

Circle games

1. Zip Zap Boing

This game promotes concentration and a feeling of fun whilst working as a whole group. The players sit in a circle and pass round an imaginary ball of energy, always to the person on their left, saying 'zip' as they pass it on. If a player wants to pass the energy to someone not next to them, they look at that person and throw the ball to them saying 'zap'. This person catches the ball and then carries on 'zipping' it to their left. If a player wants to change the direction of the ball, they say 'boing!' with lots of energy, wobbling like a jelly. The player on their right then has to 'zip' the other way. You can say 'boing' to a 'zip' but never to a 'zap'; you can say 'zap' to a 'boing'. As players become more expert, build up the pace so it is fast and hilarious. People are out if they go the wrong way or say the wrong thing. The last three players remaining are usually the winners. (Please note that this is just one of many versions of this popular game; other versions can easily be found by searching the internet).

2. Sitting Down/Numbers Games

The aim of this kind of game is for players to work together as a group without discussion, promoting concentration, trust and cooperation. They have to use cues such as eye contact, body language and listening. In one variation, all the players stand in the circle and all have to sit down – but only one person can sit at a time, without discussing who will go next; if two people or more sit down at once then everyone has to stand up and the process has to start again from scratch. In another version, all the players sit with their eyes shut and as a group have to count out loud in ones until the whole group has said a number; again, no one is allowed to speak at the same time as another person.

3. Detective Game

This game promotes concentration, cooperation and observation within the group, as well as a being great fun. One player volunteers to be a detective and leaves the room; another child volunteers to be the leader (silently); the leader then carries out a changing series of actions which the rest of the group all have to copy, such as tapping head, rubbing nose, clapping hands and so on. The detective is called back into the room and has to work out by observation who is the leader; the rest of the group have to be as subtle as possible about who they are watching and the leader has to try not to let the detective spot them changing the actions, making it hard for the detective. (With younger children, it is a good idea to give the detective three guesses). For the next round, another child volunteers to be detective and leaves the room. Then the first detective silently chooses the new leader by tapping someone on the head, and the game continues.

4. Ball or Bean Bag Games

All of these games promote cooperation, helping the players to learn each others' names, to concentrate and to make eye contact. The simplest versions involve throwing/rolling the ball/bean bag to another player whilst saying their name and making eye contact; the aim is to make sure that every player has a turn. Complications can involve repeating the entire group's pattern of throws/rolls in the same order, reversing the order of throws/rolls, or gradually introducing several more balls/beanbags once the pattern of throwing/rolling has been established, so there is a steady flow of throwing/rolling going on within the circle.