are NOT to grab onto each other’s clothes or someone will get strangled!

Explain to the group that they are now one dragon. Do dragons live very well if they get chopped into little bits? No. Dragon chunks are a bad thing! So, they must move together. Let’s practice this. Have them move around a little bit, following the “head” of the dragon. See? That’s not too bad. Well, we can’t have a dragon with a head and no tail, now can we? No! Have the last person in the line stuff a handkerchief into a back pocket. This is now the tail.

Variation One: If you have only one group, we will play “Head-to-Tail”. What must happen is that the head of the dragon is trying to steal its own tail. The tail, however, doesn’t want the tail to be lost, so it must move out of the way of the head. The fun part, though, is what the people in the middle can do to help either the head or the tail. If the person behind the head decided to help the tail, they can swing the head away from the tail before that person can reach the handkerchief. In other words, the tail will win. If the person in front of the tail decides to help the head, they simply have to not move. The tail is stuck and is going to lose.

Variation Two: If you have more than one group, have the dragon work together to help their head catch other dragons’ tails while at the same time trying to protect their own.



Eagle Eyes

This game comes from the American Indians. It is a very simple, practical game for a hunter/gatherer people. If you were out in the forest hunting, would it be possible to walk by a deer without seeing it? Of course not, right? Well, actually you could. Think about it: the deer is brown, the forest is brown. Neither of them is moving. You

don't see the deer. (For a real world context, think of whether you've ever looked for your glasses only to find them on your face; or if you have ever looked all over for a pencil you had in your hands.) If you've ever done any of these things, then you understand the purpose of this game.

Variation One: A small object is hidden in the room. The children arrive, and are told that they must search to find the object. Once they have found the object, they are to sit down without saying a word. When all have sat down, the people point out where the object was hidden.

Variation Two: Hide multiple objects around the room (I recommend full-sized, blank pieces of white paper). The group must now find all of the pieces of paper. The best way to play this variation of the game is to place the pieces of paper in plain sight at the beginning of the day and have the participants wait until the end of the day to try to find them! (Hint: in this game, the more ordinary the objects, the better.)

Mama Cow / Baby Cow

Mark out a circle on the floor approximately three feet in diameter. Mark an "X" in the middle of that circle and on the X place a stuffed cow. This is the baby cow. Now, mark a larger circle on the floor, approximately 30 feet in diameter. Now, you're ready to begin...

Have the participants line up outside of the large tape circle. Now, we need to talk about cowboys. Out west, if you were a cowboy, could you just pack up and go home for the night, leaving the cows out in the middle of a cattle drive? No. Why not? Things would come out at night to eat the cows! What type of things? (The answer you are shooting for is wolves. Lead them to say wolves if you have to, but wolves are what you want!) Wolves. (You got the correct answer!) Yeah, and wolves hunt in packs, so we now need to get you into wolf packs. Have the group count off in such a manner that you end up with anywhere from 6-10 people per pack. You never want more than ten wolves "attacking" at one time. Okay, you are now divided into wolf packs. Your wolves will come in, when your pack number is called. You must run in, steal the cow and get back out of the circle. Too simple, though...

You know, cowboys had some help with protecting the cows. What was that? Big cows. Think about it, you are a wolf that stands 30" tall and weighs 70 pounds, do you attack a cow about your size or the ones that are 50" tall and weigh 400 pounds? You go for the babies! The big cows, of course, don't like you to steal their babies! So, we need to choose a mama or papa cow to help protect the baby.

The mama or papa cow calls the number of a wolf pack, and then tries to tag the wolves. If the cow touches a wolf, it has just stomped on it and the wolf must leave the circle, going hungry for the night and waiting for their number to be called again. As soon as a wolf steps into the large circle, it can be tagged. The mama or papa cow has only one real rule: it cannot step in, jump over or go through the 3' circle; it must always go around. That puts the safest place in the game either outside the big circle or directly opposite the cow on the small circle. (If you stand in the middle of the circle, I can still reach in and tag you!)

You must decide, Facilitator, whether you will allow throwing the baby cow to a teammate. If someone is tagged with the cow, the wolf must put the baby back on the X and the game continues.

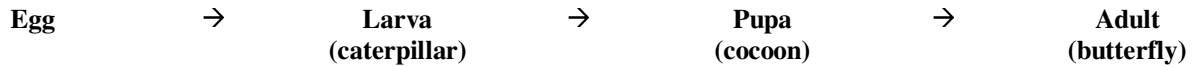


Metamorphosis/Transformations

This is a game that demonstrates metamorphosis via Rock Paper Scissors.

Do butterflies always look the same. No? Why not? Because it changes shape through its life stages, and that process is called *metamorphosis*. Today, we are going to give you the chance to transform through the different stages of a metamorphosis. There are two types of metamorphosis: complete (complex) and incomplete (simple).

Complete/Complex: Includes insects like butterfly, mosquito, fly, ant, bee, etc.



Incomplete/Simple: Includes insects like grasshopper, dragonfly, mayfly etc.



Today, it is our goal to become beautiful butterflies. Everyone will begin as eggs. As an egg, you will find another egg and play a round of “Paper/Rock/Scissors”. The loser stays an egg and must find another egg and try again. The winner gets to metamorphose into a caterpillar (the larval stage) and has to find another caterpillar to challenge. This process keeps repeating until they’ve made it to a beautiful butterfly (the adult stage). For some added fun, if your group is up to it, let them decide how to actively/physically represent the various stages.



Monster Trucks and Harleys

If you have ever been around Harleys, you know they have a slogan. What is it? “Live to Ride!” If you’ve ever been around Monster Trucks, you know that I’m actually lying to you when I tell you that their slogan is, “Ride to Live!” However, if I didn’t make up a slogan for them, this game would not work...

Mark a square on the field using cones; the area should be large enough to allow the group to line up along one side without ending up three people deep. Select two (or more) people to be Monster Trucks. They stand in the middle of the field and yell, “Ride to Live!” The Harleys respond with, “Live to Ride!” and then attempt to run from one side of the square to the other without being tagged.

If a Harley is tagged, they sit down (I generally let them stand, as it is safer and results in less of a chance for someone getting stepped on) and become oil slicks. As oil slicks, if they tag a running Harley, the motorcycle “has an accident” and crashes alongside of them, becoming a new oil slick. If anyone runs out of bounds, they automatically become an oil slick, as well.

Game continues until everyone is tagged.

Paper / Rock / Scissors Tag

This is a great game to break the ice and to get people running and participating. All they need to know is how to play Rock Paper Scissors!

Mark four lines on the ground, two of them five feet apart and representing the center of the field. The other two are approximately twenty feet from the middle and represent the end boundaries.

Split the group into two teams. Each group meets behind their end boundary and must decide, as a group, which action (rock, paper or scissors) they will do. After both teams have decided, they come to the middle and stand on their center line. Both teams are now ready to have a showdown, in which the teams face each other and, on the count of three, everyone shows their sign.

If your team loses, you must turn and run toward your end boundary. If you cross it safely without being tagged, you survived to face another round. If your team wins the showdown, you must chase the other team and try to tag them. Anyone that you tag joins your team.

The groups meet again to decide their next move and then they have another showdown. This continues until all of the members of one team are tagged or until the Facilitator decides it's done!



Slap / Push

This is a game that develops balance. In this game, two people stand facing each other, toe to toe. The object of slap is to hit the other person's hands and knock them off balance. If one person takes a step, they are out of the game. In push, you must gently push against the other person to bring them off balance. No sudden moves are allowed. In both games, contact can only be made at the hands. You are NOT allowed to touch any other part of the other person. In other words, if you lean against me and move me with your chest, I still win! (Ha! So nyaah!)

Processing Did anyone have a really “aggressive” partner? “Thoughtful”? Which was harder to fight against? Did anyone push against someone who was “passive” (always withdraws)? How hard was it to work against someone who didn’t fight back? If you pair two aggressives, who wins? If you pair two passives, who wins?

Communication

All Aboard

Props: Towel **Activity Level:** 3
Space: Limited **Difficulty Level:** 3

Story: Mount <Insert Your Camp Name Here> was thought to be an extinct volcano. Unfortunately, those silly scientists were clueless again, and the volcano just blew its top! (Shades of “Dante’s Peak” here!) Well, when I got out of bed this morning, I flipped on the Weather Channel and noticed that there was a high probability of lava today. ‘Lava?’ I thought to myself, and so I put on my lava-proof clothes. Unfortunately, I forgot to tell all of you! (Silly, silly me!) None of you are prepared. (Silly, silly you!)

Well, being the kind and generous person that I am, I have looked around and determined that this towel (gesture gracefully in a Vanna White-esque way to the ordinary towel laying on the ground) will be the only place within thirty miles (that way they can’t try to flee) that will not be covered by lava. If your whole group can stand on the towel with no body parts touching the ground for ten seconds, you will all survive.

Rules:

1. NO heroic deaths to help out the team. (You live or die together.)
5. NO sacrificing people to the fire gods. (We don’t worship false gods! So nyaah!)
6. No body part can be touching the ground not covered by the towel.
7. Be careful. There are no wrong solutions, only unsafe ones.

Facilitator’s Note: Be nice. Put the towel near a wall so that they can lean on it (though don’t tell them they can use the wall). Then, when they solve it, move it to the middle of the room. If they solve that, fold the towel by a third and have them try it again.

Focus: Communication. Some groups will attempt a mad rush to get on the towel before anyone has a clear idea of what should be done. These attempts usually fail. This activity needs to be talked over before beginning. Cooperation. You will have people shove each other off to make room for them, and you will have boys (especially) afraid to touch girls! They need to work together, especially when the towel keeps shrinking.

Processing: Did you succeed in the task? How about the goal? Who was the leader of this activity? Why? On a scale of 1 to 10 (1 being that you hate each other and 10 being that you are the perfect team) how did you do? Why do you think that? Is there a better solution?

Spotting: Avoid having the groups stack people up on shoulders. If they seem like they can handle it, okay, but make sure you are spotting the activity then! If it looks unsafe, it probably is...

Record: I once had 22 adults on an ordinary bath towel folded to 1/3 of its original size. (Subway, 1994)

Animal Attack

Props: 3” x 5” cards with various animal names on them **Activity Level:** 1
Space: Limited **Difficulty Level:** 1

Story: While out on a mission for International Geographic (not “National Geographic” so they can’t sue me), you have chanced upon the mythical Castle of Sight. This castle, according to legend, possesses a unique power: any who enter in will be changed into some kind of beast; however, they will not be able to see it. If you look down at yourself, you will notice that you look the same as you did when you came in. If you look at yourself in a mirror, you will see only yourself. Take my word for it you’re all animals! (Okay, maybe that’s a judgment call on the group you’re

working with.) The only way to break this curse is to figure out what animal you are. If you leave the castle before speaking aloud the name of your animal, you will become that creature forever!

Have the group stand side-by-side in a line. Go along the back of the group, taping a card onto the back of their shirt with the name of an animal upon it. Stress the fact that these are being given out completely at random, and that you are just taking them as they come! These cards aren't meant to represent the person receiving them.

Facilitator's Note: The reason I say this is because I failed to do this once, and one slightly overweight child discovered her card said, "pig" on it. I then spent the next ten minutes trying to explain to her that this was not done on purpose. Do it beforehand and save yourself a lot of grief!

The group must now wander around the room, asking questions of each other. They cannot specifically ask, "Am I a horse?" Instead, they are only allowed to ask generic questions. "Do I fly?" "Do I have scales" "Do I like to run?" Etc. After approximately ten minutes, stop the group and have them gather around. Ask each person what animal they think they are. After they have guessed, pull the card from their back and show it to them.

Focus: Communication. This is a very basic communication game. People are learning to talk with their group and, not only that, but to ask specific questions that will allow them to figure out what they are. This is a very non-threatening way to encourage communication within your group.

Processing: Why did we do this activity? Was it easy to figure out what you were? Why or why not? Would it have been easier if I had allowed you to ask if you were a certain type of animal? Why or why not? Why do you suppose I don't allow you to ask exactly what you are?

Spotting: Gee, I don't really know what to tell you! If you use pins to hold the cards on, be careful no one gets poked. Watch out for vicious paper cuts when playing with such dangerous materials... ☺

Balloon Towers

Props: Balloons, tape **Activity Level:** 3
Space: Limited **Difficulty Level:** 2

Story: Here is your chance for fame and glory (which is the goal of all teams, isn't it?) You get to build the scale model for the new lumpy skyscraper building. True to form, you are using nothing but the most high-tech building products and you have been allotted a generous amount of time to develop your model.

Rules:

1. Give the group a large bag of balloons and a roll of tape.
2. Tell the group that they will be given five minutes to work together to build as big of a tower as they can. Simple, right? Actually, there is a catch! (Isn't there always?) The tower must be freestanding. In other words, if, when it is unsupported, it tips over, you will measure the height of one balloon. So, building a tall, skinny tower is not necessarily the best idea...
3. When time is up, you are done. Any additional balloons you have inflated that are not taped onto the structure do not count! So, tape them on as you go! Any questions? You have two minutes to get your plans in order, and then we are going to go for it!

Focus: Communication. A lot of people feel that this is Cooperation, but I tend to disagree. (Sound familiar?) If they do not take some time to figure out who does what, they will fail. Usually, most groups designate one person to rip tape. These groups build towers six inches tall! They need to divide their efforts.

Processing: You're on your own for processing this one. Have fun!

Spotting: It's tape and balloons. I'm sure if they worked hard enough at it they may find a way to get hurt but let us hope...

Records: A 12-foot (give or take) balloon structure. (Subway, 1996.) Of course, there were 32 of them...



Birthday Line-Up

Props: Blindfolds (optional)
Space: Limited

Activity Level: 1
Difficulty Level: 1

Story: Have the group line up in a straight line. Don't sweat the order; just getting them in the line is the important part. Once the group is quiet and paying attention, have the participants line up by last names; they are allowed to talk, and move freely.

Okay, that wasn't terribly tough! Now, while they are standing still, cover your mouth and look up at the sky. Oh drat! That was an acid rain cloud that passed overhead. Acid rain, here in Low Ropes Courses, has a terrible effect: it makes you mute. No one in the group can now make a sound! They can't even move their mouths!

They must now line up in order according to birth date by month and year. You **DO NOT** care how old they are. If my birthday is 12/03/65 and someone else's birthday is 01/05/92, they are first (because January 5 comes before December 3 on a calendar!). Remember: you **DO NOT** care how old they are! (Some groups will struggle with understanding this.) Tell them to go for it. When they think they have the solution, start at the end they tell you and have them say their birthdays to see if they were right.

Facilitator's Note: Watch closely because many groups will try to cheat by mouthing the information. Stress that you want to see if they can do it without cheating, but that it really doesn't. If it becomes too bad, stop the activity and re-explain to them that it doesn't matter if they accomplish their task; only the goal (teamwork) is important, and a true team doesn't need to cheat. matter if they succeed or not. Trying is all that counts.

Variations: Line up by MIDDLE name, line up by the size of their favorite animal, line up by the number of siblings, etc. My favorite variation, however, is to blindfold them, tell them they are mute, and have them line up (without sight or sound) by favorite color of the rainbow: Red, Orange, Yellow, Green, Blue, Indigo, Violet (Roy G. Biv). If their favorite color isn't one of these, have them pick one of these colors for this exercise. Believe it or not, this activity can be done without cheating!

Focus: Communication. But how is it communication? You can't talk after the first time! Communication is defined as the sharing of ideas. It can be through speech, writing, pictures or even touch! (Have someone close their eyes and guide them around by applying pressure to their shoulders.) Even that is communication!

- Processing:** What form of communication is easiest for us? (Speech.) Why? (We use it all the time.) Is it difficult to get used to other forms? Why or why not?
- Spotting:** Not much here, either, I'm afraid. Watch out for blindfolded people doing, shall we say, "inappropriate groping"? Make sure everyone moves slowly to maintain a high safety level.
- Records:** Quincy Schools At-Risk Youth program did the blind/mute rainbow without cheating in 7:28.

Blind Drawing

- | | | | |
|---------------|---|--------------------------|---|
| Props: | Poster board/butcher paper, blindfold and crayons | Activity Level: | 1 |
| Space: | Limited | Difficulty Level: | 2 |

Story: None, actually. But here's how you play!

Hang a piece of poster board on a wall, preferably one that can be drawn on without too many problems. Blindfold one member of the group. The remainder of the group must communicate (no touching) to guide the "artist" to the poster board, help them find the appropriate crayon, and draw the head and/or face of the Facilitator on the paper.

After the head is drawn to the satisfaction of the group, the "artist" puts down the crayon, removes the blindfold and hands it to the next person. The group guides them in drawing another portion of your artistic creation. Feel free to be as detailed as possible, but avoid anything risqué.

Focus: This is Communication on a simple, entertaining level. This is good for groups that are just starting to work together, as it requires little Caring/Trust and yet reinforces teamwork concepts.

Processing: How well did you communicate your ideas? What worked and what didn't? Did you find times when the communication was blocked by the sound of too many voices?

Spotting: Don't let the group run someone blindfolded into the wall? Don't make the artist stand there so long that they get carpal tunnel syndrome? There's probably some way to injury a participant in this activity, but I haven't had any problems so far...

Record: Rumor has it the Mona Lisa was painted in this fashion... (Da Vinci and Friends, 1503-1506.)

Blind Square

- | | | | |
|---------------|-----------------------|--------------------------|---|
| Props: | Blindfolds (optional) | Activity Level: | 1 |
| Space: | Limited | Difficulty Level: | 2 |

Story: No real story to this, only directions. I'm sorry for my extreme lack of creativity. Anyhow, have the group hold hands, shut their eyes (or blindfold them) and listen closely. They are now in a circle. They must form themselves into a perfect square without opening their eyes! They may release hands, but don't let people wander from the group! When they think they are finished, have them stand still and open their eyes (or remove their blindfolds) and take a look at their work.

Variations: Try playing with other geometric shapes. You can even do complex patterns (i.e. Star of David). For an added challenge, mute half the group and take their blindfolds off.

- Focus:** How did they share their ideas of what a perfect square was? How was the plan achieved?
- Processing:** Was there a main leader? Would it have been easier if there had been one? How could this have been done faster? Does the rest of the group think the new plan would have worked better? Why or why not? How difficult was this to accomplish? Why?
- Spotting:** Watch out for the ever famous, “let’s squeeze the other people’s hands until they cry out” routine. Make sure all movements are gentle to prevent accidentally poking someone.

Group Juggle

- | | | | |
|---------------|---|--------------------------|---|
| Props: | Tennis balls (at least enough for one per person) | Activity Level: | 2 |
| Space: | Limited | Difficulty Level: | 2 |

Story: Circle the group. The Facilitator then takes one tennis ball from the crate beside them and throws it to someone in the group, (henceforth designated as the party of the first part, or, for all legal purposes forthwith) Person A. Person A will only ever catch a ball from the Facilitator. No one else will ever, for any reason, throw to Person A.

Person A will then turn and choose someone else in the circle and will throw the ball to them. We shall call that person, (be ready, creative moment coming) Person B. Person B will only have a tennis ball thrown to them by Person A.

So, get ready and try to follow along: Person A will only receive tennis balls from the Facilitator, and will only throw them to Person B. The ball is passed around until everyone has received it. After the last person in the group catches the ball, then it is thrown back to the Facilitator who takes it out of the game.

A long time ago, in a galaxy far, far away... No wait! That’s “Star Wars”. Actually, you have been sent out on a mission by the famed nature magazine, International Geographic (not “National Geographic” so they can’t sue me), to search for the extremely rare, living tennis balls. You have had great luck on your mission, and managed to acquire a small collection (or, if you have lots of tennis balls, tell the group they multiply like Tribbles) for your own personal menagerie.

Living tennis balls, however, once deprived of their native habitat, have proven to be incredibly allergic to most items living in our country. For example, they are deathly allergic to grass, dirt, concrete or whatever surface you happen to be leading this activity on. You see their heart beats normally after they are removed from the crate (squeeze the tennis ball to simulate a heartbeat), but, if the ball touches the ground (demonstrate this), the ball dies (show the group the “dead” tennis ball). However, it is not a critical thing, since all Facilitators are required to learn TBR: Tennis Ball Resuscitation. (Do some “chest” compressions, and Poof! The tennis ball is alive!)

- Rules:**
1. Pass the tennis ball through the circle. This is why you established a pattern.
 2. If the tennis ball goes all the way through without being dropped, start another one. Do NOT throw both balls at the same time. My general rule of Juggling is that once Person A has thrown their ball to Person B, I will throw the next ball in my hand to Person A. That way, it prevents a huge mix-up. However, if Person A holds onto their ball, I will wait until they have thrown it!
 3. The 50% Rule: If a group manages to get 50% or better tennis balls through in a round, add another ball. When they complete 50% or better of five tennis balls, then give them **“The FINAL Test!”**
 4. The FINAL Test: Give everyone in the group a tennis ball. Everyone follows the same pattern! Person A still throws to Person B. Now, however, they must try to find a way to get every ball through! If a group gets stuck, ask them which ball has the longest distance to

travel. (Yours. Everyone else still must handle it in the circle.) Which ball has the shortest? (The person who throws to you. Once you catch it, you toss it back in the crate.) The easiest solution to this problem is to have the person who throws to you (we'll call them Person Z) go first. Once you've caught their tennis ball, Person Z is now empty-handed. Person Y then throws their ball to Person Z who throws it to you. Etc. This way, everyone in the group, except you, of course, will only have to handle one ball at a time! Any other solution that I'm aware of, will involve everyone holding onto at least one ball while trying to catch another.

5. If a ball touches the ground, it is out. Have them leave it on the ground until the end of the round. If the wrong person catches a ball, it is out. Have them drop it on the ground and leave it until the end of the round.

Focus: Communication. This is a classic model of communication. What happens if everyone on the FINAL Test tries to throw his or her tennis balls at the same time? (Many collide and never make it to their mark.) Why? (Too much confusion!) What happens if everyone in a group is talking at the same time? (Too much confusion, and the group will never achieve its goal.) What is the best way to do this activity? (One person throwing at a time.) Why? (That way everyone focuses on the one object moving.) How is this like communication? (One person talking at a time is understood. Anything higher than that results in miscommunication.)

Processing: See Focus for the start to processing this one. Did you get all of the tennis balls through on the final time? Why or why not? What could you have done differently? Was everyone always watching for the person to throw a ball to him or her? What could have been done differently to correct this? Did the group blame someone for dropping a tennis ball? What was their reaction and what should it have been?

Spotting: The main concern is people throwing the tennis balls at high speeds. If people aren't paying attention, it is not unusual for people to get a tennis ball in the face! Make sure that the group is focused on the task, and you shouldn't have that much of a problem with people getting hit by tennis balls...



Human Knot

Props:	None / Short Ropes can be used, if preferred.	Activity Level:	3
Space:	Limited	Difficulty Level:	3

Story: Circle. Have everyone raise his or her right hand. For some groups, this will take longer than the activity. (P.S. Hope everyone has deodorant on!) They must reach out and take hold of another right hand, as long as the person is NOT standing next to them! Then have everyone reach in and take hold of someone with his or her left hand! This CANNOT be someone next to them, OR the same person their right hand is holding onto! They are now tied into one giant human knot. They must untie themselves.

- Rules:**
1. The group cannot let go of hands! (Watch for cheating on this!)
 2. The group must watch out for each other! Be careful about stepping on people, arms, etc.

3. The group *is* allowed to slide their hands around! (In other words, if you and I are holding onto each other and I want to move, our hands may move around to get a new grip. This is to prevent me from having to twist your wrist off in the attempt to move!)
4. When the group is done, they will be in either one large circle or two interlocked circles. The group must tell you when they are done. (But they can't say it right at the start! They have to have the solution first!)
5. This can be done as a timed event. While it does make it more challenging, it will also make it more dangerous. Do NOT attempt timing this activity with a group you are unsure about!

Facilitator's Note: If the group gets totally stuck, they can ask for a hint, let go and move one set of hands, **OR** let go and begin again! Don't let them have a hint *and* let go. It makes it too easy. To give hints, simply pick one person as your starting point and follow where their right hand connects. If you go through every person before getting back to your starting place, it will be one giant circle. If not, it will be two interlocking. Knowing the pattern they will end up in will enable you to tell where the biggest tangle is. (Don't tell them the final shape!) If people separate into small clusters, they grabbed someone next to them!

Talk to people during the activity, get their feedback, and see if they then turn and relay your discussion to the group. I had one group solve it in 45 seconds, they were two interlocking circles, but they continued to work on it for an additional 15 minutes until someone realized that they were at the solution! (Whoopies!) If they weren't paying attention to your instructions, let them go. You can drop hints that they are done, but let them realize it!

Variation: As stated in the "Props" area, this can be done using short pieces of rope rather than having participants hold hands. This prevents injury to wrists and gives the group "breathing room", which is especially important for groups that do not handle physical contact well.

Focus: Communication. Most groups will all talk at the same time and not listen. BIG mistake, but they must work on it. Cooperation. They have to be willing to do what other people say. Caring. If you hear, "Ow!" from the group, they lost Caring points!

Processing: Who was at the bottom? How did it feel? Who got into the most interesting (compromising?) position? For those who were freed right away, were you able to help out? Was it easier for you? Why? (O.k. You take it from here...)

Spotting: "Hey! Let's twist someone's wrist off! Boy! That will be so funny!" Pull them out of the activity immediately if it's a problem! Warn them once, if they continue, they are done! Make sure you watch out for people slipping during the activity. This is a problem that can't be avoided, but be prepared to stop the activity if someone is injured. Finally, watch out for those on the outside goofing off and pulling people around rather than helping their group solve the puzzle.

Imagination Station

Props:	Tinker Toys (2 buckets) and two towels	Activity Level:	1
Space:	Limited	Difficulty Level:	1

Story: Have the group talk it over and nominate a spokesperson that will be their Foreman. When they have made their choice, have the Foreman go off into a corner away from the group. If they need more motivation to sit in a corner, you can put a "Dunce" hat on them if you think it would help. (I wouldn't recommend it, however.) Have the group divide the remaining team members into two groups: Architects and Builders. Give each group a bucket of Tinker Toys and move them to opposite ends of the room.

The Architects begin by putting together a contraption using at least fifteen pieces of their Tinker Toys. They are allowed to use as much as many pieces as they want, but they can't use less than fifteen! When they are done, they are to cover their design with the towel and then call the Foreman over. WITHOUT letting the Foreman see what they have built, they must describe to him/her what pieces the builders will need and how it is assembled. The Foreman moves then goes to the Builders and tells them what they have to build, but is not allowed to actually handle the pieces or see where the Builders are putting them! (Hence the need for the second towel!) The Foreman may make as many trips as he/she needs to assemble the device. When all parties feel it is complete, have the Architects bring the covered original into the room and unveil both at the same time!

Variations: Make this a timed activity.

Focus: Communication. It takes a great deal of communication to convey the ideas from the Architects, to the Foreman and finally, to the Builders themselves. If there is a weak link in the communication, the object will not look like the original!

Processing: Did the objects look the same? Why or why not? If there is a difference, how could it have been better described so that the objects would have been the same? Can anyone think of a better way to have described the areas that went wrong?

Spotting: Pretty easy. Don't let people poke each other with the Tinker Toys. That's about it!



Jigsaw Puzzle

Props:	A giant jigsaw puzzle (available at toy stores)	Activity Level:	2
Space:	Limited	Difficulty Level:	3

Story: Empty the puzzle pieces on the ground. Have your team circle around the puzzle pieces. This puzzle, you explain, is a very special puzzle. If you'll notice the picture on the puzzle pieces, you'll clearly see that it is a picture of cardboard; hence the reason the entire picture is simply grayish-brown. (Yes, I know I have the puzzle turned over, but you want to start with tough on this project and then move to simple.) The group must assemble the puzzle.

Have the group begin, and time to activity, if you wish. When it is complete, process the activity. If the students wish, they can attempt to reassemble the puzzle a second time to see if they can better their time.

To reinforce the ideas of goal-setting and how it related to small tasks, flip the puzzle over. The group will have five minutes to examine the picture on the box and to sort the puzzle pieces out. Now time their attempt to assemble the puzzle.

Variation: Blindfold half of the group. The group with blindfolds is the ONLY one that may touch the puzzle pieces. Those who have sight must direct the actions of those who cannot see. The group must figure out how to effectively communicate the method of assembling the puzzle to those who

are blind. This will stress listening skills on the part of the blindfolded people and will encourage positive, effective communication from those who can see.

Focus: Communication. I can see why it would be hard to realize this is Communication, especially since the Variation has nothing, whatsoever, to do with talking and listening. . Make sure you don't use this as a warm-up activity for Communication. It requires some skill to be present in order to achieve success and a positive experience on the part of the group.

Processing: How hard was it to understand what the group was telling you to do? How many of you had a piece on the ground and somebody took it away from you? Was that frustrating? Why or why not? What could the group choose to do differently to avoid similar difficulties?

Spotting: Any time you put a blindfold on someone, you are opening up a chance for injury. Someone moving a puzzle piece can accidentally smack someone else with it. Be careful of tempers, too, as they may create problems for the group.

Record: The Saint Croix Teambuilding Facilitators assembled a blank 24-piece puzzle in 1:28. (2002)

Key Punch

Props: Two ropes, numbered disk (1 - 40), a stopwatch
Space: Limited

Activity Level: 4
Difficulty Level: 3

Story: Line up the group at the starting line. Tell them that when you say, "Go!" they must run down to the circle. With only one person in the circle at the time, they must touch the numbers in order. When they have touched the last one, the group must return to their starting line. You will time the event from the moment they start until the moment the last person crosses the starting line.

- Rules:**
1. The goal is to get all of the numbers touched, in order, in less than sixty seconds.
 2. The numbers must be touched in order. Touching a number out of order results in a five second penalty.
 3. The group is given five minutes to plan their initial attempt. They are not allowed to cross the starting line to see the number placement, however.
 4. Everyone is required to touch at least one number. If the group fails to involve everyone, they are penalized one minute for each person who was excluded.
 5. Every time more than one person steps foot inside the circle, the group is penalized five seconds. (Keep close watch, this can happen very quickly.) To be even tougher, you can penalize the group for every time they break the plane of the circle. This would include pointing, leaning, etc.

Focus: Communication. It is critical for the group be able to determine who moves when and where.

Processing: How did individual movements affect the whole group? How could you improve on your time?

Spotting: I have seen people slip on the disks and many people trip running either to or from the circle.



Mine Field

Props: Blindfolds and carpet squares **Activity Level:** 2
Space: Middle **Difficulty Level:** 3

Story: Before this activity begins, lay out a maze of carpet squares within definite boundaries. Have the group split into pairs and have each couple stand on the starting line. Hand blindfolds out to the group, and have them, a few at a time (the number will depend upon the number of people you have) attempt to traverse the maze.

Rules:

1. The person who is blindfolded must follow the directions of their partner. No solos!
2. The person who is sighted, must attempt to lead their partner faithfully through the maze.
3. The person who is blindfolded is the only one who may enter the maze. The sighted person must remain behind the starting line and guide their partner from there.
4. If a blindfolded person steps on a carpet square, they must pay a forfeit. Either start over, or be led somewhere else in the maze. It's up to you, Facilitator, to set the penalty they must pay. The same thing is true if they step out of bounds.

Facilitator's Note: The more people actually participating in the activity at the same time will bring about mass confusion in the group. Be extra careful to spot people and prevent them from running into objects. Also, feel free to change the maze once half the group is blindfolded. That way they can't rely on memory to guide them through, but forces them to rely on their partners.

Variations: Prohibit speech. Give each pair about two minutes to come up with the form of communication (or sound) they will use. They may make sounds to communicate to each other, but they are not allowed to speak actual words! (This forces them to take communication to a higher level!)

Take three sets of partners and place them on the starting line; place a chair at the far end of the maze; and choose one pair to be the guided missile and the remaining two pairs to be the heat seekers. When you say, "go", the guided missile begins to be directed toward the chair at the far end. After ten seconds are up, you say, "go" again and the heat seekers begin to "track" the guided missile. If the guided missile reaches the chair at the far end and sits down, the guided missile team wins. If the heat seekers "intercept" (pronounced "tag") the guided missile, they win for that round. If someone touches a square in "Heat Seeker", have him or her stand in one place for 10 seconds as a penalty!

Focus: Communication. We define communication, usually, as talking and listening, but is that all there is? Is sign language communication? What about writing? Touch? There are many different ways to communicate ideas; we just need to explore them...

Processing: Was it difficult to hear your partner with everyone talking at once? Did it help when you weren't allowed to use words? (Surprisingly, most groups will say yes. It's easier to listen to a distinct sound than the mass of words from the guides.) Is this activity impossible? (No, just very, very tough!) How could this activity have been made easier?

Spotting: Avoid having blindfolded people running. This is usually a bad concept. Make sure you watch the people giving directions to verify they are telling them the truth! (You will occasionally have a practical joker. Not funny, though.)

Over Easy / Tarp Flip

Props: Large tablecloth. **Activity Level:** 3
Space: Limited **Difficulty Level:** 3

Story: Mount <Insert Your Camp Name Here> has blown up! At least it has if you have already done “All Aboard”. You safely got your entire group on the safe area in time, and everyone was happy. You do have a slight problem, however. (Don’t you always?) The lava proofing on the underside of the tablecloth you are standing on has been steadily worn away due to constant exposure to lava. (They just don’t make that lava proofing like they used to!) Realizing that it will only be a short time before the lava eats its way through the tablecloth and then through you (which is a bad thing), you realize that you must flip the tablecloth over so you will be protected again until the next time we give you a lava-based activity.

- Rules:**
1. NO heroic deaths to help out the team. (You live or die together.)
 2. NO sacrificing people to the fire gods. (We don’t worship false gods! So nyaah!)
 3. No body part can be touching the ground not covered by the tablecloth. While standing on the tablecloth, the team must flip the entire tablecloth over.
 4. No leaping onto the nearby trees, stumps, etc.
 5. Be careful. There are no wrong solutions, only unsafe ones.

Facilitator’s Note: Be nice. Put the tablecloth near a wall so that they can lean on it (though don’t tell them they can use the wall). If they solve that, then move it to the middle of the room.

Focus: Communication. Some groups will attempt a mad rush to get on the tablecloth before anyone has a clear idea of what should be done. These attempts usually fail. This activity needs to be talked over before beginning. Cooperation. You will have people shove each other off to make room for them, and you will have boys (especially) afraid to touch girls!

Processing: Did you succeed in the task? How about the goal? Who was the leader of this activity? Why? On a scale of 1 to 10 (1 being that you hate each other and 10 being that you are the perfect team) how did you do? Why do you think that? Is there a better solution?

Spotting: If it looks unsafe, it probably is...

Toxic Waste

Props: Tin can, water, bicycle tube, ropes **Activity Level:** 2
Space: Limited **Difficulty Level:** 4

Story: Mark two circles on the ground ten feet apart from each other. The circle should be 10 to 15 feet in diameter (wider is tougher). Place a canister of water in the center of a circle. Here’s the story...

A nuclear reactor, in the process of being cleaned, has gone critical. The control rods were removed so that technicians could safely dust them, however nobody realized that pulling them out into the air they cause them to release tremendous amounts of energy. The rods are lying on the floor of the reactor chamber that is now filled with radiation and has a temperature of about 5,000 °F. This is a small problem you decided needs to be fixed... You consult your “Handbook For Bad Things”, only to discover that the solution seems almost as bad as the problem: you must remove the rods from the danger zone and place them in a specially constructed area outside of the reactor core. This will prevent the reaction, inhibit the spread of radiation, and provide the basis for this Low Ropes Activity.

You reach into your “Bag Of Safety Stuff”, remove a piece of bicycle tubing and a bunch of ropes. Realizing that you can’t get too close to the rods (i.e. bucket in the center of the circle), you mark a boundary on the ground so that the group will understand where they are safe and not. Using only these materials, the group must figure out how to get the bucket, pick it up, carry it outside of the circle, and place it delicately down inside the other area, all without stepping into and/or touching the inside of the main circle!

- Rules:**
1. The ropes and tubes cannot be cut.
 2. You can tie any kind of knot and/or as many knots as you want in the bike tube and the ropes.
 3. No one may enter or make contact within the area outlined by the circumference rope (or markings). If ground contact is made, all progress stops, and you start over.
 4. If any of the water is spilled (even a drop) it’s back to the beginning again!

Variation: If you are feeling nice, you can tie the ropes to the bicycle tube for the group.

Place an empty coffee can in the second circle. Have the group attempt to pour a can of water into the bucket by using the same method. Again, the group is not allowed to spill the water! A “final level” of challenge is to blindfold half of the group (shielding against radiation) and have them control the ropes while the sighted people provide direction.

I saw a Facilitator invert the can and place a tennis ball on top. The group was not allowed to drop the tennis ball or they would start over. It was incredibly difficult and created all kinds of frustration for the team. On the bright side, they processed for hours afterward!

Focus: Communication. How do you piece the different components together to accomplish the task? They will spend a great deal of time working on this (unless, of course they’ve already done something like this before), and it is very important that the communication be constructive. Watch for people being excluded and ideas being neglected. Cooperation is simply the implementation of the plan. (Note the word: “simply”.)

Processing: Were you able to do it? Why or why not? Your call as to what else you want to say...

Spotting: Inspect the bicycle tube prior to each use! It might break apart and..um..yeah. Be careful of the water. It could be cold, give someone pneumonia, or something... Maybe... ☺



Cooperation

All Screwed Up

- Props:** Threaded rod, nuts (one per person) **Activity Level:** 3
Space: Limited **Difficulty Level:** 3
- Story:** None.
- Rules:** Have the group circle around and hold up the threaded rod and the nuts. The activity is pretty straightforward: the group must work together to thread the nuts from the top of the rod until they fall off the bottom. Give the group a few minutes to talk their ideas over, and then when they are ready, start the timer. Stop timing when all nuts have been threaded over the length of the rod.
- Facilitator's Note:** for an added challenge, get two threaded rods and have teams compete against each other.
- Focus:** Cooperation. Though there usually is a fair amount of communication going on, this is mostly a cooperation exercise. It takes a surprising amount of cooperation to work the nuts all the way down!
- Processing:** How long did it take? Do you think you could have done better? On your second attempt, did you improve? Who had the best ideas? Who did the most work? What ideas didn't get tried that might have helped the group out?
- Spotting:** If it is a large threaded rod, be careful it doesn't fall on anyone. This may seem pretty basic, but it is a very real concern! Make sure your threaded rod is in good condition; nicks, cuts and burrs can do a lot of damage to participants' hands.
- Record:** 6' threaded rod – 12 people/nuts in 2:00 (Sunshine House, 1997)



Amoeba Race

- Props:** Rubber chicken **Activity Level:** 3
Space: Open **Difficulty Level:** 2
- Story:** Circle. <Insert your current teambuilding location here> has a problem: some idiot has left a rubber chicken wedged dangerously close to its heart. Your group has volunteered for the special (pronounced: “dangerous”) mission of being shrunk down small enough to enter <the location> and deal with the pesky chicken.
- To be ready to enter the heart of <the location>, you must be converted into a cell. Have the group figure out how to divide itself into two equal teams. Ask for one group to volunteer. Take the group that volunteered and have them link hands and form into a circle with the participants facing toward the *outside* of the circle, not the inside! Explain to the group that cells have two parts: the cell wall, which you have standing before you; and the inner gooky stuff. The second group is the gooky stuff and must get inside the cell wall. Now, the group is ready to walk down and retrieve the chicken. ☺

- Rules:**
1. The group must move together. If the cell wall “ruptures”, the whole group will start over.
 2. The group must NOT injure anyone. If there are cries of pain, the whole group will start over.
 3. No one on the “cell wall” is allowed to pick up the chicken. It must be somebody on the inside.
- Variation:** To make things more challenging, when the group picks up the chicken, explain to them that the added weight has caused the cell wall to become unstable and it begins to shrink. Now have the cell wall link elbows, instead of hands. The group is now ready to return to the starting point. ☺
- Focus:** Cooperation. Moving in a blob is a tough scenario. Do this one while the group is still fresh and nice smelling. At the end of a hot, sweaty day, the group will kill you for choosing this activity as a wrap-up. Also, if you chose the bucket of water instead of the rubber chicken, feel free to throw the bucket of water on the group when you are done...
- Processing:** Who was in the middle? Who had the toughest job to do? Why? Were you successful? Why or why not? What could you have done differently? (Was it worth all the trouble to save the camp? On second thought, maybe you shouldn't ask that question!)
- Spotting:** Watch people who are walking backwards, they are prone to slip. Watch out for those on the inside because they can get stepped on and trampled. Is this a race? No. Does it have to be done at a run? No. You may wish to point this out to the group if they are having problems with attempting a 200-meter blob-dash. ☺

Balloon Trolley

- | | | | |
|---------------|----------|--------------------------|---|
| Props: | Balloons | Activity Level: | 2 |
| Space: | Middle | Difficulty Level: | 3 |
- Story:** The U.S. Government wants you! Yes, you! (Who else did you think I would be talking to?) It has a shipment of top-secret, highly volatile, bottled lung-air. This lung-air is very, very toxic and must be handled with extreme care! (Simple, chronic halitosis is a terrible thing to expose people to.) Due to typical government efficiency, it has been decided to transport the lung-air by human couriers. It has been determined, however, that hands cannot be used to transport the lung-air and, even more important, it has been decided to ship all of the containers of lung-air at the same time!
- Rules:**
1. Everyone must stand in a straight, single-file line.
 2. There needs to be one less balloon than the total number of people. Everyone must have a balloon except for the first person in line.
 3. Participants must now figure out how to wedge the containers (balloons) of lung-air between them so that they can be carried. The proper configuration for lung air carrying is:

(front) XOXOXOXOX X = Person / O = Balloon (lung-air)
 4. Balloons must be wedged between participants, no one can support a balloon by themselves!
 5. The group is NOT allowed to hang onto each other. They may lean, but not grab!
 6. Now, the participants must walk a pre-determined distance, approximately twenty feet.
 7. If the group drops a balloon, one (or all) of the following penalties may be enforced:
 - a. The entire group has to start over.
 - b. The two people who dropped the balloon have to pick up their balloon (not using their hands) and move to the end of the line, replace the balloon and the team continues from there.
 - c. The group has to figure out how to pick up the balloon without dropping any of the other balloons.

- Variations:** If the group does this with ease, have them retry with two balloons between each person! Or, for any even better time, have the group attempt this while negotiating an obstacle course! (Blindfolds are nice props for this activity, too.)
- Focus:** Both Cooperation and Communication are very important to the accomplishment of this activity, however. This can be used to reinforce what the group has learned from the “Trolley” activity.
- Processing:** What was the task? What was the goal? Was it possible to accomplish the task without accomplishing the goal? Why or why not? Did you drop any balloons? How could you have done better?
- Spotting:** People tripping over each other. The only other problem I’ve seen was people stepping each other’s shoes off. 😊



Blind Object Retrieval

- Props:** Blindfolds and a rubber chicken
- Space:** Open
- Activity Level:** 2
Difficulty Level: 3
- Story:** Have the group assemble in a circle on the edge of a wide-open space (fields and/or playgrounds work well). Hand out blindfolds to everyone in the group and have them put them on (if someone protests, remember it *is* Challenge By Choice). Check to make sure that no one can see anything; stress that the goal is teamwork, and that cheating is not going to help the team. Once everyone is set, take the object out and place it somewhere in the open space. The group must now work together, while blindfolded to retrieve the object.
- Rules:**
1. Everyone must leave his or her blindfolds on. (If they are being used.)
 2. **No Running!**
 3. The group can work together or separate.
 4. If you shout, “stop” everyone freezes until you correct the problem (e.g. someone walking toward a solid object). When the problem is fixed, shout, “go” to resume the activity.
 5. Otherwise, the group is on its own to figure out the solution.
- Focus:** Cooperation. I know some of you are wondering if this might not be a Communication activity, instead. Well, if you think that, you are also somewhat right! Only “somewhat”, however, as this is really Cooperation. If the team splits off and runs in all directions, they will fail. Together, systematically, they stand the best chance of beating this activity!
- Processing:** Did you work together or split up? How many of you think this was the best choice? Why? Was there any way, short of cheating, that would help you find the object faster? Why or why not?
- Spotting:** You have anywhere from 6-600 blindfolded people moving around an area. This, in and of itself, is a problem. Watch closely to make sure people aren’t going to smack into things. Be prepared to sideline any participant who is running around and endangering the other participants!

Records: One bucket found in an area the size of a football field in 5:38. (Kimball Camp Staff, 1994)

Chocolate River

Props: Place markers (1 per participant) **Activity Level:** 3
Space: Limited **Difficulty Level:** 2

Story: Your team, on your way back to base camp, comes across a river. This river is special though; instead of water, it is a flowing, bubbling, gooey stream of chocolate. Staring in amazement you also notice that the beach is made of graham crackers – and eroding! Realizing that time is running out, you look around and find native marshmallows growing nearby. Using the marshmallows as flotation devises, your team must cross the Chocolate River.

Rules:

1. Mark a starting line and finish line about 30 feet (for 15 participants) apart.
2. The team lines up on one side. The team is to use the spots to get from one side to the other without falling into the Chocolate River.
3. If someone steps off a spot, the group (on only them, if you're nice) starts over.
4. Participants must also keep human contact with the spots at all times. If they lose contact, they lose the spot.
5. Spots must always move forward, never backwards.

Focus: Cooperation. They have to work together moving across the river in order to keep full human contact with all the spots. This lends itself to some very interesting physical contortions as people try to not leave their spot behind!

Processing: Some teams get this quickly, some take forever and some even self-destruct. Watch for reactions when they lose spots as well as the effort made in pre-planning. Do they demonstrate? How many had no concept until they saw it work once? This is a good one to talk about how people think differently.

Spotting: Watch for people taking huge steps or losing their balance backwards.

Circle The Circle / Webbing Pass

Props: Two tubular nylon webbings, hula hoops, etc. **Activity Level:** 3
Space: Middle **Difficulty Level:** 2

Story: Assemble the group in a circle. The Facilitator hangs one webbing from each of his/her wrists and then instructs the group to hold the hands of the people next to them. The Facilitator introduces the group to the webbings (mine are named "Fred" and "George"). Have them say "hi" back to the webbings. This is important because it develops the sense of the ludicrous within the group and it also serves to boost the self-esteem of the webbings that are, for the most part, never spoken to by the general public. Now tell the group that you are going to have a race with the two webbings. (Play this up HUGE! Americans thrive on competition and it will serve to drive the point home even better when this activity is over.) Tell them that George will be traveling around the circle to your left. Which one does the person on your left want to root for? (Both, actually, but you are trying to get them to say George!) Ask the next person to the left. (Again, George.) Tell them that Fred will be traveling around the circle to the right. Which one does the person to your right want to cheer for? (Both, but hopefully they will say Fred.) The next person to the right? (You should have the idea.) Put your hands through the webbings.

Rules:

1. The group is not allowed to let go of hands. (No last minute hat removal, etc.)
2. The webbing must be passed over the participants.
3. The webbing cannot touch the ground.. If it does touch the ground, the webbing starts over.
4. You can use anything you want to move the webbings (teeth, noses, toes, etc.) except for your hands! (See diagram for what constitutes a hand!) If someone uses his or her hands, the webbing will start over! (I'm pretty tough on this.)
5. Watch out, though. Some people will attempt to injure one another by squeezing. Do NOT let them get away with it. They can hold your hands if they need to.



Quick Anatomy Lesson: Please note that fingers are part of the human hand!

Now, sit back and watch the fun. The group will learn from watching others and will, hopefully, find new and better ways to move the webbing. Ideas are shared, and the group will improve as the webbings continue.

Focus:

Cooperation. (You'll get a great idea of how well your group can work together from this experience. Pay close attention, and you'll see what to focus on right away!)

Processing:

How many teams were there? How many teams are in a circle? Why do I like circles? (There's only one team.) Did anyone try to fight against "someone else's" webbing? Why did we do this activity? (It shows how many teams the group will need for the day: ONE!)

Spotting:

Watch for people tripping over the webbings. Watch, also, for people squeezing each other's hands too tightly. Be careful about people moving too fast, especially in patterns which force those next to them to move in ways their body was not designed to allow.

Giant Hootenerainataneous

Props:

Just Your Group!

Activity Level: 5

Space:

Middle

Difficulty Level: 4

Story:

Draw two lines on the ground at least ten feet apart. Tell the group that they have been sent out by International Geographic into deepest darkest Africa to photograph the mythical, the vicious, the incredibly fun to say, Giant Hootenerainataneous (henceforth referred to as "Hoot"). These creatures are exceptionally rare, and what few expeditions who have discovered them were wiped out (these things are VERY mean!). Your group accepts the challenge, and heads off into the jungle.

Within a week, you discover (oh joy!) the lair of a Hoot! You explore the inside, find remnants of friends who were on other expeditions, and get to study Hoot dooky up close! I know it's gross, but then again, you're scientists and "guano of the world" is your specialty!

You complete your studies, take priceless photos, and prepare to leave, but it is a shame you didn't actually get to see a Hoot. Well, wait! You're in luck! Between you and the front of the cave, apparently coming back from a failed hunting trip, ravenously hungry and not just a little irate at having found company before it had a chance to clean, stands a Hoot! (Instinctively, you shoot pictures!)

Now, however, you have a slight problem. You need to get out. You only have a few seconds (give them as long as they need) to save your hides. You must quickly assemble yourselves into a Hoot and walk to the entrance, because Hoots, as nasty as they are, would never pick on another Hoot. It's a slim chance, but it's all you have.

- Rules:**
1. No magical weapons or heroic sacrifices! You must survive together.
 2. You are allowed to have only one Hoot. If there are two or more, the real Hoot will feel threatened and immediately attack. This means that everyone must be connect to each other, somehow. (Yes, fingertips touching counts.)
 3. Everyone must make the noise. (This is the fun part!)
 4. If one person breaks from the group, everyone starts over.
 5. Now, here is the important part! The Hoot (is everyone paying attention?) has two legs less than the number of people in the group. In other words, 12 people have 24 legs but can only have 10 of them touching the ground!
 6. It is the Facilitator's call to decide what a foot is. My rule of thumb (or foot) is that a foot is a foot. Anyone laying on the ground saying, "I have no feet touching the ground!" automatically counts as about 7 feet. Putting your feet together doesn't count; it's just two feet side by side. If you put one foot on top of another, that would work. Facilitator, it's your call! (Don't be too nice. They can always come back later if they wish.)

Note: This activity can be dangerous (you'll see some interesting configurations) and has the potential of creating group ill will. It is a fairly difficult activity. Watch closely. Don't use this one as a starting activity. It will become too frustrating to a group that cannot communicate effectively. When I began teambuilding many years ago, I had two male teachers come to blows on this activity, to give you some idea of how much stress it can create.

Focus: Communication. Groups will divide along gender lines and each try to create a Hoot without the other. Twelve people will have the solution and be willing to share it at exactly the same time! Cooperation. This takes a LOT of teamwork to finish the task.

Processing: Look at the situation and figure it out for yourself. You should have the hang of it by now! If they do fail, you should discuss the difference between tasks and goals, and see if they met their goal without accomplishing the task (or vice versa).

Spotting: Watch for dangerous configurations. Watch, also, for tempers! Groups can get easily frustrated by the discussion phase of this activity. Avoid putting too much weight on one person. Remember: if it looks unsafe, it probably is...

Group Jump Rope

Props: Large climbing rope
Space: Open
Activity Level: 4
Difficulty Level: 2

Story: None.

- Rules:**
1. Participants enter and jump rope one at a time.
 2. To truly make this an all-group activity, have them enter one at a time and stay in until everyone has been added.
 3. If the rope gets stopped, either have everyone start over, or just start where you left off. Trust me, approximately 20 people, untrained, jumping rope at the same time? That's challenge enough! 'Nuff said!

- Variation:** Have everyone line up beside the rope. When the rope begins to move, they must all jump at the same time. You never truly realize how hard it is to get 20 people to jump at exactly the same moment...
- Focus:** Cooperation. It takes a lot of work to get everyone in jumping rope! Communication. Primarily requires people to shout, "Now!"
- Processing:** Don't over-process this one. It's simply a fun, warm-up activity!
- Spotting:** People tripping! Plain and simple, people fail to jump to properly and get hit by the rope and go down. (This is an activity *not* to play on a gravel or black top surface!) Also, watch out for people running into each other when you do multiple people jumping at one time!



Gutterball / Marble Madness

- | | | | |
|---------------|--------------------------------------|--------------------------|---|
| Props: | Molding (quarter-round) and a marble | Activity Level: | 2 |
| Space: | Limited | Difficulty Level: | 4 |
- Story:** Nope, sorry, I don't have a story for this one. Silly, silly me... Anyhow, hand out the pieces of quarter-round to the participants. What the group must now do is roll the marble from the starting piece to the end as fast as they can! This is a race, but they will have a couple of "practice rounds" to perfect their teamwork skills.
- Rules:**
1. No one's gutter can be skipped.
 2. Gutters can never come into contact with each other.
 3. When holding your piece of gutter, your hands must ALWAYS be in contact with each other. In other words, you cannot hold the piece of gutter by both ends!
 4. The marble cannot be touched by participants!
 5. If the marble falls from a gutter, it must be restarted.
- Any questions?
- Focus:** Cooperation. The goal of the group is to work together. Anything less, they will fail in this activity. That's okay, though; if they are happy, you are happy! ☺
- Processing:** Who had the best idea? Why? Did the group listen to their idea right away? Why or why not? If you could have one thing, be able to do one thing to improve your speed, what would it be? Why? Did your time improve as you worked? Why or why not?
- Spotting:** Stepping on the marble has, in fact, happened. Definitely a tripping hazard! Watch out for sword fights erupting from younger groups as they seek to bash each other with the molding. Otherwise, watch the group's efforts and encourage them...

Islands

Props: Place markers (paper plates work fine)
Space: Limited

Activity Level: 4
Difficulty Level: 1

Story: Your ship has sunk. Here you are, stranded on these tiny islands, each big enough to fit only one person. (Just another typical day on the Ropes Course, if you ask me...) Unfortunately, islands are sinking at random and your goal is to be the person to stay dry, not end up swimming in the ocean like all the others! (Yes, this is competition!)

Facilitator's Note: It may seem odd to throw competition into a teambuilding program, however this provides a nice "break away" activity to change the pace of the program. Be careful of how much you play up the competition angle though; they still have to work together afterwards.

Rules:

1. Circle the group and move them out of the playing area so you can set up.
2. Randomly throw out the Frisbees, the only requirement being that they are sufficiently far apart to prevent major collisions when the game begins!
3. Announce that people are to mill around, listening and waiting. When the Facilitator shouts, "Islands!" the entire group must get to a Frisbee and touch it. The last one to a Frisbee is out!
4. If two (or more) people going for the Frisbee touch each other, they, too, are out!
5. After each round, remove the requisite amount of Frisbees so that there is still one less Frisbee than the total number of participants.
6. All participants who are not "swimming in the ocean" MUST move to another Frisbee when "Islands" is shouted or they are automatically out.
7. Now, here is where you can bring teambuilding back into the game. As people are eliminated from the game, begin to divide them into two separate teams. When the competition comes down to only two participants and one Frisbee, I call a time out and have the "champions" meet with their respective teams. For the participant who is not standing on a Frisbee, his or her team should discuss how he or she could successfully reach the other Frisbee. For the participant who is standing on a Frisbee, his or her team should discuss how he or she can successfully win, especially since that person is not allowed to stand on the Frisbee they started from and there is no other Frisbee to run to.

Fun Fact: If I can't make the Frisbee in time and someone else is going to win, I can play "spoiler" by tagging that person and making us both lose! It's cheap, it's dirty, but it is creative problem solving. Don't tell the group this; let them find out all on their own. 😊

Variation: Play with a set number of objects (1 Frisbee for every 5 participants). In this game, don't remove the Frisbees until you get to a one participant to one Frisbee ratio. Then, remove all but the last one and have the competitors battle it out for that Frisbee.

Focus: Cooperation. You'll find it takes a great deal of effort not to collide with anyone in the process of getting to an object as small as a Frisbee!

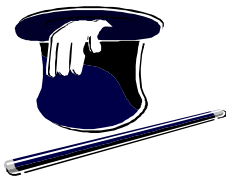
Processing: Have fun. Process as much as you want...

Spotting: Watch out for collisions. Watch the attitude of participants. If the competition is too much, stop the activity, declare everyone winners, and move on.



Levitation

- Props:** Hula hoops
Space: Limited
Activity Level: 2
Difficulty Level: 5
- Story:** None.
- Rules:**
1. Everyone must get into a circle around the hula-hoop.
 2. Raise your hand and extend your pointer finger. No grabbing, hooking your finger, etc.; the hula-hoop must rest simply on the extended fingers.
 3. The Facilitator will put the hula-hoop horizontally on the outstretched fingers of the team. Everyone must maintain contact with the hula-hoop.
 4. Now, all the team has to do is simply lower the hoop to the ground.
- Focus:** Cooperation. The hoop will seem to float, like magic, and keep rising despite the best efforts of the team. If the group cannot work together, they hoop will not come down!
- Processing:** Did you have difficulties lowering the hoop? Why or why not? Why does the hoop keep rising when the group is trying to lower it? Did you finally reach a solution?
- Spotting:** Beware of tempers in this activity! People in your team can get pretty frustrated with this activity. If people get verbally abusive, frustrated, etc., you may wish to stop and process the experience.



Moonball

- Props:** Large inflatable ball
Space: Open
Activity Level: 5
Difficulty Level: 3
- Rules:** Circle. The game is very simple. See the large ball? The Facilitator will throw it into the air and the group, working together, will have to keep the ball up in the air. How do you do that, you ask? (I know that's what you're thinking. If not, pay attention...)
- The ball must be hit, catching and throwing are not allowed, and each hit must launch the ball at least four to six feet into the air (except, of course, if the ball is out of control, then any hit will count). As soon as the Facilitator throws the ball, they will start the stopwatch. When the ball touches the ground or, if the group makes an illegal grab, the time stops. For a group of fifteen people, an average score is 1:15 with exceptional scores over the two-minute mark!
- Focus:** Cooperation. You will find teamwork to the extreme on this activity! It takes a lot of effort to keep hitting the ball up in the air. The unusual thing you will find, however, is that when you begin this activity, you might find it hard to drag the group away from it. Most people want to set the record. Let them go, if you have time. However, do not sacrifice teambuilding for the sake of "pure fun". Remember, this is fun with a purpose!
- Processing:** Did you break the record? Why or why not? What could you have done differently to help keep the ball up in the air longer? Who had the best "save"? Do you think, if you came back to this later, that you could get the record? Why or why not?

Spotting: Don't let the ball come down on just one person, if possible. Watch out for people crashing into each other, not that this can be helped. If the group is exceptionally hyperactive (running people over, jumping into the ball, etc.), you might want to have them come up with an organized structure for how they are to keep the ball up in the air!

Record: 4' cage ball is 2:45 (Kimball Camp - New Adventurers, 1997)
3' cage ball is 4:51 - (Kimball Camp Summer Staff Training, 1997)
4' beach ball is 11:32 (Branch County Alternative To Incarceration Program, 1998)



Nitro Can Pass

Props: Coffee can **Activity Level:** 3
Space: Limited **Difficulty Level:** 1

Story: Circle. Have the group take a seat upon the ground, facing inward. A nuclear reactor has just gone critical. Unfortunately, some idiot left a can of nitroglycerin sitting right next to the reactor core! If it is not removed before the meltdown it will explode, throwing nuclear waste everywhere. (Basically, picture everyone glowing in the dark for the next few thousand years.) Realizing the plight (isn't that a cool word?), you turn back to get the can, so that you can heroically save the day.

- Rules:**
1. Place the empty coffee can in front of a person.
 2. They must now pass it around the circle. However, since the can has been in contact with radioactive material, you obviously don't want to touch it with your hands! (That would be silly!) So, the group must pass it around the circle without using their hands. (For questions as to what constitutes a hand, please see "The Webbing Race".) If anyone uses their hands or lets the can touch the ground, start the can over.
 3. Process for a moment. Now, have the group pass the can around the circle without using their arms at all. (For those who protest, explain that you want to keep the radiation as far from their attractive faces as possible, lest they melt off into a pile of goo upon the ground!) If anyone uses their arms and/or hands or lets the can touch the ground, start the can over.
 4. Now, they are ready for the final step: fill the can about halfway with water. This water is the nitroglycerin. If a person uses their hands/arms, allows the can to touch the ground, or spills the water, they must now start over. And, as an added bonus, if they do spill the nitro, then take the can back, put more water in it than there was the time before! (This is called "incentive" to prevent them from spilling the water.)

Facilitator's Note: Don't do this on a very cold day or with a group that has no sense of humor. A person getting wet is not necessarily a good thing if they are not going to be happy about it. You'll know which groups to do this with!

Focus: Different ideas and different approaches may be used, tons of advice will be given, but when it comes down to actually passing the can, it is Cooperation, pure and simple. Those that can work together will succeed, those who can't, won't.

Processing: Which “C” was most important in this activity? Why? What did it take to solve this? On a scale of one to ten, how well did you Communicate? Cooperate? Care? Why did you pick that number? Was there an easier way to do this? Is there anyone who would have done it differently? Why?

Spotting: Avoid having the group use their teeth. It is bad for dental health. Watch the sharp edges found around coffee cans! Preferably, find cans that do not have sharp edges.

Parachute Play

Props: Parachute **Activity Level:** 3
Space: Open **Difficulty Level:** 1

Story: None. But we’ll skip to the rules because they are much more exciting!

Rules:

1. Spread the parachute around the group and have the group stand around it.
2. With the parachute held tightly, have the group practice the basic parachute move. Shout “Up!” When you say that, everyone must flip the parachute above his or her head, holding it high as it begins to drift back down. Now, shout “Down!” At this point, everyone must drag (and it can be quite an effort) the ‘chute back to the ground, so that their hands are all resting upon the parachute upon the ground. (In other words, don’t have them standing up, holding the parachute at waist level.) Make sure they go all the way up and all the way down. It will be very important for later parachute activities. Play for a few minutes; it’s a lot of fun!

Variations: Flip the ‘chute up into the air, have everyone lay flat on their backs with everything but their heads under the parachute and then have them pull it back down to earth. Now everyone is snug and warm under a large blanket!

Flip the ‘chute up into the air, have everyone lay down on their stomachs and pull the parachute down around their necks, so that only their heads are under the inflated parachute. They are now ostriches!

Flip the ‘chute up in the air and simply let go!

Focus: Cooperation. It takes a fair amount of teamwork to move a parachute! However, since this activity is non-threatening, it’s a great way to “slow down” in the middle of the day, while still working on the group’s teamwork goals. Communication. Now is a good time to explain “direct communication”: I talk, you listen. In the following parachute activities, all communication will be direct. Is it a better form of communication? No. It just happens to serve the purpose, and prevents confusion.

Processing: Don’t bother. You can ask a couple of questions, but it’s not that critical. Use this activity, instead, as a springboard into other parachute activities...

Spotting: When playing with a parachute, always beware of people being clothes-lined by the edge of the ‘chute. Otherwise, this is a fairly safe and froofy activity.



Right On Target

- Props:** Hula hoop, rope circle (4-ft diameter), blindfold, throwables **Activity Level:** 3
Space: Middle **Difficulty Level:** 3
- Story:** None. But, we did steal this idea from YMCA Camp Ihdhapi who presented it at the Spring 2002 Adventure Learning Training. Special thanks to them and kudos for a wonderful activity!
- Rules:**
1. Blindfold a participant and have them stand within the hula-hoop.
 2. The remaining team members grasp the rope circle and stand ten feet behind the blindfolded participant. (In the original rules, you did not have to be behind the participant, merely ten feet away. It's up to you...)
 3. On your signal the blindfolded person attempts to toss a throwable through the rope circle. The team holding the circle can move themselves to get under the throwable, but they cannot let go of the hoop to do so.
- Variations:** If you are using rubber chickens, have the rope-circle-group cluck like chickens to help the thrower locate the circle. If they are using small rubber mice, have them squeak like mice. If they are using tennis balls...they...um... So, are you having a good time today?
- Try playing this with water balloons! (Make sure your group has a sense of humor.)
- Focus:** Cooperation. The rope-circle-group will have to coordinate their efforts to get under the throwables. Communication is important, as well, to help the thrower determine where the location of the circle.
- Processing:** How did it feel to be the person throwing the objects? Did you have a system for moving the rope hoop? Was wind a factor? Which objects were easier to catch? Could you catch more than one object at a time?
- Spotting:** People could get bonked by throwables. It is safer to not use solid objects like baseballs, bowling balls, shot puts, etc.



The Switch

- Props:** Parachute **Activity Level:** 4
Space: Open **Difficulty Level:** 3
- Rules:** Circle and set the group up as you did for The Washing Machine, making sure to number the group appropriately. Practice the commands “Up!” and “Down!” a few times to make sure that everyone understands the basic commands.
1. Spread the group out evenly around the edge of the parachute (this is very important!).
 2. The Facilitator shouts “Up!” and calls a number (or group name, whatever). Those who have that number must let go of the ‘chute, leave their positions, and walk to their left to the place vacated by the nearest person with the same number. (Does that last sentence make sense?)

Oh, well, you'll figure it out!) When they have all reached their new places, grabbed the parachute and are ready, shout "Down!"

3. Do this two times with every group, just so that they are sure of what they are to do! Now comes the fun... This time, it becomes competition. You will shout "Up!" as before, but as the group takes off to their new place (be somewhat kind on how much time you give them) you will shout "Down!" and the people on the outside will try to trap the group underneath the parachute. After a few have been successfully trapped, let them go.

Focus: Cooperation. It takes a great deal of coordination on all parts. If you are running under the 'chute, you hope that those around you run the right direction (or remember to run at all!). For those on the outside, it takes a great deal of control to not collapse the parachute prematurely and it takes a tremendous effort to actually bring the 'chute back to the ground. Caring. Caring comes into play from the fact that you want to be nice to those under the 'chute. (In other words, try not to clothesline them with the edge of the parachute as they try to make good their escape!)

Processing: What made people successful in not getting trapped? What caused people to be trapped? Honestly, was there anyone on the outside who brought the parachute down before they were supposed to? Did it make a difference in who got trapped? Who had the longest run to get to their new spot? Did they get caught? Why or why not? Why did we just spend ½ hour playing parachute games?

Spotting: Watch for people being clothes-lined by the edge of the 'chute! (As always...) Also, watch people running the wrong way and colliding with each other under the parachute! (This is pretty common, so make sure the first few times you have people *walking* through it!)

Touch The Can / Touchless Huddles

Props: Soda can, tennis ball and small rock

Activity Level: 1

Space: Limited

Difficulty Level: 1-5

Story: Most people don't truly realize just how lonely it can be being a pop can. You spend most of your life waiting for someone to come along, to remove the horrible, gassy build-up within your soul. When the moment comes, they pick you up, hold you, treat you as if you were their best friend, and then callously discard you to a life of loneliness in a ditch somewhere or dispatch you to a higher plane of existence where you will wait for your next incarnation, perhaps within the body of a toaster and/or a new car. (Does it scare anyone that both are made of the same metal? I mean, I love my toaster, but to drive it down the street?) So, to boost the self-esteem of pop cans we have decided to help one suffering can.

Now, in counseling there is a technique called "touch therapy" that says if you want to make someone feel better about themselves, simple physical contact can be a powerful method.

- Rules:**
1. To begin, have the group stand in a circle. (They don't have to stay that way.)
 2. Everyone must have a body part (preferably fingers) touching the can at the same time.
 3. However, because it can never be simple, no one is allowed to touch anyone else while touching the pop can! Not even clothes can touch!

Variation: After the pop can, go to a tennis ball (they have rough lives too). You can keep going to progressively smaller objects until you get down to the ridiculously small and/or you are bored and ready to move on.

Focus: Cooperation. You have to be able to work together to pull something as complicated as this off!

Processing: Who had ideas? Were they all good ideas? (Yes.) Were some better than others? (Definitely yes.) Could you solve it faster now that you've had the opportunity to do the activity once? Is there another formation that would have been better?

Spotting: Not much. Avoid mad dashes as they tend to hurt people, especially if they charge at a tiny, little pop can! Also, avoid placing your fingers inside the pop can. There may be sharp edges that can gash a finger. (Do I worry too much?)

Record: Pop Bottle (20 oz) - 23 people (Union City Schools At-Risk Youth Program, 2000)
Ping Pong Ball - 14 people (Sprint, 2001)
Cough Drop - 12 people (Quincy Public Schools Teachers, 2000)



Two-Person Crab Walk

Props: Just Your Group **Activity Level:** 3
Space: Middle **Difficulty Level:** 2

Story: While on assignment for "International Geographic", you are sent to cover the Junior Ornithological Knowledge Expo (henceforth referred to as "JOKE"). It seems a simple enough assignment and, since each of you owes \$300.00 for your yearly subscription to International Geographic, you have little choice. While at the Expo, you are invited to take part in an Initiation Ritual.

- Rules:**
1. Divide up into groups of two.
 2. Sit on the ground, put the soles of your shoes together (sole-mates!) and lift your bodies off the ground by pushing on each other.
 3. Only your arms may touch the ground! (You must really depend upon each other to keep your derriere off the ground.)
 4. When you are ready, you and your partner must try to take at least one step. (For fun, if you have a really athletic group, have them go for a walk like this.)
 5. If your whole group can lift their posteriors off the ground for a few seconds (adjust time for each groups abilities), they have passed, and will be able to continue on their photographic assignment, if not... (Let's not dwell on that possibility!)

Variations: Try having them do it in groups of 3, 4, etc. This is an excellent warm-up activity, and will help to instill the group with a sense of the ridiculous. It acts as an icebreaker in a non-threatening activity where trust is not a strong requirement. It will also help you to see how the group reacts to a basic problem and will help you to decide where next to go with your group.

Focus: Cooperation. It takes a lot of work to lift your body off the ground by pushing on someone else's feet. It takes even more to take a step! This is more or less for fun, though. Enjoy!

Processing: This can be a "Welcome to Low Ropes" activity, and shouldn't be heavily stressed as something critical for the group. After this activity would be a good time to discuss the difference between

tasks and goals, and to discuss the nature of teamwork. This is an intro activity and shouldn't be heavily processed.

Spotting: Beware of people "going the extra mile". If this is used as an introductory activity, don't let people kill themselves in the attempt! Also, make sure the ground is clean, with no sharp, pointy things that could hurt someone!

Warp Speed

Props: Tennis balls and a stopwatch **Activity Level:** 3
Space: Limited **Difficulty Level:** 1

Story: None...

Rules: Circle. Have everyone place his or her right hand within the circle. Put a tennis ball in the hand of one person. Explain to the group that they must move the tennis ball around the circle as quickly as they can, making sure that each person has an opportunity to hold it by themselves. This means everyone must have the chance to hold the ball and not just having the first person bounce the ball off three or four people with one throw before the ball is caught again! A typical group of 20 should be able to pass the ball around the circle in under 20 seconds. Ask if there is any way they can speed up the ball. Can they find a way to move it faster? Let them try it again. Give them a few chances, allowing for time in-between each try for the group to discuss ways to increase the speed of the ball.

Variations: If you use this after Ball Juggle, you can ask them to move the ball as fast as possible through their established pattern. Don't tell them they have to remain in the circle; let them figure out the best way to stand.

Focus: Cooperation. A team has to work together for it to be able to beat 20 seconds. If the group works very well together, they should be able to beat ten seconds! Communication. If they aren't doing so well, how can they change the way they are doing things so that they can move faster?

Processing: What was your time on the first try? How about the last? Did you improve? Was the improvement gradual or sudden? Why? Are there ways that you can move the ball faster? How?

Spotting: Watch out for people throwing tennis balls. Other than that, it is not that unsafe of an activity.

Washing Machine

Props: Parachute **Activity Level:** 3
Space: Open **Difficulty Level:** 1

Story: None.

Rules: Circle. Begin the activity as you did with Parachute Play, by having the group find their places around the parachute. Now, divide the group into sections. Typically, with about 15-20 participants you will want to divide them into five groups. You may have more or less depending upon the size of the group. Have the first group go under the parachute and lay down flat on their backs toward the center of the 'chute.

1. When the group is lying down, the Facilitator tells those who are left to begin filling the washing machine. To do this, you gently flutter the parachute up and down over those lying underneath.
2. After a moment, then you explain that it's time to start the wash cycle. Begin to move the parachute by having everyone push it to his or her left and then pull it back to the right. (Just like an agitator in a washing machine.) Do this for a while, and then prepare to rinse.
3. To rinse, do large flutters of the parachute over the group. (This is a bizarre sensation.)
4. When you are done rinsing, then you spin dry by making large movements from left to right.
5. When the clothes are done, shout "Up!" and flip the parachute off the clean participants. Substitute another group in, and feel free to have someone else lead the activity!

Focus: Cooperation. Again, the communication is direct, so this activity focuses primarily on the group's abilities to follow directions.

Processing: Again, don't be too intense. This is designed for fun! Ask a few questions, and then move on.

Spotting: Be understanding about those who are claustrophobic. Otherwise, have fun.



Worm Hole

Props:	Elastic cord (4 foot long, tied in a circle)	Activity Level:	3
Space:	Limited	Difficulty Level:	3

Story: You are a worm. Not just any worm, I'm sure you are a nice worm. I really mean that. It's a compliment. Anyhow, it has just rained and you have decided you want to get above ground to work on your tan (that's why worms come out in the rain).

Rules: The group should stand in a circle. Place the worm hole between any two people in the circle.

1. The group must not break contact with each other at any time.
2. The person passing through the hole cannot touch the worm hole.
3. If a person touches the worm hole while going through it, they must go through again as well as the person who went before them.
4. If anyone lets go of hands, they must also pass through the worm hole again.

Variations: Have the worm be a straight line and have the line pass through the worm hole.

Focus: Cooperation. It does take a lot of help to keep the worm hole from touching your teammate!

Processing: Have you noticed any patterns in the way this group solves problems? Are they productive? Unproductive? What effect did planning have on your process? What are some specific ways you cooperated to complete this activity? Do you cooperate in most things you do?

Spotting: Beware of snapping the worm hole! If people let go quickly, it can really hurt to get snapped!

Yaeger Stagger

Props:	Blindfolds, throwables, timer, starting line	Activity Level:	3
Space:	Middle	Difficulty Level:	4
Story:	None.		
Rules:	Use the rope to mark a starting line on the ground. Spread 12-18 throwables on the ground, in shrubs, etc. in an area up to 50 feet in front of the starting line. Groups divide into teams of three (you can have one or two teams of four, if necessary) and you are all set. <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. The first person stands facing the line. They are blindfolded and their job is, when directed, to walk out into the field and pick up as many throwables as possible within a given time (e.g. three minutes). The first person cannot see, but can move and talk.2. The second person stands on the line, facing away from the first person and the throwables. The second person can talk, but may not turn around and look at the objects. The second person cannot move, but they can talk and see, but they may only face toward the third person.3. The third person faces toward the second person and is standing a few feet away from the line. The third person is in line with the first and second people. The third person's job is to see where the objects are and to relay the information to the second person who tells the first person. The third person cannot speak or move, but they can see and find a way to communicate information to the second person. The first round stops after three to five minutes or when all the objects have been picked up. For the second round, have the group switch roles.		
Variation:	Have the blindfolded person retrieve only certain items without touching others.		
Focus:	Cooperation. With all of the limitations on the roles of the people, it really takes a great deal of teamwork to get the information conveyed properly!		
Processing:	What role did you like the best and why? Which role did you like the least and why? What was your level of frustration with this challenge? How does it compare with others? What methods of communication did your team work out during this challenge? What worked and what didn't?		
Spotting:	People in blindfolds should be ringing bells! Protect them. Make sure they do not walk near anything that can injure them. Make sure their partners are guiding them safely! Spot, if necessary.		

Caring / Trust

3-D Mine Field

Props: Blindfolds / Obstacles
Space: Middle

Activity Level: 2
Difficulty Level: 3

Story: Sorry, I don't have a story for this one. You'll have to be creative enough to come up with one for me. I will, however, be nice enough to actually tell you what you have to do! This game is played in much the same way as "Minefield", but it has some fun twists.

- Rules:**
1. Ahead of time, mark out a boundary on the floor, approximately 8' X 30'.
 2. Scatter a LOT of props in this area (rubber chickens, tennis balls, hoola hoops, etc.). At different points along the way, run ropes across the Mine Field at various heights. Feel free to hang things from them (rubber chickens, tennis balls, hoola hoops, etc.).
 3. Have everyone find a partner and blindfold one person from each pair.
 4. The sighted person can only direct the blindfolded person by verbal commands, and must stay outside of the Mine Field as their partner goes through. The object of each pair is to walk the blindfolded person safely from one end of the Mine Field to the other. This means that the sighted person cannot let the blindfolded person walk into anything, whether it is from above or below.
 5. Penalties for touching an obstacle can include: making the pair start over or counting how many items they touch for later comparisons.
 6. After a pair successfully (whatever that means) negotiates the course, switch the blindfolds and try again.

- Variations:**
1. See how few steps it takes for a pair to accomplish the course.
 2. See how fast the crossing can be made.
 3. Turn it into a game of tag between two pairs by giving the first person a 10-second head start and seeing if the other person can catch up.

- Focus:** Trust and Communication. This is a nice intro to Trust activities. You'll find that the more people crossing at any time will create more chaos and confusion. Too many people shouting directions will do at least one of three things:
1. Improve verbal commands.
 2. Improve listening skills.
 3. Cause everyone to walk around and collide into things.

Processing: Did you run into anything? Why or why not? What difference did it make if you were trying to speed through it, rather than taking as much time as you needed? Was it harder having many people shouting directions to you at the same time? Can you think of how you might have been able to communicate better with your partner?

Spotting: Watch people deliberately walking their partners into danger. Beware of people "running" to try to tag other people. If it looks unsafe, it probably is.

Blind Trust Walk

Props: Just your group (or optional rope and/or blindfolds)
Space: Open

Activity Level: 2
Difficulty Level: 2

Rules: Have each person find a partner. Assemble the group into two straight lines, with their partners standing next to each other. Hand out blindfolds (optional) to everyone on the left side of the line.

With the blindfolds securely in place, take the group for a walk. You lead, and let the sighted partner decide how he/she will guide their partner. They can do it in one of two ways:

1. By touch ONLY.
2. By voice ONLY.

They must guide their blindfolded partner on the paths you lead by one of these two methods. You, as leader, must constantly be looking back to make sure they are doing this properly! (Occasionally you get the people who think running their partner into things is a fun time, so keep an eye out. My bet is you'll be able to tell who would do that the second you pass out blindfolds!) After a few minutes, have the partners switch roles.

Variations: You can vary this activity in many ways. For less trusting people, you can allow them to keep their eyes closed. (Some people are very apprehensive about being blindfolded. For me, personally, I just don't like wearing nasty, smelly blindfolds.)

You can blindfold the entire group and lead them around simply by having them hold onto a rope. (Note: the people closest to you will have an easy time of it, and those farther away are more likely to run into objects. Be careful!) You can make the group guide one another by sounds, not words. This will require the partners to set up some sort of code between them.

Focus: Trust. There is little risk in this activity, but it will help to set the tone for later Trust exercises. This could be a great test to see whether or not your group will make it to Trust Fall.

Processing: Based on how your partner led you, do you feel you trust them more or less now? What could they have done differently? Did you fully trust your partner before the activity began? How hard did your partner work to earn your trust? (Would you like, just to be vengeful, to lead your partner through the forest again?) (If you used the rope, ask who had the easiest time following you? Why? So those who stay closest to the leader have an easier time? How does this relate to faith in Christ?)

Spotting: Watch people deliberately walking their partners into obstacles! (It does happen.) Keep the pace slow, smooth and gentle. This is an orientation to Trust, so you don't want to traumatize people right away... ☺

Lean Sequence

Props: Just your group
Space: Limited

Activity Level: 2
Difficulty Level: 2-5

Story: None. The goal of this exercise is to stress "Challenge By Choice" as it relates to trust-building activities. Use this as an introduction to Trust or as a basis for any High Elements.

Rules: Have everyone find a partner. (If they are a person short, feel free to step in and assist.) Have everyone stand, right feet together, using right hands (or left if you have two "lefties") grip each other's right elbow. Now, have the partners lean (not step) back, balancing by holding onto each other. If the partners feel comfortable, they may grasp each other's wrists and lean back. If they are still comfortable, have them hook their fingers together (not intertwined). Finally, if they are doing well, they can hang onto each other by two fingers.

Okay, now that we have established a basic level of trust, have one person step behind their partner. The back person should brace one foot behind them and raise their arms so that their hands are about a foot away from the front person's mid-back areas. The front person locks their

arms across their chest, locks their body straight and, at the command of the person behind, falls backward. If the front person is comfortable, the back person may take a step further away and the partners will repeat the process.

Focus: Caring. More importantly, this is trust, plain and simple. It is also a good way of working on trust within a “Challenge By Choice” framework.

Processing: Normally, this is used as to segue (isn’t that a spiffy word?) into other activities. Process it as much or as little as you want/need before moving on.

Spotting: Watch those leaning at full extension! Before beginning, caution participants to not attempt a lean if they have a physical problem that could be exacerbated by the stress. Also, keep an eye on how far back people are moving during the “falling” phase. Do not let them move beyond what you think is safe.

Everybody Up

Props: Just your group

Space: Limited

Activity Level: 3

Difficulty Level: 2

Rules: Have each person find a partner, sit on the floor, and face each other. They must put their feet together, bend their knees, link their hands, and pull themselves up to a standing position. When some of the groups have accomplished this, then have them split up into groups of three, four, etc. Finally, after they have mastered four, have the entire group try to pull themselves to their feet at the same time!

1. They must PULL themselves up, not stand individually!
2. All derrieres must leave the ground simultaneously. No standing and then pulling the other person to their feet!
3. In large groups, hand and foot contact must be in such a way that a current of electricity could pass through the entire group! (In other words, don’t allow the group to split into tiny groups just to accomplish this activity.)

Variation: Have the group do it back-to-back. Do NOT allow them to link arms, though, due to the possibility of shoulder dislocation!

Focus: Trust and cooperation. Communication becomes important with larger groups. Groups of 50+ will need to do some heavy-duty thinking to come up with a solution.

Processing: Did the group do it right? (i.e.. Are they on their feet? Did they come up with a solution?) Does it matter how they did it, provided they didn’t cheat? Do they feel good about themselves? ‘Nuff said!

Spotting: Watch to make sure people have a strong grip on each other. Be aware of what people will fall on if they do slip. Again, as always, watch for people goofing off. If it gets to be a problem, remove the people from the activities or you can be their partner!

Feather Fall

Props: Tubular Nylon Webbings
Space: Limited

Activity Level: 3
Difficulty Level: 3

Rules: Tie water knots in two webbings. Hook the two webbings together to form a figure-eight with the knots on the top and bottom of the eight. (This is one of the things you will need to see in training. Do NOT attempt this on your own!)

Assemble the group in a circle and ask for a volunteer. Have the volunteer sit down on the central knot and turn to lay down so that their body covers both webbings, their feet and heads should each be touching a knot. Have them cross their arms across their chest, get comfy, and close their eyes (it makes the experience a little more bizarre). Have the rest of the group gather around, reach their hands underneath the person and grab, with both hands, on the webbings. As soon as everyone is ready, you will give a three count. On three, the entire group will...

...Slowly and Gently...

... lift the person into the air, up to about chest level. Hold them up there for a few moments and, again on your command, begin to rock them...

...Slowly and Gently...

.... from head to foot, swinging them...

...Slowly and Gently...

.... back and forth as you begin to lower them toward the ground. Make sure that they come in contact with the ground feet-first, posterior next, and then finally their head and shoulders. (Are you sensing that I might be trying to warn you about a potential problem in the activity?). When they are on the ground, have them get up and select your next volunteer.

To get more group involvement, have other people lead the count and direct the group on how to lower the person back to the ground.

AT NO TIME SHOULD ANYONE IN THE GROUP BE TALKING ABOUT DROPPING THE PERSON ON THE WEBBING!!!

Facilitator's Note: This activity, if done correctly, is fairly safe and is a lot of fun! However, if a person is small, their shoulders can slip between the webbing, dropping them headfirst to the ground. To prevent this, make sure that you take the webbing on either side of the head, wrapping the straps around your hands until there is enough slack removed so that the person cannot slip out. If done properly, your arms, when brought together, will make a "pillow" for the volunteer to lay their head against.

Focus: Trust, primarily. There are aspects of communication (Direct Communication = I talk, you listen) and certainly cooperation is needed, but the group must use this activity to begin to focus on caring for their teammates. If they don't, don't do Trust Fall!

Processing: How did you feel when the group first lifted you into the air? On a scale of 1 to 10, how much did you trust your group before this activity? Why? How about after? Why? Was there anyone who didn't try it? Is it acceptable for someone to not do this activity? (Yes! You tell me that you're going to drop me, I will not let you try!)

Spotting: If they joke about dropping someone, don't do the activity. If they "accidentally slip", sit them down, talk about the risks, and then move on to anything other than Trust activities! Make sure the participants do nothing to destroy the trust of those in the group!



Group Lap-Sit / Sitting Circle

Props: Just Your Group **Activity Level:** 2
Space: Middle **Difficulty Level:** 2

Rules: Circle. By the way, in case you weren't certain at this point, the term "Circle" is used in place of, "Assemble the group into a circle, facing inward, and awaiting further instructions." Have the group turn and face clockwise so they are facing the back of the person in front of them. (Kind of confusing, I know, but picture a single-file line that just happens to be in a circle!)

Have everyone shuffle INWARD until everyone's toes are touching the heels of the person in front of them. Warning: They will attempt to move forward, thus shifting the circle around forever and ever. They must move in to shrink the circle to get everyone heel to toe.

The Facilitator (you) should then step out of the circle and tell everyone to pay attention. You will count out loud. At "one", everyone bends their knees slightly. At "two", a little more. At "three", everyone sits on the lap behind them. (***) Show them what you want! (***) It is very important that everyone sit in such a manner as to keep his or her knees together so that the person in front of them will have a lap to sit on. The number one problem that causes people to miss a lap is because there isn't one behind them! ☺

If everyone sits properly, they will all support each other's weight equally and no one will get overloaded! (This is applied Physics.) My weight is on your lap, but someone behind you is supporting your derriere so my weight gets channeled all the way through the circle! Confusing, but definitely fun!

Note: This will only work if everyone trusts everyone in the group! If one person fails to sit, misses the lap behind them, or tries to support the group without sitting down, the whole circle will collapse! (This is a problem.) If it fails, have everyone stand back up and begin again. They must be able to hold the circle for 10 seconds. If done properly, have them sit for a time giving each other shoulder rubs. It's very comfy!

Focus: Primarily Trust. Communication is direct (you speak, they listen). Cooperation is there, but not central. Caring is important: you don't want to drop anyone, and you must make sure you give a good back rub.

Processing: What was the task? (To sit on each other's laps.) What was your goal? (Teamwork.) Did you accomplish your task? Did you accomplish your goal? How important were each of the 3 C's? Yada yada yada... (In other words, take it from here!)

Spotting: Make sure the ground is free of all sticks and twigs and other painful things, just in case the group slips. Watch for those who are afraid of trusting the group. They will cause the downfall of the entire group. It's not their fault, however. They need to build trust, just like you and I!

Team Horizontal Ladder

Props: 4, 1 ½" by 30" dowel rods per pair of participants **Activity Level:** 4
Space: Limited **Difficulty Level:** 4

Rules: Have the group select a volunteer and move them off to the side. For the rest of your group, they must divide into pairs of roughly the same height. If, among the leftovers, there is an even number of participants, you need to sit out and spot the activity, if there is an odd number, you will need to be involved.

Have your group line up, the equal-height partners standing opposite of each other. Hand each pair four dowel rods. This is very important: have the pairs set two dowel rods together on each shoulder. The reason we use two wooden dowels per side is just in case one should happen to break. When this is done, have the pairs scootch in close together so that there are two lines of people, shoulder to shoulder, opposite from someone of equal height, linked by four dowel rods across the middle. (Here's where about two pictures would truly be worth a few thousand words.)

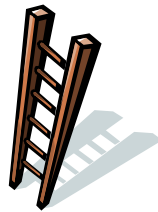
Once everyone is in position, have the one remaining person climb up on the dowel rods of the people on the end. That participant must then climb up and over the dowel rods until they reach the other side. (Picture looking down on a horizontal ladder where the rungs are still wooden but the side supports are human!) Once they have reached the other side, the team must find a way to GENTLY lower that person back down to the ground. Switch some people around, and send the next one through.

This is "Challenge By Choice". Respect those who choose not to climb through.

Focus: This is a very good example of Trust. Participants still have some control over their actions, but they must trust the group to support them as they go through. Communication would be a secondary consideration and the group should be sure to encourage each other.

Processing: How does this differ from other Trust activities that we've done so far? Why? For those who chose not to do it, is there a specific reason? (Note: NOT a specific person!) What could the group have done to help you feel more comfortable?

Spotting: You are lifting someone off the ground. As soon as you ever lift someone, sirens and bells should be going off in your head! This is a fairly safe activity if facilitated properly. Most books recommend using only one dowel rod. I'm a firm believer in overkill. (Or, perhaps that should say "oversafe"...) Do whatever you can to protect those involved. That can be done quite easily by keeping everyone on task and focused on the participant being lifted. Remember, if your group is NOT working well, skip this activity!



Trust Circle / Wind In The Willows

Props: Just Your Group **Activity Level:** 3
Space: Limited **Difficulty Level:** 3

Rules: This activity can make or break a group. I use this when I don't think the group is ready for the "Trust Fall". It is CRITICAL that the group comes together for this activity, and the group should be guided into this one. Definitely not a starting activity!

Circle. Have one volunteer stand in the middle, surrounded by the rest of the circle. AS SOON AS THE PERSON ENTERS THE CENTER, ALL EYES FOCUS ON THAT PERSON AND EVERYONE SEALS THEIR MOUTHS! (Except, of course, for encouragement!) The volunteer locks their arms across their chest, stands rigid, and closes their eyes. The Facilitator (you) says, "Bumpers up!" At this point, all those surrounding the person step in to shrink the circle and raise their hands to a ready position at around a mid-torso level. They should also, at this time, brace themselves by placing a foot back. I need to stress that the back foot should be at least two feet behind the front to give you the support necessary to catch someone who is falling.

When everyone is ready, you will say, "Begin." The volunteer then says, "Ready to fall." The group will concentrate solely on the person in the middle! When everyone is ready, they will say, together, "Ready." The volunteer will say, "Falling." The group will respond, "Fall on." The volunteer will fall, keeping their body rigid. The group, IN ABSOLUTE SILENCE, will catch that person and GENTLY begin to pass them back and forth around the circle (the volunteer is able to move because they pivot on their feet). After about 10 to 15 seconds, catch that person, bring them into an upright position, and tell them they are done.

If someone cannot take this activity seriously, make him or her sit off to the side in silence! There are to be absolutely no comments about dropping anyone! Trust is the toughest thing to build in a group, and is the fastest thing lost. Facilitator! You MUST be paying attention! Set the example for the others! I have been dropped in this activity at least three times. Only once was I ever dropped because of someone goofing off. After that incident, no one else would enter the circle and the activity was ruined. It is critical you keep everyone focused! Also, if you are telling the group they need to trust you, you might have to do this to show you trust them. It's okay. If everyone is doing his or her job, you're in no danger.

If someone bends, have him or her stand back in the center and start over

Focus: Trust! I cannot say it enough: Trust is the toughest thing to earn in a group, and is the quickest to lose! Caring is important. Encouraging the person who is nervous, understanding if someone chooses not to go into the circle. Asking someone if they would be willing to try later. Volunteering to go ahead of someone who has reservations (not that people have to reserve their spot in line, I'm talking about the fact that some will be nervous, they doubt the group (see Webster's Dictionary for the complete definition of reservations.)) Here is where your group can earn major teamwork points!

Processing: Was this a difficult activity for you? Why or why not? Did you drop anyone? If you had been dropped, would you have continued to trust the group? Did you trust the group before going into the circle? Can anyone name some examples of caring which took place? Etc. Etc. Etc.

Spotting: Inattention! Here is where things start to get serious. If someone is laughing, joking around and not paying attention, someone could get badly hurt. I know it doesn't seem like a long way to fall, but believe me, face first? It hurts! Watch and make sure the group is ready at all times!

Trust Dive

Props: Stair Steps
Space: Open

Activity Level: 5
Difficulty Level: 4

Rules: Have the group line up in two straight, parallel lines. Have them zipper their hands (see diagram on “Trust Fall”) and raise them up (the impact of the person jumping will drive their hands down). Select a volunteer. They will decide how far away the group catching them will stand (I recommend having them start about a foot away until they’re used to it) and how many stairs up they will stand. They proceed to assume a diving position with hands outstretched above their heads. The “diver” says “Ready to jump.” The group, upon checking their readiness, responds with “Ready.” The diver then replies, “Jumping” and does so. Upon completion of the dive, set the diver back up on their feet and let them try again, adjusting either their starting height upon the stairs or the distance the group stands from them.

1. Have the diver dive “flat”! What I mean is that they are to dive in such a manner as to have their body contact the maximum number of arms. In plain English (yeah, right), the diver must not arch, as in a traditional dive, but must instead remain parallel to the ground. This way the group will have multiple arms catching them and will minimize the risk of people falling headfirst to the ground.
2. This activity, while less dangerous than “Trust Fall” (due to the fact that the diver has some chance of saving themselves), should have the same rules enforced, namely: no talk of dropping people, make sure everyone pays attention and have everyone always being involved.
3. Don’t do this activity if the stairs are slippery!
4. Avoid excessive distances where it is a real strain for the diver to reach the group!
5. Avoid excessive height. It makes the person a LOT more difficult to catch!

Focus: Trust! Gee, like that wasn’t obvious! Cooperation is also very important!

Processing: Use this as a prelude to “Trust Fall”. This is a great way of testing a group to decide whether or not they are ready.

Spotting: Watch arching when diving! They are not to dive, as into a pool, they are to dive as if a bunch of people were going to catch them! Make sure you always start slowly and work your way up to the more dangerous stunts!



Trust Scavenger Hunt

Props: Two opaque (non-see through) bags.
Space: Open

Activity Level: 1
Difficulty Level: 2

Rules: Divide the group into two and give each group a bag. Have them go out and collect random items. After a set time (say, oh, about 10 minutes), call the groups back together and have them swap bags. The teams flip a coin to decide who goes first.

At this point, one team member reaches into the other team's bag and touches an object. When they have one firmly in hand, they tell the whole group what they think they have in their hands. Once that person has described the object, have them pull it fully from the bag and show it to both teams. Allow the teams to discuss whether they think the description was good enough and then put it to a vote. If the group feels it was a good description of the object, then that team gets a point. If not, then no point is awarded and the other team gets their chance to guess an object.

Note: Usually (and I do mean "usually") there is nothing gross and/or disgusting put in the bags. Watch out, though. If one team does pick up something slimy and nasty, it will destroy this activity and hamper the growth of the team.

Focus: This activity works very well as an "Intro to Trust" activity, and a good lesson on teambuilding. Even though the team is split, did you ever say that this was something about "competition"? No! The team is still required to look out for its members. It sounds silly, but for a lot of people just blindly reaching their hands into a bag can be a tough experience.

Processing: What was it like sticking your hand in the bag? Did you automatically trust that the other group would only pick up nice things? How many of you were a little nervous as you reached in for an object? Why? If, and I'm hoping this doesn't happen, your side had picked up a nasty object, would that have made you trust the other group? Why or why not?

Spotting: Venomous, living things; non-venomous living things; sharp, pointy objects. You can restrict what they are allowed to pick up, but that indicates a lack of trust in the group. I mean, think about it, if I dictate what they can and cannot put in the bag, where is the trust factor? The group needs to draw its own conclusions as to what is acceptable and what is not.

Trust Wave

Props:	Just your group	Activity Level:	5
Space:	Open	Difficulty Level:	4

Rules: Divide the group into two equal straight lines with team members standing opposite from each other. The lines should be just far enough apart that when the player's arms are fully extended in front of them at shoulder height, their hands reach the wrist of the person opposite. These are the spotters.

One teammate, the runner, starts about ten yards from the group and asks the group if they are ready. When the lines reply, "Ready", the runner walks, jogs, or runs between the two lines of people. The spotters in the lines do the wave, raising their arms before the runner reaches them and lowering them after the runner as passed.

1. Have the group walk the first time through so everyone becomes comfortable with it.
2. Spotters need to correctly judge the speed of the runner so they can lift their arms up in time.
3. The runner needs to maintain their speed, slowing down isn't a problem, but speeding up is.
4. If the runner wants to run quickly, they need to allow 10+ yards of approach for safety.
5. Watch the people in the middle and end of the lines to make sure they are paying attention. The back half of the line may not see the runner approaching and fail to react quickly enough.

Focus: Trust. You'll notice some runners will duck their heads even though they are more than clear. Others will trust the team and run tall. This activity can be a good ending one. It isn't as dangerous as Trust Dive and Trust Fall, but still illustrates the team's trust in itself.

Processing: How hard was it to trust your teammates? Why? Did anyone duck their heads? Was anyone worried about being the runner? What would have happened if just one person were not paying attention? How would this affect the trust in the team?

Spotting: Watch for the above points and for any lack of attention. Don't be afraid to stop the activity if you decided the team might not be ready for it.

Yurt Circle

Props:	Just your group	Activity Level:	3
Space:	Limited	Difficulty Level:	3

Background: A tribe of Indians used to do this activity as part of a sacred ceremony. They would assemble the braves (sorry ladies!) and do this activity. (If they can do it with over two hundred men, your group has no excuse!) But it isn't as easy as it sounds...

Rules: Circle. (Circles mean that there is only one team, and that everyone is equal!) Have everyone take hold of the hands of the people next to them. Have everyone get a good grip! The best thing I've discovered is to have people push their sleeves up and grab wrist-to-wrist; it's almost unbreakable. Run (happily) around the circle, counting the group off by twos. If there is an odd number, you MUST participate. (Trust me, this is really cool! Would I lie to you?)

You must now demonstrate for them the proper way to fall. Take two other people from the circle and have them stand on either side of you. Have each of them get a good grip, and then brace themselves. What happens in the circle is this: Everyone stretches out so that the circle is tight (but not straining); they put their feet together; lock their body absolutely straight; and fall either in or out. In other words (remember, you are demonstrating this to the group), you will say something like, "Ones fall in, twos fall out." I will say "Ready? Go." At which point everyone must fall at the same time! Now watch as I show you how to fall...

Now, let's try this all together! Reassemble the circle (this is where you step out if you don't have to participate). Have them try it.

Facilitator's Note: If someone slips, bends, lets go, etc., the whole circle collapses. There are a lot of ways for the circle to fail; everything must work perfectly or else... Don't be surprised if your group never gets it; it is very difficult. Make sure you switch who falls which way; sometimes twos fall better "in" than ones! Physics says that everyone will balance the weight through the circle, unless you have an 80-pound person between two 300-pound people, then the circle is kaput! When they get it, have them hold it for ten seconds and then stand back up as a group! This should NOT be used as a beginner activity, build up to it, instead!

Focus: Trust!!! If someone doesn't trust the group, they will continually bend (thus, not taking any weight and collapsing the circle). The other C's are factors, but not absolutely critical.

Processing: Did they succeed? If not, why not? Does it matter if they accomplished it? Do they want to come back to this obstacle? How many tries did it take? Why? Why were they absolutely perfect and managed to accomplish it the first time when I have eaten dirt before when doing this activity?

Spotting: The ever-annoying "let me yank hard on the hands of those I'm attached to and pull the whole circle off balance"! Watch out for people not leaning; don't blame them for this, but encourage them to participate and trust their group. Watch for people trying to maim each other's hands. Place teachers/leaders around them so that they can't hurt people for "fun"!