

Playground Games

Teaching Ideas



Playground Games

Cat and Mouse

A chasing game from China

Two children are chosen. One child becomes the cat (the chaser) and one becomes the mouse.

All the other children form a circle, holding hands, with the mouse inside and the cat outside.

The children holding hands walk in a circle, saying this rhyme:

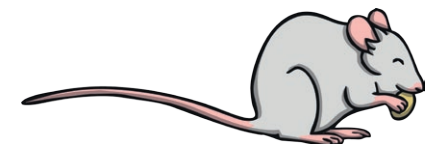
“What time is it?”

“Just struck nine.”

“Is the cat at home?”

“He’s about to dine.”

When the rhyme is finished, the children stop moving and the cat starts to chase the mouse. The mouse is allowed to move in and out of the circle but the cat must stay outside it. The mouse must keep moving and cannot stay inside the circle for more than 10 seconds at a time. If the cat catches the mouse, the mouse becomes the new cat.



Catch the Dragon's Tail

A playground game from China

The children stand in a line with their hands on the shoulders of the child in front.

The first in line is the dragon's head and the last in line is the dragon's tail.

The dragon's head then tries to catch the tail by manoeuvring the line around so that he can tag the last player.

The players in the middle do their best to stop the dragon's head from catching the tail, without letting the line break.

When the head catches the tail, the tail player takes the front position and becomes the new dragon's head.

All the other players move back one position.



What's the Time, Mr Wolf?

A traditional game

One player is chosen to be Mr Wolf.

The other players stand in a line on the opposite end of the playground. This line is referred to as 'home'.

Mr Wolf stands with his/her back to them. The players chant, "What's the time, Mr Wolf?"

Mr Wolf replies with different 'o'clock' times, indicating the number of steps forward the players are allowed to travel. For example, if Mr Wolf says "four o'clock", the players must walk forward four steps.

The game carries on until Mr Wolf thinks the players are getting close enough to catch. When this happens, Mr Wolf replies, "Dinner time!" S/he then turns and chases the players.

The first child that Mr Wolf catches before they reach the 'home' line, becomes Mr Wolf. If Mr Wolf does not catch anyone, s/he has to be Mr Wolf again.

If a player reaches Mr Wolf before dinner time, they tap Mr Wolf on the shoulder and run for home. If Mr Wolf catches them, they have to take his/her place.

Duck, Duck, Goose

A traditional playground game

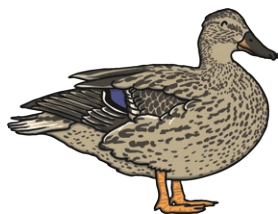
The children sit or stand in a circle, facing inwards.

One child is chosen to be 'it' first.

The child who is 'it' walks around the outside of the circle, tapping each child on the shoulder, saying "duck" each time.

When the child who is 'it' chooses another child to name "goose", the goose must chase the first child around the circle, trying to catch them before they can get to the goose's place.

If s/he catches them, they may now have a turn at being 'it'.



Name Chase

Similar to Duck, Duck, Goose

This playtime game is helpful when learning names or introducing new children to the class.

The children sit around in a circle, facing inwards. One child is chosen to be 'it' first.

The child who is 'it' stands up and walks around the outside of the circle, tapping each child on the head and saying their name, with prompting if necessary.

When they choose, they will tap a child on the head and say the name chosen by the group instead (the class name, or another chosen word – this could be something silly like 'banana').

The chosen child must now jump up and chase the first child around the circle, trying to tag them before they can sit down in their place.

If they succeed, they may have a turn at being 'it'.

Freeze

One child is chosen to be 'it'.

Whenever they catch another child, that child must remain frozen in place, with their feet wide apart.

The frozen player can only be 'unfrozen' if another child crawls between his/her legs!

The last player to be frozen is 'it' for the next round.

Simon Says

A traditional playground game.

One person is Simon and starts by saying, "Simon says..." followed by an action.

Everyone then copies the action.

If Simon gives an instruction without saying "Simon says" beforehand, anyone who does that action is out.

The last person still playing becomes Simon for the next round.

Red Light, Green Light

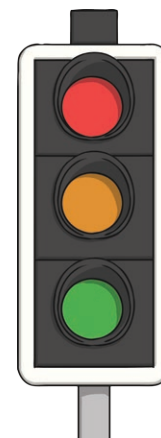
One person stands at one end of the playground. They are the traffic light. The rest of the players are at the other end of the playground.

When the traffic light faces the group, s/he says, "Red light!" and everyone must freeze.

The traffic light then turns his or her back and says, "Green light!" while the group tries to get as close to the traffic light as possible.

The traffic light turns around quickly, again saying, "Red light!" and if anyone is spotted moving, they have to go back to the starting place.

The first person to tag the traffic light wins and gets to be the next traffic light.



Shadow Tag

A playtime game for a sunny day.

This is a variation on the traditional game of 'Tag'.

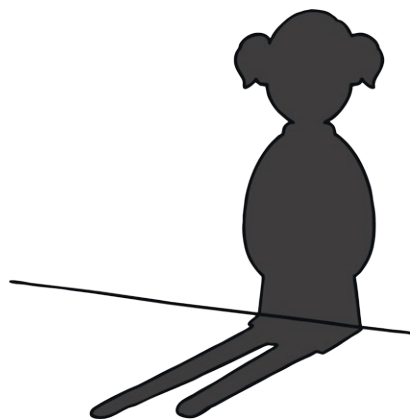
Children tag each other's shadow with their feet instead of tagging their body.

Freeze Tag

This is a variation on the traditional game of 'Tag'.

If the person who is 'on' tags you, you have to freeze where you are.

Another player can tag you to unfreeze you.



Crocodile, Crocodile, May We Cross Your Golden River?

One player is named the crocodile and stands in the middle of the playground.

The other players stand behind a line, in a row about ten metres away from the crocodile.

A designated 'home' area is agreed, usually the opposite end of the play area.

The players call out, "Crocodile, crocodile, may we cross your golden river?" The crocodile replies, "Not unless you have the colour... on."

Those players lucky enough to have that colour on may cross the playground safely to the designated home area.

The crocodile then counts to ten and when they reach ten, the other players must walk or run 'home' whilst the crocodile tries to catch them.

Anyone who is caught, helps the crocodile to choose what colour the players should be wearing next to be able to cross the river.

The game continues with a different colour each time until the last player is caught and s/he becomes the crocodile.

Fish in the Sea

The children stand in a circle, facing inwards.

Allocate the names of fish to the children, such as cod, sardines, tuna and salmon.

One player is chosen to be the fisherman. This person is the caller and stands in the middle of the circle.

The fisherman calls out the name of a fish. When they hear their fish, those children move around the outside of the circle in a clockwise direction until they reach their places again.

To extend the game, give children further directions on how to move.

Tide turns – change direction

High tide – move quickly

Low tide – move slowly

Fisherman about – crouch down low to avoid the nets

Coral reef – jump

The last person back to their place becomes the fisherman.

Jumping Beans

The children begin by moving around the space.

When they are given various commands, they should carry out the matching action.

Jumping bean – jump

Runner bean – run around the room or (for younger children), run on the spot

Broad bean – stretch arms and legs as wide as you can and walk with large strides

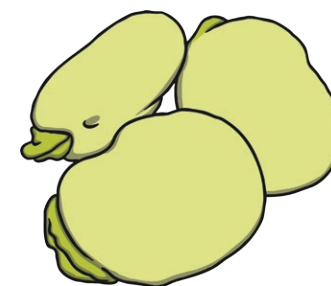
Baked bean – lie on the floor in a star shape

Jelly bean – wobble like jelly

Chilli bean – shiver as though you are cold

Frozen bean – stand very still

Challenge children to think of their own 'bean' related actions to match, for example, magic bean, baked beans on toast, beanstalk.



Hopscotch

Using chalk, make a hopscotch grid.

Number the squares from one to nine.

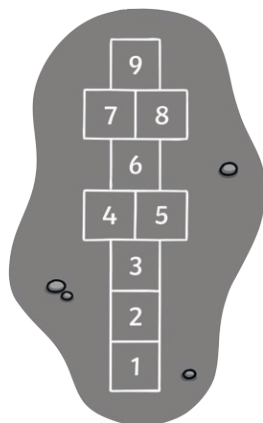
Using a beanbag or small pebble, aim to throw the marker onto square 1.

Hop over the marker then hop alternating single and both feet all the way to square 9.

Turn around and hop back.

Continue this pattern with square 2, square 3, etc.

If you throw your marker and miss the correct square, your turn is over.



Noughts and Crosses

Draw a simple grid onto the playground.

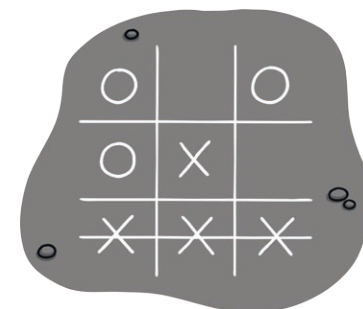
Two people can play on each grid.

Each player should be either noughts (O) or crosses (X).

The player with the X starts the game by drawing X in a square.

The player with O follows.

Both players take it in turns to place their X or O in the grid, aiming to get a winning line of three in a horizontal, vertical or diagonal row.

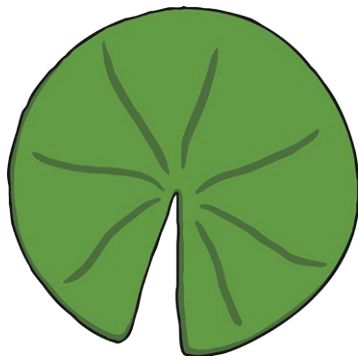


Lily Pad Jump

Draw lots of lily pads on the playground, with varied distances between them.

Challenge the children to be frogs, jumping from one lily pad to another without touching the playground.

Give children the chalk and encourage them to create their own lily pad trails.



Walk the Line

In pairs or small groups, one child draws a continuous chalk line on the playground.

A second child has to follow the chalk line by walking or running along it without stepping off.

Encourage children to make circles and loops with their chalk to make it more challenging for their friends.

Funny Faces

Draw oval shapes on the playground and ask the children to fill in the face shapes with details such as eyes, noses, mouths, adding hair and accessories such as glasses or hats.

Can children draw a portrait of each other?

Beanbag Races

Put the children into two teams.

Each team should be in a line.

The child at the front of each row has a beanbag.

The challenge is to race to pass the beanbag from the front to the back of the line, and back again.

The children should pass the beanbag in a different style each time. For example:

- Passing the beanbag with right or left hand only.
- Passing the beanbag over the shoulder.
- Passing the beanbag through the legs.
- Passing the beanbag by balancing it on the head of the person next to them.

Challenge the children to think of their own ways of passing the beanbag.

If a beanbag is dropped, the children start again from the front of the row.

The Keeper of the Treasure

Use a beanbag as treasure.

Children sit in a circle, facing inwards.

One child is the keeper of the treasure and sits in the centre of the circle, wearing a blindfold.

Another child is chosen to steal the treasure.

The second child creeps up to the keeper of the treasure and tries to steal it.

The keeper may try to catch them by listening to where they are and pointing at them.

If the keeper points at the robber then they are out.

If the robber steals the treasure then they have a turn at being the keeper of the treasure.



Queelio Cockio

A traditional Scottish game

One child is chosen to be 'Queelio'.

Queelio has a beanbag in his hand and stands with his/her back to the other players who stand on the other side of the playground.

Queelio throws the beanbag over his/her shoulder. One of the other children catches it or picks it up and hides in behind their back.

All of the other children, except Queelio, put their hands behind their backs so that Queelio doesn't know who has the beanbag.

Queelio turns around. The other children chant, 'Queelio Cockio, who's got the beanbag?'

Queelio has to guess who has the beanbag. If the guess is correct, s/he has another turn as Queelio. If s/he is wrong, the player who was hiding the beanbag becomes Queelio.