

Cooperative and Initiative Games

Diminishing Load

Objective: To move a group across an open field as quickly as possible

Procedure: Instruct the group that it is to get across an open field as quickly as possible. To get across, a person must be carried.

Rules:

- The first person must return to be carried across.
- If someone being carried touches the ground, both must return to be carried across.

Concepts: Problem solving, teamwork, cooperation, and trust

Reflection: You may wish to consider these questions as a starting point and then let the discussion go where the group takes it.

- How did the group decide to solve the problem?
- Did anyone become the leader?
- How did the leader emerge?
- What things did you have to think about before you started?
- How did you feel when things didn't go as well as you wanted?
- How did you deal with the feelings?

(Give the group the option to try the activity a second time.)

Materials: None

Minute Measure

Objective: To develop an awareness of the duration of a minute and to practice estimating time spans

Procedure: Ask the group members to find a comfortable spot and sit down. Explain that they are going to estimate three minutes. Have them close their eyes and keep them closed. They begin timing on a signal from the instructor. At the end of one minute, each should raise his hand with one finger up. At the end of two minutes, they should raise another finger. At the end of three minutes, they should open their eyes and put down their hand. Everyone should remain silent until everyone is finished.

Rules:

- Everyone keeps their eyes closed until they finish timing.
- Everyone remains silent until the end of the activity.

Concepts: Problem solving and self esteem

Reflection: You may wish to consider these questions as a starting point and then let the discussion go where the group takes it.

- How did you estimate the time?
- For those who finished first, how did you feel?
- What did you learn about yourself?
- Are there other ways we tell time?
- What are ways people use to estimate time?
- If you did it again, what would you do differently?
- Did you care if you were close or not?
- Did the time you spent waiting seem to take longer?
- Would you like to do this again to see if you could improve?

(Give the group the option to try the activity a second time.)

Materials: A watch with a second hand or a stopwatch

Weight Pull

Objective: To raise and lower a weight using a rope and pulley as often as possible in a given time

Procedure: A weight is attached to a rope running through a pulley or tackle. Each person in the group must hold the rope behind a set point and then raise and lower the weight as many times as possible in 2 minutes.

Rules:

- The weight may not be dropped from the top of the pulley.
- A safety area is drawn on the ground 6 feet around the weight and no one is allowed to enter it.

Concepts: Teamwork, cooperation, and leadership

Reflection: You may wish to consider these questions as a starting point and then let the discussion go where the group takes it.

- What was the purpose of this activity?
- Were you doing more or less work than you thought you should?
- Did the group arrange itself in any particular order?
- How was the group arranged?
- What was physically hard about this activity?

- What was mentally hard about this activity?
- How well did your group do?
- What could you do to improve?

(Give the group the option to try the activity a second time.)

Materials:

- A heavy weight (about 200 pounds)
- A pulley
- A strong, large-diameter rope
- A timer

Height Alignment

Objective: For the group members to align themselves according to height

Procedure: Instruct the group to blindfold themselves. When everyone is blindfolded, tell the group to arrange itself in a line according to height, without speaking.

Rules:

- No one may talk during the activity.
- Blindfolds must remain in place throughout the activity.

Variations: Align according to shoe size, waist measurement, etc.

Concepts: Communication, problem solving, and disability awareness

Reflection: You may wish to consider these questions as a starting point and then let the discussion go where the group takes it.

- What bothered you about not being able to speak?
- How did you communicate?
- Who became a leader?
- How did you decide to lead or follow?
- How did you know where to fit into the line?
- What did you learn from this activity?

(Give the group the option to try the activity a second time.)

Materials: Blindfolds

Order Out of Chaos

Objective: Develop nonverbal communication in carrying out a task

Procedure: The group is blindfolded. Each member is assigned a number. Once the numbers are given out, the members must line up in proper numerical order without talking.

Rules:

- No talking is allowed.
- Blindfolds should remain in place until the task is completed.

Variations: Line up by birth month, age, alphabetized list of objects, etc.

Reflection: You may wish to consider these questions as a starting point and let the discussion go where the group takes it.

- What do you think is the purpose of this activity?
- What ways did you see to solve the problem?
- How did you try to communicate this solution?
- What examples can you give of not understanding what someone was trying to say?
- How did you deal with any frustration?
- What kind of leadership came out of the group?

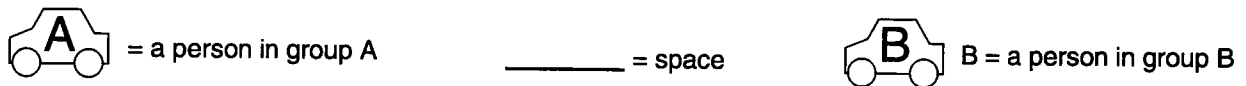
(Give the group the option to try the activity a second time.)

Materials: Blindfolds

Traffic Jam

Objective: To have two groups, of at least three people each, exchange places on a line of spaces

Procedure: Have the two groups line up facing each other on the spaces. There should be one more space than the number of participants and that space should be in the middle, separating the two groups:



The spaces should be one step apart.

The groups are now to switch positions on the line. The As should move to the right of the center space and the Bs should end up on the left of the center space. They must do this by following either of these procedures:

1. Stepping off to an adjacent empty square
2. Stepping around a person facing the opposite way to an empty space

Rules:

- Players cannot move backwards.
- Players may not step around someone facing in the same direction.
- Two players may not move at once.

Concepts: Leadership, decision making, and communication

Reflection: You may wish to consider these questions as a starting point and then let the discussion go where the group takes it.

- What was the purpose of this activity?
- Did a leader emerge and how did he lead?
- How well did the group do and why?
- If you disagreed with the group, how did you deal with it?
- What did you like about this activity?

(Be sure to give the group the option to try the activity a second time. It's a hard one!)

Materials: Space markers

All Aboard

Objective: For an entire group to stand on a two-foot by two-foot platform without having anyone touch the ground

Procedure: Everyone in the group must get off the ground and onto the platform. For groups of 10 to 15, a two-foot by two-foot platform is adequate. Use smaller or larger platforms accordingly. To be counted as on the platform, each participant must have both feet off the ground for 5 seconds.

Rules:

- Everyone must have both feet off the ground, simultaneously, for 5 to 10 seconds.

Concepts: Problem solving, teamwork, cooperation, and trust

Reflection: You may wish to consider these questions as a starting point and then let the discussion go where the group takes it.

- What was the purpose of this activity?
- Did it seem simple at first?
- How difficult was the activity?
- What made the activity go well or not?
- What things involved teamwork?
- Did everyone want to cooperate?
- What did you learn from this activity?
- How did you decide what to do?

(Give the group the option to try the activity a second time.)

Materials: Stable two-foot by two-foot platform

Bump

Objective: In teams of three, to throw, catch, and then transport a knotted towel 50 feet

Procedure: Break the group into sets of three. One person (the thrower) is 20 to 30 feet away from the other two, who are catchers. The thrower tosses the towel using a lofty throw to the pair. The catchers should stand facing each other about a foot apart. The catchers must trap the towel between their upper bodies without using their arms. This should be repeated until the towel is caught. The pair must then transport the towel 50 feet and drop it into a receptacle. If the towel is dropped, they must return and do the throw and catch again. The pair then returns (carrying the towel in their hands) and partners change roles. This is done until all three have thrown the towel.

Rules:

- The group may not use arms, hands, or shoulders.

Concepts: Teamwork, cooperation, trust, and self-esteem

Reflection: You may wish to consider these questions as a starting point and then let the discussion go where the group takes it.

- What did you think was the purpose of this activity?
- Which part was the easiest?
- Was it easier the second time you were a catcher?
- What were some good points of working with your partners?
- What were some problems of working with your partners?
- How did you deal with problems?
- What kind of feeling did you have during this activity?

(Give the group the option to try the activity a second time.)

Materials:

- Knotted towel
- Receptacle

Bowline Stroll

Objective: For the group, joined together, to travel over a course as quickly as possible

Procedure: Everyone in the group ties a bowline around their waist, making sure the rope is snug around their middle. Next, they tie the free ends of their ropes to one small loop of rope. Each person should be no more than one foot from the center loop. The group must then travel from point A to point B as quickly as possible.

Rules:

- Care must be given to proceed safely.
- No one may be dragged by the group.

Concepts: Communications, teamwork, and cooperation

Reflection: You may wish to consider these questions as a starting point and then let the discussion go where the group takes it.

- What did the group think the purpose of the activity was?
- How did the group decide the best way to move?
- Was anybody in the group a leader?
- How did you feel about that?
- What was the hardest part of the activity? Why?
- What was the best part of the activity?
- Can you think of specific examples of when the group cooperated in the activity?
- What did you learn from the activity?
- What did you learn about the others?
- If you were to do this again, how would you do it differently?

(Give the group the option to try the activity a second time.)

Materials:

- Enough rope for each Scout to have a 4½-foot section
- One 6-inch-diameter loop of rope

The Amazon

Objective: Using a plank, stick, pole, and rope, for the group to retrieve a container placed some distance from a simulated river bank

Procedure: The group must use the materials provided to retrieve the container. They may use the materials and themselves in any way they see fit. The group may not touch the ground beyond the “river bank.”

Rules:

- The group may use only the materials provided.
- If a participant touches the ground beyond the bank, the group must start over.

Concepts: Decision making, cooperation, problem solving, and teamwork

Reflection: You may wish to consider these questions as a starting point and then let the discussion go where the group takes it.

- What do you think the purpose of this activity was?
- How did the group decide to solve the problem?
- Were you satisfied with how decisions were made? Why or why not?
- What was the hardest part of completing the activity?
- What was the best part?
- Who assumed leadership?
- Did leadership shift as the activity progressed?
- Who made suggestions for completing the activity?
- Were all of the suggestions heard?
- Why were some suggestions ignored?
- What did you do during the activity?

Materials:

- 30-foot length of $\frac{1}{8}$ -inch rope or goldline
- A 2-foot by 2-foot or 2-foot by 8-foot plank at least 12 feet long
- A no. 10 can with bail handle
- A reaching pole at least 8 feet long

Monster

Objective: For the group to form a monster capable of moving and talking

Procedure: The group is instructed to join themselves together to make a monster. This monster travels

using both its hands and feet and it also makes its own sound before and after it moves. The group must form a monster that walks with one more leg than the number of members of the group and one arm less. (A group of five would form a monster with six legs and four arms to walk.) When the monster is created, have it make its noise and move 20 feet or so, stop, and make its noise again.

Concepts: Problem solving, decision making, and team work

Reflection: You may wish to consider these questions as a starting point and then let the discussion go where the group takes it.

- What was the purpose of this activity?
- What skills were developed by this activity?
- How did this process work for your group?
- What problems did the group have to deal with?
- How were they dealt with?
- How did you decide on the monster's call?
- What did you learn?

Materials: None

Human Ladder

Objective: For the group to form a human ladder for group members to cross

Procedure: Participants are paired off and given one hardwood dowel to form a ladder rung. Several pairs standing together form a ladder. The climber starts at one end and climbs onto the ladder, proceeding from one rung to the next. After the climber passes their rung, each pair moves to the front of the group, extending the ladder. Have the group move from one point to another 20 to 30 feet away. Repeat with all members being climbers.

Rules:

- The rungs must be no higher than the pair's shoulders.
- The rungs must not move while the climber is on the rung.

Variation: Travel around a set of obstacles

Concepts: Teamwork, trust, and cooperation

Reflection: You may wish to consider these questions as a starting point and then let the discussion go where the group takes it.

- What was the purpose of this activity?
- What skills were developed by this activity?

- What made the climber uncomfortable?
- What made the climber comfortable?
- How did you work with your partner?
- How did your trust increase or decrease as the activity went on?
- What responsibilities did you feel toward the group?
- What was the hardest about climbing?
- How did the group work as a whole?
- Are there times when one group member relies on the rest of the group in real life? When?

Materials: 5 to 10 hardwood dowels, 3 feet long and 1¼ inch in diameter

Hog Call

Objective: This is a good first-day game when Scouts do not know each other very well

Procedure: Ask each group member to pair up with someone they do not know very well. Give each pair time to talk and find out about the other person. Pairs are then asked to choose a matching set of words, e.g., salt-pepper, black-white, etc.

Split the pairs, asking each member to walk to opposite ends of a field. When in place, Scouts are instructed to put on blindfolds. On signal, they are to try to find their partner by shouting their matching words.

Leaders should protect individuals from running into each other or wandering off.

Rules:

- Keep your blindfold on until your partner is found.

Concepts: Communication and teamwork

Reflection: You may wish to consider these questions as a starting point and then let the discussion go where the group takes it.

- What do you think was the purpose of this game?
- What did you notice about the “noise volume” of the group at first? Did this change? Why?
- What skills were developed by this activity?
- How can these skills be applied to your Scouting activities?
- How can these skills be applied to life outside of Scouting?
- How did you and your partner decide on the pair of words you used?
- How did it feel to try to find someone with everyone shouting?
- How hard was this to do?

Materials: Blindfolds

Plutonium Portation

Objective: To move “hazardous plutonium” in a safe manner to a safe place

Procedure: Explain to the group that a paper cup of plutonium capable of killing 3.75 million people needs to be moved to a safe place without spilling. The moving must be done wearing protective garments (blindfolds) and using the transport device available. The transport device is a rubber band with four or six 3-foot strings that are attached to the main rubber band with smaller rubber bands.

Scouts are paired and one Scout in each pair is blindfolded. The non-blindfolded Scout leads his partner to a string. Then the entire group moves to the cup. Directed by their sighted partners, the Scouts slip the center rubber band over the cup by pulling their string to expand the band. Once the rubber band is securely around the cup (which is filled $\frac{3}{4}$ full with water), the group must pick up the cup and move it 20 feet without spilling it. Once the group has completed the task or failed, change roles.

Rules:

- All transport Scouts are blindfolded and only one person directs their action.
- No one blindfolded may speak during the exercise.

Reflection: You may wish to consider these questions as a starting point and then let the discussion go where the group takes it.

- Did you trust your partner?
- When you were blindfolded, what other senses did you depend on?
- What did you like best?
- What parts were frustrating?
- Was the communication clear?
- When something went wrong, whom did you want to blame?
- Were you able to work as a team and how did it feel?
- Are there any times in real life when something like this could happen?
- What did you learn?

Materials:

- Water
- Paper cups or foam cups
- Rubber bands and string

This initiative game can also be done using a tin can (up to no. 10). Use strips of inner-tube in place of rubber bands, and binders twine in place of string (see “Rubidium Relocation”).

The Great Centipede

Objective: To pass all members of the troop from one end to the other of a great centipede

Procedure: Line up the entire troop, including staff, in pairs. Each member of a pair faces the other and holds his hands out parallel to the ground. Each pair stands shoulder to shoulder with the next pair. The pairs form a continuous chain. The setup can be in a straight line or may curve. One member of the first pair is helped onto the supporting hands of the second pair. He lies on his back and is passed between each pair until he reaches the far end, where he becomes a member of a new pair. The process continues until each participant is passed along the centipede and emerges at the far end.

Rules: One senior staff member should spot at the front of the line and assist in helping the participant up to the first pair. Another senior staff member should spot at the far end and assist in unloading the participants. Instruct pairs to keep their hands parallel to the ground, to support the person during the body pass, and to make sure the person being passed is not dropped. Point out that an object of the game is to see how secure we can make each participant feel.

Spotters may be used along the line to ensure that the pairs stay together and that no unnecessary bouncing occurs. Participants "being passed" should be instructed to relax, to hold their body straight, and to be sure not to tuck. They should keep their hands folded over their stomach or across their chest.

Reflection: This is a great game to end a series of patrol initiatives and cooperative activities. It brings the whole troop together and it's a lot of fun. No reflection need be done.

Materials: None

A Note on Sources

Additional ideas for cooperative games and initiative problems may be found in the following:

Boy Scouts of America, *COPE Manual*

Andrew Fluegelman, editor, *The New Games Book*

Andrew Fluegelman, editor, *More New Games*

Karl Rohnke, *Cowstails and Cobras II*

Karl Rohnke, *Silver Bullets*

Karl Rohnke, *The Bottomless Bag*

Karl Rohnke, *The Bottomless Baggie*

Woods Wisdom, published by the Boy Scouts of America, is the best source of Scout skill events. And remember, almost any game or contest can become a cooperative event and a source of learning using reflection.