



Winning Through Cooperation: Trust-Building Games

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Learn a dozen trust-building games that require students to cooperate, communicate, and encourage each other. Discover the advantages of emphasizing teamwork and fair play over competition. Incorporate adventure-based learning into your lessons.

1. Warm-ups (*Human Spring / Handcuffs*) -----

2. Partner Tag

3. Taffy Pull

4. Trust Run

5. Treeball

6. Knots

7. Down To The Ground

8. Flying Carpets

9. Traffic Jam

10. Everybody Up

11. Overhand Knot

12. Monster Haul

Other Ideas

1. Cooperative Rocks/ Paper / Scissors

2. Hold Tag

3. Worm Hole

4. Hacky Sack

5. All Aboard

6. Tie And Move

7. Ball Drop

Choose your games wisely:

- No players are eliminated from play because of physical conditions.
- Look for games that are structurally continuous or cooperative, not competitive.
- Choose games that require little prep time, and use only a few easily accessible props.
- Make games age-appropriate.
- Avoid offensive actions, props or goals.



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22 Ways to Encourage Healthy Play and Cooperation

1. **Support the process**, not the product; the activity, not the outcome. Stress the relationships and the encouragement. If someone's attitude becomes selfish or if he loses his temper, stop the game and deal with it. Glorify God in all things.
2. **Don't give prizes to winners.** Reward or discipline the whole group. This will make people more responsible to group goals and not focused on themselves and what's in it for them.
3. **Give group challenges.** Such as, "I offer this challenge to the group. Figure out a safe way to score 100 points, with regular basketball scoring, in the next 4 minutes." You could allow group members to earn small beads to wear on bracelets for special accomplishments. Use the beads as reminders, rather than rewards. "I challenge the group to earn \$400 toward your upcoming retreat. If the group accepts this challenge, I will offer challenge beads to the group members."
4. **Change the goal of the activity** to "getting exercise," "having fun," "being part of a group," "scoring as many points as possible as a group," or "seeing if everyone can touch the broom without touching anyone else," etc. . . rather than "the person who gets the most points wins."
5. **Change the equipment.** Rather than volleyballs, use nerf balls, water-balloons, Frisbees, teddy bears, schmertzls, beach balls, and kooshes.
6. **Change the teams:**
 - a. Person switch - have the person who scores switch teams after scoring.
 - b. Rotation - have people regularly rotate to the other team. For example, after serving the volleyball, the person rotates to the other team.
 - c. Change teams arbitrarily according to clothing, eye color, age, etc...
 - d. Whistle switch - whenever the game leader blows a whistle, the players switch roles. If they were ITs, they become runners; if they were hidlers, they become chasers; if they were frozen, they become mobile. Or, just have small groups of students (such as all those with no sisters, or people wearing watches) reverse roles.
7. **Change the scoring:**
 - a. Collective scoring - the group attempts to reach a pre-determined number of points together.
 - b. Benchwarmer scoring - each person on the team must score once before anyone can score twice.



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- c. Bonzai scoring - the group gets points for the number of hits or passes prior to scoring (example: in volleyball, award one point for each hit before returning the ball over the net for a potential of 3 points each serve).
 - d. Reverse scoring - points you make are given to the other team.
 - e. Timed scoring - race against the clock and not each other.
 - f. Underdog scoring:
 1. If the teams are tied and you score, you get one point.
 2. If your team is ahead and you score, you get two points, your opponent gets one.
 3. If your team is behind and you score, you get two points, your opponent gets zero.
8. **Make it more difficult for the winners to score by:**
- a. Changing the distance they must travel (move their goal farther back).
 - b. Changing their mode of transportation (walking, hopping, crawling, running backward...)
 - c. Changing the number of their players (one person goes to losing team).
 - d. Changing the size of their goal (with cones, shrink the goal on their side and enlarge the goal of the other team).
 - e. Exhaustion ideas - if a few athletic students dominate a game (say, soccer) make them begin each exchange or possession by running around the farthest goal, or running to the sidelines and back.
 - f. Game within a game - after the runner is tagged by the IT, they play rocks-paper-scissors, thumb wrestle, or play another two-person game. If the IT wins, he has captured the person. If the runner wins, he has 5 seconds of freedom to escape.
9. **Support "Personal Bests," or challenge them to beat a nebulous "world record."**

Check Out These Resources:

- *Screamers & Scramblers* by Michael W. Capps
- *Play It Again!* edited by Wayne Rice and Mike Yaconelli
- *Building Community In Youth Groups* by Denny Rydberg
- *Youth Group Trust Builders* by Denny Rydberg
- *Cowstails and Cobras I & II* by Karl Rohnke
- *More New Games!* by Andrew Fluegelman