

Summer's Ball Game

Goal: To energize the group. Promote communication. Promote Creative Problem Solving, Adaptability, and Fun!

Rationale: By setting a challenge the group will learn to try different strategies, adapt their plans, advocate for and communicate their ideas, and feel a sense of accomplishment when they reach their goal. These are all essential skills for healthy youth development.

For the Youth Developer leading the activity it is an opportunity to observe what role different members of the group take on, their levels of individual participation, and communication styles. Once the Youth Developer has gained a sense of those s/he can plan accordingly to ensure maximum inclusion at the comfort level of each individual youth in all program activities.

Outcomes: Teambuilding. Communication. Energy and Physical Activity. Cooperation. Problem-Solving. Fun!

Materials: Open space. 5-inch+/- diameter, light-weight, bouncy ball.

Number of Participants: 5 – 35 (If group is very large it can be split into smaller groups.) Leader can either choose to participate with the group or to observe and encourage from outside depending on personal goals and established relationship with the group.

Notes for Activity Leader: Encouragement of participation and engagement are crucial to the success of this activity. Try to refrain from making suggestions. Be a cheerleader!

Instructions: Take group to open space where they can spread out. See script.

Script:

"The initial object of this activity is for the team to keep the ball in the air, like this."
(Tap the ball up in the air like a volley ball or a ping pong ball using your hands as the paddle.) "You can arrange yourselves however you think will help you accomplish that goal most effectively. Make sure to keep track of how many touches we get in before the ball hits the ground. Does that make sense?" *(Pause for questions.)* "How would you like to stand?" "How many touches would you like to try for on your first try?" *(Pause for discussion. Leader should allow the group to come up with their strategy on their own.)* "Are you ready?"

Have the group make their first attempt.

After first attempt congratulate the group. Ask the group "How did that go? What worked?"

Have them make any adjustments and try again. If it seems like some members are dominating the activity introduce a twist;

1. No one can touch the ball more than twice in a row.

Have the group try again. Ask questions again. If they have mastered the task add another challenge;

2. Everyone must touch the ball once.

Try again. Ask questions again. If they have mastered the task ask them to set another goal of how many times they would like to tap the ball.

Allow them as many tries as you like and as time allows to meet that goal. Remembering to leave time for the Debrief.

Debrief: Ask the group what they thought/how they feel about the activity. Was it harder or easier than they thought it would be? What worked and what didn't work? What kinds of things might they try if we did it again?

(Optional questions: What role did you take in the activity?

Why do you think we did this activity? How might it be helpful in helping us work together? What did we learn?)

Adaptations for Special Circumstances and Additional Rules and Challenges:

Extra Rules:

1. No person can touch the ball more than once in a row.
2. You must call out the name of the person you are tapping it to.
3. You must keep one foot stationary.
4. You may only use your left hand.

If There Are Physical Limitations:

1. Use a bigger, lighter ball, such as a beach ball or even a balloon.
2. When one or more members of a group have physical limitations, developmental disabilities, or are reluctant to participate introduce the rule that everyone has to touch the ball at least once *first*. Allow the group to discuss how they are going to accomplish that goal before making any suggestions. Make sure to emphasize importance of full group participation. Often the person or people with limitations can be the person to throw the ball up first fulfilling that requirement.

If There Are Spatial Limitations: If you only have an office you can do the activity sitting in chairs. They can adjust their chair in different configurations to accomplish their goal.

Personal Note: I like to use this activity on an ongoing basis throughout the course of a program. Groups can build on their previous records. If there are multiple sites/groups they can compete with each other. Awards can be given out for the highest number of hits, most creative strategy, and highest level of whole group participation.

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are not getting the activity introduced a word
1. No one can touch the ball more than once in a row.

Give the group a signal. Ask questions again. If they have mastered the task add
a new challenge.
2. No one can touch the ball more

3. Again. Ask questions again. If they have mastered the task ask them to do another
kind of task many times they would like to tap the ball.
Allow them as many tries as you like and as time allows to meet that goal. Be ready to
to let a time for the Debrief.

Debrief: Ask the group what they thought how they feel about the activity. Was it hard
to learn than they thought it would be? What worked and what didn't work? What
kind of things might they try if we did it again?
(Optional questions) What roles did you take in the activity?
What do you think we did this activity? How might it be helpful in helping in work
together? (What did we learn?)

Adaptations for Special Circumstances and Additional Rules and Challenges

1. No person can touch the ball more than once in a row.
2. You must call out the name of the person you are tapping it to.
3. You must keep one foot stationary.
4. You may only use your left hand.

Physical Limitations

1. Use a lighter ball, such as a beach ball or even a balloon.
2. When one and more members of a group have physical limitations, for example,
disabled, or are reluctant to participate introduce the rule that everyone has to touch the
ball at least once. Allow the group to discuss how they are going to do this. That
goal is to make any suggestions. Make sure to emphasize importance of full group
participation. Often the person or people with limitations can be the person to blow the
ball up first fulfilling that requirement.

3. Use a small ball. If you only have an office you can do the same in a small
space. They can adjust their chair in office or configure one to accommodate their goal.

Personal notes: Take to use this activity on an ongoing basis throughout the course of a
program. We can build on their previous records. If there are multiple suggestions
the can compare with each other. Words can be given out for the highest number of
but a more creative strategy and higher level of whole group participation.