

New
Jersey **4-H**

Leader Training Series



Recreation/ Creative Play

When to Play

Goals for Play



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1990, revised 1994*

Recreation can be a highlight of your 4-H club meeting, depending on how you conduct it. Creative play is an opportunity for you and your club members to:

- have fun together
- be spontaneous
- expend energy.

Play may occur:

- at the beginning
- during the meeting
- or at the end

Remember, whatever the goal for playing, the main reason youth play games is **TO HAVE FUN!** So, be sure to put **FUN** in their **PLAY!**

Having a goal for play will help you, the teen leader, or the game committee know what kind of game to choose to play.

Is your goal:

- to burn off excess energy?
- to work on developmental skills?
(example: problem solving skills)
- to work on individual behavior skills?
(example: self-control; following directions.)
- to work on physical abilities?
(example: develop coordination)
- to work on basic motor skills?
(example: running, jumping, balance, etc. This goal will apply to almost any game you choose for the younger set, grades 1-3.)

Why Some Won't Play

FEAR of :

- not being selected for a team,
- being too uncoordinated to be valued by a partner or teammate, not understanding what to do, and/or
- being criticized or made fun of can cause some kids to hang back and make all kinds of excuses for not playing!

As a leader, you can overcome fears that discourage play by:

- selecting games that anyone **can** do.
- beginning with a game that is not too threatening.

Developing Play Skills

Learn how to lead games, and then practice.

- Learn-by-doing, take a workshop on leading games.
- Find and use a good reference for leading games. (Check with your county 4-H office for references for games and play. Your local library is also a good resource for books on play.)

When you're ready to start your role as game leader, begin with simple games.

- Beginnings often feel awkward.
- As you lead more games you will be more at ease and natural. Be aware that you and each 4-H'er bring a history of previous play experiences . . . some fun, some disappointing, and others devastating.



Play Hard, Play Fair, Nobody Hurt, Have Fun!

Keep your play on the positive side, focus on cooperation.

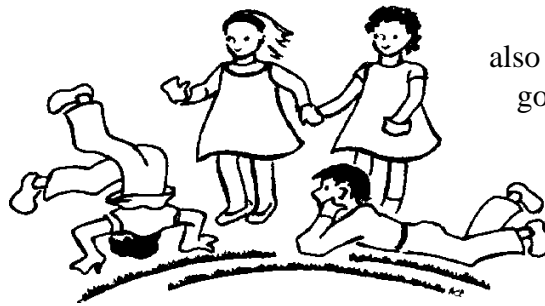
- Set the limits of acceptable behavior.
- Encourage team work.
- Avoid games that eliminate people.
- Redesign favorite games that eliminate people to include more and more people.

Cooperative Play

What is cooperative play anyway? Does it sound like it will be boring because everyone is nice? Actually it is not. It's full of high energy and quick change possibilities. The major difference

is the focus on common characteristics. For instance, games that group people by birthdays, hair color, clothing color, etc. focus on our connections. This opens the door for everyone to see more subtle connections as the group continues to do things together.

Golden Opportunity!



Cooperative play also provides you the golden opportunity to eliminate once and for all the self-esteem damaging process of choosing teams based on “skill level.”

When teams are formed by matching people with common characteristics “being chosen last” is eliminated.

Competition

So far we have talked about cooperative play and including more people rather than excluding people in our play. So, where does competition fit in? Is competition all bad?

Competition in itself is not a bad thing. What’s bad about competition is what people allow it to do to themselves and others. As George Leonard says, “There is nothing wrong with competition in the proper proportion. Like a little salt, it adds zest to the game and to life itself...” You, as the leader, have the opportunity to influence your members in a positive way about handling competition and developing cooperative skills.

Getting and Holding Their Attention

Before you can teach youth, you need to have their attention. Suggested techniques (from How to Play With Kids by M.S.P. Terrell):

- **Maintain active listening through eye contact.** Make sure you are the one facing the sun.
- **Creative Sound:** Use any mix of high, low, variable speed or intonation. Examples: horseracing banter, whistling, whispering, different accent.
- **Collaboration:** Make a deal with 2 or 3 youth. They will start laughing, clapping, snapping their fingers, or stomping their feet. Everyone’s attention will soon be on you.

Be Prepared!

Stop While You are Ahead

- **Rituals:** Teach mini-games to use later whenever you need everyone's attention. Example: Hand signal used in football for time out, "Freeze" (stop where you are!) "Islands" (nobody touching anyone else.) "Dead Ants" (everyone gets on their back with feet and hands in the air.)

Have all the necessary equipment ready for the games you plan to play. Know the directions for the game. Explain the directions clearly. To do this you need their attention. Refer to the section immediately before this one.

Stop the game while their enthusiasm is still high! Channel their enthusiasm to the next planned activity—another game, project activity, etc.

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