

Play With Your Brain by Curt Hinson, PhD.

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Cross-Lateral Learning

Hand & Elbow; Elbow to knee; Nose & Ear; 1 & 2; 2 & 5; Finger & Thumb; Arm Up, Out & Down

Cooperative Shapes

Objective: Problem-solving; cooperation; creativity.

Equipment: Chinese jump ropes.

How to play: The children form groups of four or five. Each group receives a Chinese jump rope and stands inside of it with the rope pulled up around their waists. The teacher calls out different shapes (e.g., boat; tree; star; the letter R; circle; square; shark; the state of Texas; etc.) and the children attempt to turn their rope into the shape of the object called out.

Flash Tag

Objective: Math computation; cooperation; agility.

Equipment: None

How to play: The children form pairs and stand facing each other. Each child makes a fist and shakes it three times (palm facing down) with their partner. On the third shake each partner sticks out any number of fingers (1-5). The object is to add your number of fingers with your partner's number of fingers and call out the answer first. The person who correctly calls out the answer first wins and a one-on-one tag game begins with the winner trying to get away from the other player. The other player must catch and tag the winner to end the tag game. Players must walk during the tag game. The pair then starts over with a new math problem and a second tag game. After the second turn, each player raises his/her hand and looks for a new partner to play with.

Hand Off

Objective: Problem-solving; cooperation; creative thinking.

Equipment: Any object that can be handed back and forth between two people (e.g., lummi stick, beanbag, yarn ball, etc.)

How to play: The children form pairs. The pair stands facing each other with one partner holding the object. The children take turns handing the object back and forth to each other. The object is to hand the object back and forth as many times as possible in the allotted time without repeating any of the handing methods that was previously used. Encourage the players to be creative and come up with new ways to hand the object to their partner. The object cannot be tossed or thrown.

Math Toss

Objective: Tossing; catching; cooperation; thinking; problem-solving; communication; addition; subtraction; multiplication.

Equipment: One soft (foam) ball or bean bag for every two players.

How to play: The students form pairs. Each pair has a ball. The player with the ball calls out a number (i.e., 17) and tosses the ball to the other player. The player catches the ball and must call out a math problem that equals the number called (i.e., $14 + 3$; $10 + 7$; $20 - 3$; etc.). Once the problem is called out, the player with the ball calls out a new number and tosses the ball back. The object is to see how many problems can be correctly solved in a certain amount of time. No numbers can be duplicated.

Mirroring

Objective: Cross-lateral movements; cooperation.

Equipment: None

How to play: The children form pairs and stand facing each other. One partner is the leader and begins moving his/her arms and legs in slow motion. The other partner attempts to mirror the movements of the leader. After one minute, the partners switch roles.

Shark Tank

Objective: Listening/following directions; problem-solving; cooperation; communication.

Equipment: Blind folds (optional); 1 set of Poly Sharks; 1 set of Poly Stars; a variety of other equipment such as: hoops; beanbags; jump ropes; etc.

How to play: The equipment is spread out randomly around the area on the floor. The children form pairs. One partner is blindfolded (or closes eyes). The object is for the other player to give the blindfolded partner verbal instructions to move across the area (Shark Tank) without stepping on any of the objects. Players start with 3 "oxygen tanks." When an object on the floor is stepped on the players lose one oxygen tank. If a Shark is stepped on they lose all oxygen. If a player steps on a Poly Star they get one oxygen tank back. After they lose all three they must go back and begin again. The blindfolded player must keep both arms extended out in front to act as bumpers in case he/she gets too close to others. The player should walk slowly and only go where the partner instructs. After the player successfully crosses the area, the partners switch roles and attempt to cross back to where they began.

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Team Juggle

Objective: Tossing; catching; teamwork; problem-solving; group dynamics.

Equipment: Foam balls or other soft objects.

How to play: The children form groups of five and stand in a circle. Each group is given one ball to start. The group passes the ball around the circle in a "star" pattern, with each player always throwing to the same person. After the children have mastered one ball, another ball is added. The challenge is to see how many balls or objects each group can juggle at one time without dropping or missing the balls. To make it more challenging the group can juggle balls forwards, backwards, and while standing inside another group.

True or False

Objective: Chasing; fleeing; quick thinking; cooperation.

Equipment: Cones or markers.

How to play: Players are divided into two groups and stand (or sit on the floor) facing each other, approximately 1 foot apart. One group is designated to be the "true" team and the other group is the "false" team. A safety line is marked on the floor or ground approximately 15-20 feet behind each group. The teacher asks a question or gives a statement that is either true or false (e.g., the capitol of California is Sacramento). If the statement or question is true, the true team (gets up and) runs to their safety line while the false team attempts to tag them. If the statement was false, the roles of the teams are reversed. A player gets a point for tagging the other player or for making it across the line without being tagged. Each player keeps his/her own score. Switch partners often.

West African Jumping

Objective: Leg strength/endurance; problem-solving; cooperation.

Equipment: None

How to play: The children form pairs and stand facing each other. The players decide who the "same" winner is and who the "different" winner is. The game begins with the players jumping in place six times. On the sixth jump, both players randomly stick one foot forward when they land. If the feet match on the same side, the "same" player wins, if the feet are on opposite sides, the "different" player wins. The game continues with the players jumping six times again.