# **Active Games**

## Presented to HRW by

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Recreational activities can be very helpful tools in accomplishing many necessities in our everyday lives. They can help us socialize with others, learn valuable life skills, maintain a level of physical fitness, and just make life more fun to live. In this session we will explore many games and how to use and lead them to accomplish these things.

Below you will find some things you may want to consider when you begin to plan a recreation program.

* Your audience
* ages
* male, female, mixed
* physical abilities
* how many will be present and the age and sex breakdown
* how they will be dressed (some games are not appropriate when gals are in dresses, etc.)
* in some cases – religious orientation
* educational level, maturity level
* social background (at-risk kids with pool noodles can be scary but you learn a lot about your audience!)
* The facility where you will be doing the games (outside, in a gym, in a living room, will you need a sound system, etc.)
* The supplies that you will need for each game
* The amount of time that you have to fill
* What are the desired outcomes of your program (just fun, meet new people, burn off some energy, teach a skill, etc.)

What you need to do when leading a recreation activity or program:

* Know your material inside and out
* Plan more activities than you can use
* Have your supplies ready and available as much as possible
* Speak loudly and clearly (be sure your audience understands what you want them to do)
* Be enthusiastic about what you are doing and having them do.
* Be Safe.
* Be flexible. If something isn’t working, do something else.
* Play only to the height of excitement, don’t let the game get boring

I usually try to play one of my most exciting games first to get the crowd’s attention. Once you have the group’s attention and they are having a good time, the whole program gets easier.

**Prisoner’s Base**

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| --- | --- |
| Game Length | - 15 to 20 minutes. It is often played two to three times in a row |
| # of teams: | - 2 teams |
| # of campers/players on each team: | - 8 to 20 |
| Supplies Needed | - four (4) pylons |
| Game Setup: | - Four (4) pylons are placed in a large rectangle or square.  - Each team’s home side is behind their own two pylons  - The area between the two lines created by the four pylons is the neutral zone |
| How to Play | - Each team tries to capture all of the players from the other team in their prisoner’s base  - This game is based on the first out rule – you can only tag someone who came out before you did, and you can only be tagged by someone who came out after you did. Thus, you need to track who was the first out.  - When a player is tagged, he/she is escorted to the capturing team’s prisoner base pylon.  - The prisoners can form a human chain of up to three (3) people off of the pylon. Any other prisoners must stand behind the pylon  - To be freed, the prisoner at the head of the pylon must be tagged by a free team member. The freed prisoner gets a free walk back to their side. The free player who tagged the prisoner does NOT get a free pass back to his/her side. |
| Rules: | - The team lines extend forever out to the side |
| Variations: | - You can use the second pylon as a freeman’s pylon. If a free player gets to the freeman’s pylon without being touched, he/she can then either stay on the pylon and tag any of the other team that steps out, or they can raise their arm to signal that they are freeing the lead prisoner from the prisoners base. |

**Prisoner’s Base Set-up/Layout**

**Team 1 Home Side**

**Prisoner Base for Team 1 Freeman’s Pylon**

**Neutral Zone**

**Freeman’s Pylon Prisoner Base for Team 2**

**Team 2 Home Side**

**TRIANGLE TAG**

A hand-held triangular game for four people. Use this as a quicky warm-up activity. One person in the triangle is designated as the chasee and the other two hand-holders act as blockers or protectors. The fourth person is IT, and must try to tag the designated odd person in the triangle, but cannot purposely try to break the grip. The triangle personnel dance and jump about in semi-coordinated moves to keep the IT at bay. Change roles clockwise every 60 seconds or when a catch is made. Or, never change positions and play the same rules every day for two weeks to measure your classes' potential for civic disobedience.

**QUAIL SHOOTER'S DELIGHT**

This game can be played indoors or out by eight to thirty people. Equipment needed includes several (one per person) frisbees, Nerf balls, knotted bandannas, etc. Ask two or three people (depending on the group's size) to stand back to back in the circle's center. Remaining members pick up one or two nerf balls (or whatever objects are being used.) They should arrange themselves in a circle around the catchers and about fifteen feet away. On the count of three, those around the circle toss objects gently toward people in the center. Those in the middle try to catch as many thrown objects as possible. Rarely do catchers wind up with more than one or two each; often they catch none. Rotate two to three new catchers in until everyone has tried (and failed) in the center of the circle. This game is a great equalizer, as quick, athletic persons usually fare no better than the less active persons do.

**How Do You Do?**

Form a circle with one person selected to be "It". "It" walks around the outside of the circle, chooses a member of the circle,

and taps that person on the shoulder. "It" then responds "How do you do?". The person selected replies "I'm fine, thank you!" This sequence is repeated two more times. At the end of the third "I'm fine, thank you!" both players take off running around the outside of the circle in opposite directions attempting to make it back to the open spot in the circle. When they meet half way around the circle they shake hands and again say "How do you do?" and "I'm fine, thank you!". The player who fails to make it to the open spot remains or becomes "IT". VARIATIONS: Players must walk or run backwards around the circle.

**Moonball**

Moonball is a game that develops cooperation and fast reactions. Play becomes intensely competitive, as a group competes against its last best effort.

Scatter your group (any number, but use 2 or more balls as the group size demands) on a basketball court or an open field. Use a well inflated beach ball as the object of play. The group's objective is to hit the ball aloft as many times as possible before the ball hits the ground. Rules:

1. A player cannot hit the ball twice in succession.

2. Count one point for each hit.

Do not use a volleyball, basketball, etc. for this game. A beach ball is a non-intimidating, fun-related object of play.

**FLIP ME THE BIRD**

Use as a "warm-up" activity - no more than three to five minutes. Tie knots in towels to equal half the number of people in the group. These knotted towels are called birds. If your budget and sense of humor allows, buy rubber chickens to equal half the number of people... etc.

Assign two to three people to be IT. To be immune from a tag, a player must be grasping a bird. Since there are only half as many birds as pursuees, there is much flipping of the bird. There can only be one bird in the hand (but that's worth two in the bush). In keeping with the name of the game, the bird must be thrown, not passed from person to person.

**PAIRS TAG**

Find someone you want to choose and/or be chosen by. Don't worry, there's no holding hands in this game. Deciding who is initially IT, that person tries to tag only their chosen partner, who, of course, attempts to keep from being tagged. If a tag is made, the IT designation switches over and the choosee becomes the chooser. Taken as is, this could be a very boring game. The interesting element is that a lot of other pairs are playing the same game in a restricted area; the smaller the group, the smaller the game area. Only fast walking is allowed and three seconds must elapse between tags. Watch for picks.

**EVERYBODY'S IT**

Sometimes referred to as the world's fastest tag game. When the GO signal is given, everyone is it and must try to touch someone else. If you are touched, you must stand still with hands-on-head. If two people tag each other simultaneously, both are caught. Continue until only two players are left, which pair represents members of an endangered species and must remain uncaught. These two swift-of-foot survivors walk hand-in-hand toward the setting sun.

Restrict the playing area for more action. Head tags do not count.

**OLD PLUG**

Four players make a line by grasping each other's waists. The rest of the players are in a large circle around them. They try to hit the wrist of the last player in the line (old plug) with a ball. The other three in the line try to maneuver to protect old plug, but they must not lose their hold on each other's waists. When old plug is hit, he joins the circle, and the one who hit him becomes the first man in line. The new old plug is the player who was formerly third in line. A second ball may be added if one isn't enough.

**TRIO TAKE-OFF**

Any number of players can play this game, but it is most exciting with 12 or more. All but two players divide into pairs and link arms or hold hands with their partners. The partnerships then form a circle. The two remaining players become the chaser and the runner: The latter runs swiftly around the outside of the circle to avoid being tagged. At any time, however, the runner may link arms with one of the members of a partnership. At this point the previous partnership is dissolved and the third member becomes the new runner. When the chaser succeeds in tagging the runner; the runner becomes the new chaser. A new runner is chosen and the game continues.

**SHUFFLE YOUR BUNS/SIT DOWN WAVE/GRAB A SEAT**

Everyone sits in chairs in a circle. Add one chair to the circle. The player to the right of the empty chair begins the wave by moving to the chair as quickly as he/she can. The rest of the players follow thus creating a wave. Variations: add a second empty chair, or try changing directions.

Select one individual to be in the center of the circle. The player in the center attempts to grab the open chair while the circle tries to keep the wave moving without letting the player in the center sit down. BE CAREFUL because chairs have tendency to slide.

**TOILET TAG**

Mark off playing area for your size group. Designate one or more players to be "It". "It" runs around attempting to tag other players, who are then "dead" and must kneel down on one knee with one arm out and to the side. Dead players can reenter the game only when a free player sits on the dead player's knee and pulls down the extended hand--"flushes the toilet". The game ends when all players except "It" are kneeling.

**BEACH BALL FOOSBALL**

You will need a good size beach ball and a large room. To play, divide the group into two teams. All of the members of one team sit in rows of three to five abreast, one row interspersed between the other team's rows, all team members facing the same direction. Each team should have three to four rows. Then members of the other team sit with their backs to the team already seated. If you're seated correctly, you should be glaring into the eyes of an opposing team member about two leg-lengths in front of you. Every player must remain seated. Play and score just like regular fussball, a point for each time the beach ball goes over the opposing teams goalie row. Variations include playing blindfolded, left hands only and heads only.

**"TOE SHANES"**

Get group into pairs of similar size. Each pair puts their hands on the other's shoulders facing each other. Each tries to step on the other's toes. The first person to step on the other's toes three times wins. Be careful not to hurt each other.

**HUMAN TIC-TAC-TOE**

Set up nine chairs in three rows - just like the sections on a tic-tac-toe diagram. Then divide your group into two teams. Each team takes its turn by sending one person to sit in a selected chair. The first team to get three in a row wins. To make it more exciting, establish a time limit that each team member has to select a seat. (Five seconds works well)

**FOX AND SQUIRREL**

Group gets into pairs. Pairs spread out in the area, face each other, and lock hands. One person is designated a fox and another the squirrel. The pairs are the trees. The fox tries to tag the squirrel. If this happens, they switch roles. The squirrel may jump in between any of the pairs that are trees. The person to the squirrel's back now becomes the squirrel.

**MOUSETRAP**

Two players form a bridge roof by joining hands over heads facing each other, for all others to go under while music playing. When music stops, the bridge (or mousetrap) falls to catch anyone below. The caught person or persons join the mousetrap and the music starts again. Play until all or most are caught.

**ALAMO**

All you need for this great game is a pretty big room and some gator skin balls (or balls that don't hurt when you throw them at people!)  
  
You put about five or six balls in the middle of the room. All participants stand around the outside line (if in a gymnasium) or touching the wall if in a regular room. When a leader yells "Alamo" the game begins. Anyone who gets a ball throws it, trying to hit others to get them out. The person who gets hit with a ball is out of the game and must sit down with legs crossed until the game is over. If the ball is thrown at a person and they catch the ball then the person who threw the ball is out. One catch though is that if you have a ball you cannot walk with it! The only way you can move with a ball is if you roll the ball on the floor. If a person is caught walking with a ball then they are out. This game is a winner and is great because you can play it over and over again because the games don't last long. Plus, it's contagious because everyone wants to get the winner of the previous game out! It's great for all ages.

**COURTESY TAG** (warm up)

**Target Group:** 12 or older  
**Group Size:** 10 to 50 players  
**Time Range:** 5 to 10 minutes  
**Space Needs:** A large open area to run around  
**Props:** One bandanna for each player and some things to mark the corners of the boundaries.

**Procedure:**  (Here's yet another version of Everybody's.) Give each player a bandanna and have everyone spread out around the playing field. You will be playing a game of Everybody's It. This time when you tag someone who is holding one bandanna, this player kneels down and gives you the bandanna he has. You will now have two bandannas. Here is the interesting community part of this one. If you have two bandannas, you cannot be tagged down. No player can ever have more than two bandannas. If you are down, you can get back in the game if someone gives you a bandanna. You can only tag other players if you have one bandanna. An interesting game that can go on forever or for a very short time.

**Observations/Questions:** What was the game like for you? What did you spend most of your time doing - tagging, helping, avoiding? What makes the game fun to play? How can we use this idea during our program?

**Source:** (Variation from) Mohnsen, "Teaching MS Physical Education: A Blueprint for Developing an Exemplary Program."

**TEAM TAG** (warm-up, problem solving)

**Target Group:** 12 and older  
**Group Size:** 12 to 24 players  
**Time Range:** 15 to 25 minutes  
**Space Needs:** Large open area  
**Props:** One small soft tossable object and four markers for the corner of the boundary area.

**Procedure:** (It might be helpful to go back to November 2000 and review Everybody's It without the High 10 part.) Break your group into small teams of 4 players each. Give each team a different tossable object. This is their "get-back-inner" for the game. When the game begins everyone starts to play "Everybody's It" - except you don't tag anyone on your own team. Tags are made below the neck in a safe manner. When tagged, the player squats down. To get back in the game, the squatter must receive the "get-back-inner" (GBI) from another teammate - the player who possesses the GBI must throw it to the squatting player, not simply tag the player with it. If a player has the GBI and is tagged, she squats down and then finds someone on her team to throw the GBI to. She must have it thrown back to her to get back in (no throwing it to herself). At no time during play can another team touch/disrupt the GBI of another team. The objective: Have the most players standing when time is up. (2 minute rounds work well). There is a way to beat the odds by staying close together and just handing the GBI around - but the game isn't as much fun. Brings up the discussion of the "FUN FACTOR" - problem solving your way right out of a good time.

**Observations/Questions:** How would you rate your success? What contributed to it? What prohibited your success? What did you concentrate on more, tagging, avoiding the tag, helping a teammate? How does this relate to jumping right in, the concern for setbacks, and assisting the process? (Just a thought?) Did your team develop any sort of strategy? What was it? How did it help? Did you use any other teams strategy? What do you think about that? Good? Otherwise? What would be a way for everyone to be up at the end of the game? Would it be as fun? Would the game be worth playing? What's the lesson here?

**Source:** Zip Lines, Summer 1999 issue. Great resource from Project Adventure you receive with your membership (www.pa.org) that comes out three times a year - one is usually all on innovative activities.

**MAT BALL**

This game is played much like Kickball, with fly balls, and throwing the ball to basemen to get runners out. The difference is that a runner is not required to move on to the next base. Large mats are used for the bases. As many players as choose to may accumulate on a base. Individuals may leave in any order (or all at once!) to go on to the next base, which keeps the base players on their toes!

**Go for the Goal**

This game, despite appearing to be highly active, can be played by anyone willing to walk a little. Think of it as a cross between football and ultimate Frisbee. The goal is to “catch” a large rubber ring in the scoring zone. The biggest equalizer in the game is that the direction of play can be changed at any time by the team throwing.

**Equipment Needed**

• Large rubber ring (large enough to fit a hand easily through)

• Large grassy field (at least 100ft by 200ft), marked with beginning of scoring zones at end and midfield

**Basic Gameplay**

• Break all participants into two even teams. Make sure all boys and girls are evenly divided.

• One team starts with the ring at the middle of the field. The offensive players spread out and run around, attempting to get open. When the ring is thrown to a player, he or she attempts to catch the ring in any manner.

• The offensive team is attempting to complete three passes in a row. Once the offense has successfully completed three passes in a row, the offense can then “Go for the Goal”.

• To Go for the Goal, the offensive team attempts to complete a pass in either scoring zone. However, the player catching the ring can only catch it using the “spear” method – catching the ring by putting his hand/arm through the ring. If the player catches the ring in this method in the scoring zone, the offense scores a point.

• The opposing team is allowed to play defense, and can attempt to catch the ring or knock it down, but they cannot touch the offensive player in any way. If the defense knocks down the ring or intercepts it, the defense then becomes the offensive team.

• At any point, the team on offense can decide to pass the ring in a different direction. The thrower can be very obvious about it by calling it out, or can be subtle, and attempt to get a single teammate to go the other way. The team on offense can change directions while they have the ring as many times as they want.

• The objective is to be tossing the ring towards *A* goal zone, not a specified goal zone, at all times.

• Play for 15 minutes, take a break, then play the second half.

**Rules**

• Throwing should alternate between boys and girls (if playing co-ed teams)

• Offensive team allowed to change directions at any time

• Scoring zones only have a beginning and no “back line”

• Players cannot make a catch in the scoring zone until the three team catches have been made