

### Why games?

Some people just don't see the point of games, and think that youth group, or especially confirmation, should be all work and no play. What they might not see is how well games bring us together! Kids having fun will make new friends easily, and be able to bond over a shared experience. Even if the game is stupid, they can bond over making fun of how stupid the game was.

### How to run games

#### **Make the game equally and easily accessible for everyone**

Avoid picking a game too similar to a sport, where those people that play the sport will have the upper hand on those who don't.

#### **Know how to play the game!**

Don't just read about it, see it in action! Before you even attempt it with a group, test it with a few people first to make sure you understand how it's supposed to work! See what needs tweaking by playing it with a small group first.

#### **Teach it well!**

When teaching the game, don't just read the instructions and go. Show it with a small sample of people, preferably someone who's played the game before. Let people see what the game is supposed to look like in slow motion before throwing people into it full speed. Allowing time for questions will help you remember things you forgot. When people don't understand a game, that's when it'll bomb.

#### **Own it!**

After you've led a game a few times, make it your own! Make your own variations on it. Lead it so many times, you're known for it. Become the master of your game. Pull it out of your back pocket in a flash! There are lots of times you need a quick game. If you've got an "ace in the hole" kind of game, it will save the day!

#### **Change it up!**

Tweak the game by changing how you play the game, how you move, or changing the object of the game.

#### **Be prepared!**

If you're going to play the game, have all the materials you need ready to go! Few things worse than having to wait for fun!

### How to ruin games

#### **Say you're playing a game**

"Let's play a game!" (Groan) The idea of playing a game can immediately turn off many older students and adults. One groan can kill your momentum. Just start leading the game, and before they know it, people are playing the game and having fun!

#### **Keep playing a game that's not working**

Sometimes a game just doesn't work. It happens. If a game bombed, don't force it. No one will want to try that game ever again. Tweak it and try it again some other time.

#### **Embarrass losers**

Games often have losers and winners. There's no need to point out who lost. You can tell a game is good if nobody is keeping score!

#### **Win it, or show poor sportsmanship**

Go ahead! Play hard, and be competitive! Just remember you're there to cheer on your kids. No one wants to play a game the leader always wins. How cool is it if you're the kid that got the youth director out?

#### **Waste food**

OK, this one is personal, but I hate games that waste food. People have died playing "Chubby Bunny," some groups have played dizzy bat, where you slam a 7-Up, eat a banana really fast, and spin around until you throw up. Gross! There are lots of people that don't have enough food, and many struggle with food. Playing games that waste it is insulting to those people, and irresponsible. Don't just plan a big food fight.

#### **Recklessness**

Be mindful to as much as you can with your game. Playing outside? Watch for possible hazards: wet grass, holes in the ground, etc. Inside hazards are fewer, but rugburn can sting. If kids are dressed up for Sunday School, maybe don't play that really active game. Kids picking on someone? Find a way to diffuse the situation.

## [How to plan a games set list](#)

**What's the purpose?** Getting kids pumped up at the start of a lock-in? Focusing kids in at a night of youth group? Getting kids acquainted at the beginning of a retreat? Settling kids down in your cabin at camp?

**What's the size and age of your group?** 50 middle school kids? 30 high school kids? 100 elementary school kids? 20 families with parents and kids of all ages?

Once you've answered those questions, you can start to pick your set list!

### **Example scenario: Beginning of a lock-in with 50 middle school kids**

**Welcome kids in. Start 10 minutes prior to event, or when first kids show up. Play for up to 40 minutes.**

#### **Cold Wind Blows (shoe games)**

-If kids show up and there's a game already in motion, that's a much more welcoming and comfortable way to get kids plugged in, as opposed to awkwardly hanging around in your church's entryway.

**Get kids acquainted. Play for 20 minutes.**

#### **Rock, Paper, Scissors, EXTREME!**

-Kids have maybe started to learn a couple names from the previous game. Get them to learn a few more! Get kids pumped

**Get kids pumped up! Play for 30 minutes.**

#### **Ships and Sailors**

-This is my personal "ace in the hole" game. I always have success with it! Most kids' favorite game!

### **Example scenario: Beginning of a night of youth group with 30 high school kids**

**Get kids mingling. Play for 10-20 minutes.**

#### **Group Poker**

-This game is a silly way to pairs kids up with kids they wouldn't have chosen themselves. Ask a silly ice-breaker question!

**Get kids pumped! Play for 20 minutes**

#### **Push Me/Pull You**

-As the group gets smaller, kids will rally behind someone. This game also can run itself after you get it started. Choose a youth or adult leader to take leadership of the game! You can then take a minute to get stuff set up if you need it!

### **Example scenario: Centering a group of 10-20 elementary school kids at camp or a VBS**

**Get kids welcomed in. Start playing when the first kids arrive until all kids have arrived.**

#### **Cold Wind Blows (shoe games)**

-Having an activity already happening as kids arrive is way more welcoming than having kids awkwardly hang around your entryway.

**Get kids to learn some names. Play for 15 minutes.**

#### **Group Juggle**

-Kids will learn some names and have some fun with the zaniness of this game. End the game by having the kids try to see how quickly they can play the game, using problem solving skills to work together to do it!

**Sit the kids down, and start to quiet down and center. Play for 5-10 minutes.**

#### **Frogger**

-This game gets kids to sit in a circle and do something quietly together while still engaging them. Kids that didn't get to have their moment in some of the earlier games can have a turn being the detective or the frog!

## Name games/Icebreakers

[Icebreaker Questions! Need some silly questions? Here ya go!](#)

### [Cold Wind Blows/Train Wreck/Do you like your neighbor?/I have never/Fruit bowl/Shoe games](#)

**Materials:** Place markers (players' shoes, or chairs are easiest)

Stand or sit in a circle. Have markers for each place in the circle (take off your shoes, or use chairs). There should be one fewer marker than participants. Participants introduce themselves, and then say "The cold wind blows if..." and say something like "...you've been to New York!" If you have been to New York, you need to find a new place, minimum 2 spaces away.

**Variations:**

Train wreck/Fruit bowl: Yell "Train wreck" or "Fruit salad" to make everyone move.

Do you like your neighbor?: Ask someone sitting if they like their neighbor. If they say "yes," their immediate neighbors switch places.

They could also say, "No, but I like people that..." and fill in the blank (e.g. are left-handed, are wearing blue, have been to Florida).

### [Blanket name game](#)

**Materials:** Blanket or sheet

Split group into 2 teams. Leader and a volunteer hold a blanket, preventing groups from seeing each other. Each group sends up a person to be their representative. Blanket is dropped to reveal each team's representative. First team representative to say the name of the opposing team's representative earns that player on his or her team.

### [Rock, Paper, Scissors, EXTREME!!/Evolution Rock, Paper, Scissors](#)

**Materials:** None

Players meander about, looking for opponents. Players introduce themselves to each other. Players compete in Rock, Paper, Scissors. Winner earns the loser on his or her team, along with any team members the losing opponent may have. Members of the team cheer for their leader. Final round of the game features two players with the entire group screaming for their leader.

Variation: Evolution Rock, Paper, Scissors – Players start as an egg. After winning a round of RPS, they 'evolve' into a chicken. After winning another round as a chicken, they 'evolve' into an eagle. Eggs may only challenge other eggs, chickens may only challenge other chickens, etc. Eggs, chickens, and eagles may be anything! Be creative with these! Losers may devolve back from a chicken, to an egg, etc.

### [Group Juggle](#)

**Materials:** Varying items easy to toss or hand off

Circle your group up. Warm up with a tennis ball or other soft ball. Have the members of the group establish an order by tossing the ball to each other without repeating, calling the name of the person to whom they are tossing the ball. Challenge the group by adding multiple balls, running the same order.

**Extra challenges:** Have a special ball go in reverse order. Have a weird item (like a random action figure or Happy Meal toy be handed to the person next to them. See how fast the group can get through their order. Get creative!

### [Going On A Picnic/Nameless name activity](#)

**Materials:** None

Group stands in a circle. Player 1 (possibly the leader) introduces him or herself. They say, "I'm going on a picnic, and I'm bringing... (something that starts with the same letter as their first name, e.g. 'William bringing waffles!)" Continue around the circle. Each subsequent player must say what every previous player is bringing to the picnic, before adding his or her own.

**Variation:** Each player introduces themselves with an adjective and action that starts with the same letter as their first name,

Example: "I'm allergic Alex" (mimes sneeze). Great for introducing adults on a retreat! Gives everyone a nickname, too!

### [Name Tag](#)

**Materials:** Soft tagging item, like a pool noodle, or a leftover t-shirt from that camp, retreat, or lock-in

Players sit in a circle. Someone is in the middle, with a tagging item. A player will start by saying their name, and then the name of someone else in the circle. The person named must now stand up, say their own name, and someone else's name. Play continues until the person in the middle tags the person whose name was called before that person says someone else's name. The tagger switches spots with the tagged.

Before they sit down, they start the game anew. If they fail to say someone else's name before sitting, they may be tagged.

### [M&M Game](#)

**Materials:** Small candies (M&M's, Skittles, gummy bears, etc.)

Set a bunch in the middle, and have people take as many as they wish! For each one you take, you have to share a fun fact about yourself.

**Variation:** You can have the different colors of candies stand for different questions!

## Active

### [Run screaming/Scream race/Run, Scream, Die](#)

**Materials:** None

Line up contestants. Contestants scream and start running. When the contestant can no longer scream, he or she stops running. He or she may opt to die overdramatically. Winner is the one who ran the farthest. Bonus points may be given to the person who screamed the loudest.

### [Shepherds and Wolves/Knights and Dragons](#)

**Materials:** None

Players each secretly pick a shepherd (or knight) and a wolf (or dragon). Your goal is to keep your shepherd between your wolf and yourself. There is no end to the game. If you feel like you're just running around aimlessly, you're probably playing the game correctly. Leader can call out that all shepherds are now wolves, and vice versa, or pause the game and have everyone choose a new wolf.

### [Snap, Crackle, Pop](#)

**Materials:** Enough markers/chairs/spoons/place holders for each group (minus one)

Contestants break into groups of three. Players decide who in the trio is "Snap," "Crackle," and "Pop" between them. The game leader will call off one of those characters (Example: Pop). Whoever is the character called (Pop) must run around the outside of the circle. The two remaining members of the trio (Snap and Crackle) form a "bridge" by grabbing the other remaining partner's foot, while the called character (Pop) crawls under their leg bridge. Once in the center of the circle, the called character (Pop) must grab one of the markers, without being the last one left without one. **Note: Take your floor into consideration. This game can cause slipping and rug burn.**

### [Push Me, Pull You/Garbage Can Game of Doom](#)

**Materials:** Large item, like a trash can

The groups stands in a circle and grabs hands. A large object, such as a garbage can, is placed in the middle. Players push and pull each other into the object without letting go of the other players' hands. When a player touches the object in the middle, he or she is eliminated.

### [Kumja//Bunny Bunny](#)

**Materials:** None

This is a difficult rhythmic elimination game, played best with small groups of advanced middle school and higher. Even then, the game can bomb. Kids either think it's the greatest game ever, or the most annoying game ever.

The group stands in a circle. There are three layers to the game:

**Kumja:** (Pronounced "Koom-jah") The group chants "kumja, kumja" as a base layer.

**Bunny:** The bunny is passed person to person (similar to "The Wa" in Wa)

A player receives the bunny by pointing to themselves and saying "bunny bunny" then pointing to another player in the circle and saying "bunny bunny." The whole process should take four counts: two to yourself, two to someone else.

**Tokki:** (Pronounced "Toe-key") The person on either side of the person with the bunny will dance and shout "tokki tokki tokki tokki" over four counts. Whatever dance the players feel best exemplifies the term "tokki" may be used. The point is to be goofy and obnoxious.

If players mess up the rhythm, or commonly, forget to "tokki," they can be eliminated, or just stop and start over.

*\*Advanced players can play where you're not allowed to smile while you have the bunny.*

*It is then the job of the players doing the "tokki" to try to make that person laugh.*

### [Shufflebuns](#)

**Materials:** Chairs

Get your group in a tight circle with their chairs. Try to have no spaces between chairs. Leave one chair open. One person stands in the middle. A player next to the empty chair will shuffle over to take that vacant seat. The next player around the circle takes the newly-vacant seat. Continue shuffling around the circle with each subsequent player taking the empty seat. The person in the middle tries to take the open seat. Players sitting can slap the empty chair instead of moving and force the shuffle direction to reverse.

### [Rush Hour](#)

**Materials:** Chairs/place markers

Get your group split roughly in half and send the halves to opposite ends of the room. Have them line up their chairs or place markers, facing the other side. On "GO!" the groups run across the room, crashing and bumping in the middle, to try to sit in a chair on the opposite side. While the players are running, and before they have a chance to sit down, remove a chair/marker from each side of the room. Players that don't get a chair are out. They must sit in the middle of the "road" between the two sides. If you'd rather, the players that are out may stand to potentially prevent possible personal injury. Play continues until there is one winner from each side.

*To speed up the game, remove multiple chairs/markers from each side each turn.*

## Quiet/Small Group

### Celebrity

Materials: Paper and pens

Players write down the name of a person or character, real or fictional, to represent them. The leader reads off everyone's "celebrities" and begins the guessing. Players attempt to guess who the other players wrote as their celebrities. For every wrong guess, the player who was just guessed incorrectly gets to make the next guess. On a correct guess, the player who was just guessed joins the team of the player who correctly guessed his or her celebrity. Object of the game is to be the last celebrity guessed.

### **Movie game**

Materials: None

Group sits in a circle. One player (the contestant) will leave the room, while the rest of the group comes up with a movie title, preferably a longer movie title (e.g. "Back to the Future"). Split up the title into its individual words, and divvy the words up in order around the circle, (i.e. player 1 has "back," player 2 has "to," player 3 has "the," and player 4 has "future.") The contestant comes back in, and asks questions of those in the circle. Whenever a question is asked of a player that has a word in the movie title assigned to him or her, he or she must use his or her word from the movie title in his or her answer.

*Example: Contestant – "[Player 4], what's your favorite color?" Player 4 – "Silver! It's the color of the future!"*

### **Coffee Pot**

Materials: None

Group sits in a circle. One contestant leaves the room while the rest of the group comes up with a verb. The contestant comes back into the room and asks the sitting group questions with the word coffee pot replacing the chosen verb. Group members answer the question as if the verb the group has chosen replaces the word coffee pot. (Somehow, "coffee pot" seems to always become a euphemism for "pooping.")

*Example: the group chooses the verb "to eat." Contestant – "How often do you coffee pot?" Player – "3 times a day!"*

### **Silent Ball**

Materials: A ball

Players disperse throughout the room. Players must keep silent during the entire game, except to ask questions of the game's leader. A ball is tossed among the players. Any player that talks, misses a catch, or makes a bad throw, is eliminated. Leader throws in variations to the game (e.g. players must stand on one foot, players must throw with their non-dominant hand, etc.) Any player violating any of the leader's rules is eliminated.

### Four on a Couch

Materials: Pens and paper

8-16 Players are split into two teams and are all sitting. There are four seats in a row designated as "the couch." (You may be playing on an actual couch, or just call four chairs in a row "the couch") To start, each team should have two players on "the couch." Each player writes their name on a slip of paper, and turns them into a central location. Slips of paper are randomly handed out to the players. It doesn't matter if you get your own name. Leave one open spot. The person sitting to the right of the empty seat says the name of someone in the game. Whoever holds the slip of paper with that name on it moves to the empty seat. Play resumes with the player next to the newly-emptied seat.

Continue until all four spots on "the couch" are occupied by one team.

*Variation:* For an extra challenge, each time a player moves, have them switch papers with the person who called them!

### Screaming Toes/Look Up, Look Down/Scream Game/Stare Wars/BattleToes

Materials: None

Stand in a circle. Everyone looks down and secretly chooses someone else in the circle. Look at the toes of the person you have chosen.

Leader counts, "3, 2, 1, look up!" If you are staring at a person that is staring at you, you both scream and are eliminated from the game. You will have one or two winners, depending on if your group number is odd or even.

### Frogger/Froggy Murder

Materials: None

Group sits in a circle with a "detective" trying to find out who the "frog" is. The detective leaves the room, and the group picks a "frog." Everyone else is a "fly." Detective returns to the game, standing in the middle of the circle. The flies all buzz while the frog eats the flies by sticking their tongue out at them. When a fly is eaten, they may, can, and should die an over-exaggerated death. This is all done while sitting stationary on the floor. The detective has three guesses to identify the frog.

## [Fortunately.../Unfortunately...](#)

**Materials:** None

Players create a story together. Player 1 starts the story with “Fortunately...” (e.g. the hotel had room service!) Player 2 continues the story with “Unfortunately...” (e.g. the cooks didn’t wash their hands.) The story continues with each player adding more to the story, by starting with “fortunately...” or “unfortunately...” alternating. Great for car rides!

## [Ghost](#)

**Materials:** None

This is a word game. Player 1 starts with a letter. Player 2 adds another letter. Play continues around the group with each consecutive player adding another letter. As soon as a word, three letters or longer, is completed, that player loses. Players must always be working towards a word. If a player says a letter that doesn’t seem to be working towards a word, other players may challenge his or her letter choice. The challenged player would need to say the word he or she was thinking of. If he or she was not thinking of a word, he or she would lose.

## **Ah-So-Ko**

**Materials:** None

The group stands in a circle. One person starts off by saying “Ah” and placing either their left or right hand across their chest, parallel to the floor pointing either to the left or the right. Play continues with the person towards whom “Ah” pointed, saying “So” and putting either their right or left arm up, bending at the elbow so the forearm is parallel to the floor over their head, pointing either to the left or right again. The third person says “Ko” and points to anyone in the circle. Play continues with the person towards whom the “Ko” was pointed. They begin anew with “Ah.” Play continues until someone messes up. The game can be an elimination game, or just restart when someone messes up.

## [What if...?](#)

**Materials:** Paper, pens

Everyone in the group takes a slip of paper and writes a “What if...” question on it. It can be helpful to think of a theme (e.g. Travel, Sports, Church, Christmas). After everyone has completed their “What if...” question, players switch papers at random until everyone has a new slip of paper. On the back of the paper (or if there’s ample room on the front), write an answer to that question. After everyone has finished writing answers, switch papers again so you have a last new slip of paper. Don’t worry if you don’t feel your question or answer isn’t clever, because this is where the hilarity kicks in: Person A will read his or her “What if...” question, but Person B (next to Person A in the circle) will read the answer from his or her slip of paper. Person B continues, reading the “What if...” question on his or her slip of paper, Person C answers with his or her answer, continuing all the way around the circle until Person A answers the last person’s question.

## **Questions Game**

**Materials:** Nothing

Group stands in a circle. Play starts with one person (Player A) asking a question to the next player in the circle (Player B). Player B quickly asks a question to Player C, who in turn asks a question to Player D. *No repeating, no hesitating, no answering the question asked!* Questions can be literally anything! You can either play elimination style down to a single champion, or just play for the fun of the game.

## **Buzz/Fizz**

**Materials:** Nothing

Your goal is to count to 50 (or however high you want) as a team! Player A says “1.” Player B says “2.” Play continues around, but for every multiple of 5, say “BUZZ” instead of the number. Likewise, for every multiple of 7, say “FIZZ” instead. For 35, say “BUZZ FIZZ.”

*Game should sound like this: “1, 2, 3, 4, BUZZ, 6, FIZZ, 8...”*

## [Wa](#)

**Materials:** None

The group stands in a circle. “The Wa” is invisible energy that is passed from player to player. A player will start with “The Wa” and raise his or her hands, palms together above his or her head. The player points his or her hands at another player in the circle and says, “Wa.” This player now has “The Wa.” He or she puts his or her hands up, palms together and says, “Wa.” The players on either side of this player must help this player receive “The Wa” by ‘chopping’ toward the middle player’s stomach with both hands, palms together and saying “Wa” simultaneously. This should be done in a steady, 3-beat rhythm. Any players messing up the rhythm, or missing his or her part is eliminated.

Example: Johnny starts with “The Wa.” Johnny passes “The Wa,” pointing to Sally and says “Wa.” Sally says “Wa” with her hands up, palms together. She has correctly received “The Wa.” Billy and Susie are on either side of Sally, and ‘chop’ towards her stomach, saying “Wa” together. They have correctly aided her in receiving “The Wa.”

## Large group

### Ships & Sailors

Materials: None

This one is complicated, and can take some time to master, but if you've got it down, it's always a favorite! Basically a pirate-themed version of "Simon says..." The leader is the captain. Players get eliminated by messing up, or not completing a group.

**Captain's coming!**: All players snap to attention. They may not do anything until you call "at ease."

**At ease:** Players resume playing.

The captain can (and should) try to get players out by calling other commands after "Captain's coming," but before "at ease."

**Ships:** Players walk to the left

**Sailors:** Players walk to the right (Doesn't matter whose left or right)

**Hit the deck:** Players quickly lay down on their stomachs.

**Seasick:** Players quickly run to the back of the room and pretend to throw up. If they do it for real, they're out.

Imitation commands: Great ways to get a solo player out while at attention

**Captain's Son:** Players flex their muscles and say "gr"

**Captain's Daughter:** Players do a little hip bob, twirl their hair, and say "woo hoo!"

**One-eyed Jack:** Stand on one leg, cover one eye, make a hook with your finger, "aarrrgh!"

**Mermaid:** Players lay down, flap their tailfin, wave and smile. Cooing is optional but encouraged.

Group commands: Anyone not in a full group is eliminated

**Man (Person) overboard:** Players find a partner. One of them "goes overboard" (lays down) while the other "rescues them" by grabbing their partner's hand, and raising their hand, thus signifying a rescue.

**3 people rowing:** Get in a line of 3, and pretend to row (stay standing. There's always one group of kids who tries to sit.)

**4 people eating:** Get in a circle of 4, and pretend to eat (Again, stay standing)

Optional:

If your group is really good, and you're stuck at the magic numbers of 12 and 24 (meaning the group commands don't get anybody out), try...

**Starfish:** Get in a group of 5. Link arms in a circle facing outward

Tips:

-While at attention (**Captain's coming!**), count (or estimate) how many people are left. Say "OK, we've got 14 people. Someone will definitely get out when I call 3 people rowing!" Kids psyche themselves out thinking they don't want to get out, and forget they're still at attention.

Someone almost always gets out.

-Distract the kids with a joke while at attention. Pirate jokes are the best. Here's one:

"What's a pirate's favorite letter?" Crowd will respond "R"

"You'd think it's 'R', but it's really 'the sea.'" Get it????

### **Boppity Bop Bop Bop/Elephant, Monkey, Palm Tree**

Materials: None

Players stand in a circle. One person is "it" in the middle of the circle. "It" will go up to someone in the circle and say "boppity bop bop bop." The person "it" goes up to must say "bop" before "it" finishes saying "boppity bop bop bop." If the person "it" approached doesn't, they are now "it."

"It" may try to fool someone in the circle by simply saying "bop." If the person "it" goes up to says anything when "it" only says "bop," that person is now "it."

Variation: Person in the middle approaches someone calls either "Elephant," "Monkey," or "Palm tree!" and counts to 10 quickly but clearly.

Person pointed to plus their neighbors must do the action called for.

Elephant: Person in the middle sticks both arms out like a trunk. Neighbors form "ears" by making a circle with their arms

Monkey: Person in the middle and two neighbors must recreate "See no evil, hear no evil, speak no evil" by covering their eyes, mouth, ears.

Palm tree: Person in the middle sticks both arms up, hands together. Neighbors turn back towards person in the middle, and make branches

### **Person to Person**

Materials: None required, though music can help, such as in Musical Chairs

Players should pair up. One member of the pair stands in a small circle, facing outwards towards their partner in a larger circle facing inward.

The two circles turn to the right and start walking, chanting "person to person." The leader will call out a pairing of body parts (e.g. knee to elbow, or finger to top of head). Partners will have to touch those body parts. The last partner pair to do the pairing is out. Group leader must use discretion (avoid tongue to tongue or other inappropriate pairings)

## Succotash/Triple Threat/Fish Bowl

Materials: Pens and paper

Before play, players each submit 3-5 words or phrases for this game into a bowl or hat. They can be anything, though nouns are easiest to guess. Players split up into teams, and have one minute to correctly guess as many words as possible. After the team's minute is up, the bowl or hat is passed to the next team. The game is played in three rounds.

Round 1: played similar to "CatchPhrase." The team member may say anything other than "rhymes with...", "starts with...", or the word or phrase itself. Actions are permissible. After the words are exhausted, the timer is paused, all used words are put back into the bowl or hat, and round 2 begins. The player whose turn it is/was may resume his or her turn with the remaining time.

Round 2: played like Charades. Teams choose an actor to silently act out clues. No talking! Words have all been used once, so the teams can be aware of what words were used in the previous round.

Round 3: A single word clue is given. No actions, no changing the word. Words will be familiar by now.

## Choose Thy Option

Materials: None

There are three options:

**Buoy:** Players hold their arms down at their sides, hands flared out, slowly bobbing side to side.

**Dancer:** Players do a disco dance

**Ninja:** Players do some sweet ninja chops and kicks.

A leader will choose an option. All other players choose their own option. The leader turns his or her back to the other players and announces "CHOOSE...THY...OPTION!" and turns around revealing his or her option he or she chose. All players performing the same option as the leader join the leader's team. The team then collectively selects an option, continuing until one or few players are left.

## Pew Battleship

Materials: Pews in a sanctuary

There is one "guesser." You will also need a judge (usually the game's leader). Everyone else hides on or underneath the pews in your sanctuary. The guesser picks a position horizontally, then picks a row number. The judge goes to that row number, and calls out any player who was lying in or under that pew at the horizontal position the guesser was standing relative to the pew.

Variations: Give the guesser a limited number of guesses to speed the game along instead of playing until they get everyone out. Split up into two teams, and have two guessers - one for each team - trying to get people from the other team out. Give the guesser special guesses where they have a wider range to guess (e.g. the row they guessed plus the two neighboring front and back, or a wider range horizontally, like the entire pew). If your sanctuary has multiple seating sections. You could have two games going simultaneously, or even have two teams using different sections of the sanctuary.

## Group Poker

Materials: Playing cards (enough for each player to have one)

Great game for groups of any size! Deal out the cards, one to each person. The game leader calls out different poker hands (e.g. "Full house!"). Players find people to make that poker hand out of the playing cards they have. Groups sit and discuss a silly icebreaker question!

## Heads or Tails

Materials: Coin, or something that can give you a random "heads or tails" outcome

Great game for very large groups! Have everyone in the group choose either heads or tails by putting their hands on either their head, or their "tail" (backside). Flip the coin and announce the outcome. Everyone who chose incorrectly must sit down. Whittle down to one winner!

## Rock Paper Scissors Tag

Materials: A field or gym with two back lines, and a mid line. Cones or a rope work well for outside

Players are split in two teams. Each team picks rock, paper, or scissors. Teams come up to the middle line and say, "Rock, Paper, Scissors," then all players reveal what their team chose. The losing team must run back behind the line on their side while the winning team may tag any player from the losing team. Players tagged join the other team. It's sometimes good to limit one tag per player per round.

## Human Tic-Tac-Toe

Materials: 9 chairs in a 3x3 grid.

Divide the group into two even teams (Team X and Team O) and number off the members of each team. Leader calls a number, and the player from each team with that number run into the grid and grab a seat and put up their team letter using their arms. First to take their seat with their team letter wins and gets the square! First team to complete a tic-tac-toe wins!

## Team building

### **Ants on a Log**

Materials: A log, or piece of rope long enough for everyone to stand on.

All players stand on the log in a random order. Without falling off the log, they must move themselves around in particular orders (birthdate, alphabetically, by height, etc.). As an added challenge, make them unable to speak, or perhaps blindfold someone. If the group needs help, allow one person to walk freely off the log to help others balance.

### **Human knot**

Materials: None

Have a group of 5-10 stand in a circle. Like the Hokey Pokey, put your left hand in! Now, grab someone's left hand with your right hand! This helps everyone finish facing into the circle, so no one feels out of place facing backwards. Try to get the group's arms as tangled as possible. The group must now slowly start to untangle the knot without letting go of each other's hands.

### **Misc.**

#### **Vegetable Showdown**

Materials: None. Just creativity

This is a great way to pick a single winner from two final contestants. The two contestants stand back to back, and pace off 3 steps. A leader will count "1, 2, 3" as they pace off. On 3, each contestant turns to face the other, and the leader calls off a vegetable. Each contestant must impersonate that vegetable to the best of his or her ability. Winner determined by applause, or leader's choosing.

#### **Group split up technique/Fruit Bowl Upset**

Materials: None

We all have that one group of kids that is completely inseparable. When you typically split into groups, you tend to end up with some pretty predictable small groups. What about when you want to split them into people they don't know, quickly and easily? Kids work the system when counting off all the time. Try this:

For our example, we'll say we need 6 groups. Have kids break up into groups of 6. They will automatically pick people they already know. Embrace this!

List 6 different things - colors of the rainbow, different fruits, or my personal favorite: Lucky Charms marshmallows. Get creative! It can be whatever you want! Kids select one of these 6 items to be in group of 6.

Then, using the colors of the rainbow example, have all the Reds be one group, Orange another, and so on. You have just successfully split up your kids into groups they don't know, or at least didn't choose themselves!

Works especially well for two-team games like Capture the Flag. Everyone finds a partner, then the partner pairs make two single file lines, face each other, and step away from each other. Those are your two teams! No one can pretend to be on the other team, because someone used to be their partner and knows they're on the other team!

## Resources

The greatest resource is other youth ministers around you! Ask what games have worked well in other groups, or how they tweaked it to make it better!

-[Youth Ministry Great Games](#) - Silly YouTube videos that teach you how to play and lead games!

-[Ultimate Camp Resource](#)

-Les Christie book, "[Best-ever games.](#)"

-Discussion starter books: "[What if....](#)" "[Gimme Five....](#)" "[Unfinished Sentences.](#)" also by Les Christie

-[Youth Ministry Land](#) – Laser tag rental, etc.

### **Store-bought games/items**

#### [Scattergories cards](#)

Each card has a category. Pick a letter, and let the fun ensue. Leader shouts, "Give me a superhero that starts with 'B'!" The leader could also pick a certain group of people that can answer the question. "This one is only for the 5th graders!"

For large groups, split up into teams. Have each team give an answer to the category! Keep going around until one team can't come up with an answer.

#### [Spot It](#)

Nerdy but fun twist on the game: scan each individual card into your computer. Give each kid one card. Put one card up on a projector screen, and have kids race to hit a "buzzer" and say their match. Great for large groups! Up to 55 can play!

#### [Knobby Balls - Why you should use them!](#)

Let's not kid ourselves: dodgeball is a ton of fun. Playground balls can hurt, and Gator balls are expensive! And it's no fun to be the lone girl playing against boys on the baseball team. Knobby balls are common carnival prizes and are a great ball to use that levels the playing field! These balls twist and turn in the air the harder you throw them, and it is practically impossible to hurt someone with them. You can throw one as hard as you can point-blank into someone's face, and it won't hurt (still not recommended). And they're cheap!