

Community Building in a Summer Program

These games can take anywhere from two minutes to two hours depending on your group's needs. We start with transition games that you can play while walking between locations or riding on a bus that require no supplies or setup and very little instruction. Next are waiting games that are best for a stationary group but require no materials. Finally, we have games and activities that require advanced planning and materials, as well as long-running games that you could play over the course of the program. You might find ways to adapt the games to be shorter or longer to suit your needs, and we encourage you to add comments to the documents explaining how you have or would play the games.

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I. Transition Games

A. Walking Between Locations

■ Trivia

Rather than a formal trivia game, give a “lightning round” to your students. Base your questions on your own knowledge (current events, your college’s history, pop culture). Whoever answers the most questions correctly is the new trivia master and must do the same.

■ Would you rather?

Get conversations started among students with thought provoking questions about what they would rather do or have. One good online repository of “would you rather” questions:

<https://conversationstartersworld.com/would-you-rather-questions/>

■ Rhyming Riddle

Choose two unrelated words that rhyme with each other (i.e. “fish dish”, “bread head”, or “smelly deli”). Then give a one-word synonym for each of the words (“angle plate,” “money brain,” or “odorous bodega” for the examples given). Let the group take their time thinking up the rhyming pair and sharing their ideas. As your group gets better try making three word rhymes or offering more difficult synonyms.

■ Hello

Have one student walk a few feet ahead of the group so they can’t see anyone. Choose one person in the group to shout “hello” (or any other short word or phrase) trying to mask their voice. The student walking ahead tries to guess whose voice they heard.

■ French Toast

Like twenty-questions, the object is to guess a word one person is thinking of. The word does not need to only be a “person, place or thing” but can be

literally any one word. Also, rather than asking yes or no questions, guessers are asking which of two words the keyword is closer to. *The first question must begin* “is it closer to french toast or...(insert word)?” Whichever option the person chooses becomes the new point of comparison. For example: “Is it closer to French toast or a cow?” (a cow) “Is it closer to a cow or a human?” (a human) “Is it closer to a human or a philosopher?” (a philosopher) “is it closer to a philosopher or Aristotle?” (it’s Aristotle!) It usually takes many, many more guesses than that.

B. Games for the bus

■ **Sing down**

Split the bus down the aisle and give the two teams one word (i.e. “money” “rain” “free” “sunshine” “night” “party”) have each group come up with as many songs that use that word as they can. After a given time, have groups taking turns singing the part of the song with that word. Award one point for each song.

■ **Newly-friend Game**

Select one person to be the new friend each round, and ask that person one question at a time (i.e. favorite book, street name, number of siblings). After each question, give the “new friend” a chance to write down or type their answer into their phone before letting the group guess how they think the new friend answered. Keep playing until the group gets 5 answers right and then switch out the new friend. Be aware of: asking questions that may be too personal for a student to share. If you’re worried about this, consider having the “new friend” come up with their own questions

■ **Count off**

Have everyone close their eyes and try counting to 20 as a group (or reciting the alphabet) one at a time. If any two people say the same number they have to start from the beginning.

- **Mind Meld**

Students need a partner here, so this works best if they are sitting next to someone. Have students pair off. Each student thinks of a simple word and on the count of three the two partners share their words simultaneously. They then have to the count of three to think of a word that is “in between” the two stated words. For example, if one partner said “foot” and the other said “baseball” a middle word might be “soccer,” “football,” or even “cleat”. The pair keeps repeating the process until they state the same word. Whichever partner gets there first wins and should share their progression with the group.

- **Categories**

One person comes up with a category (i.e. fruits, states, rivers, car models, pastas) and each person takes their turn listing something from that category. If a person takes too long on their turn or repeats something that is already said they are “out” and the game continues until one person is left standing.

- **List it**

For a less competitive version of this game come up with a limited category for the students to list together. Without looking at their phones, can the full group list all the states in the country? All the state capitals? All the presidents? All the academy award winners of the last 10 years? All the Disney movies in order? All the counties in your state?

II. Waiting Games (No Supplies)

A. Shorter games

- **Ultimate Ninja**

Students start in a close circle and on the count of three shout “Ultimate Ninja!” and jump back. Now, rotating clockwise, each player has a chance to make one smooth move. When it is not their turn they must be frozen.

Their goal is to slap the hand of another player without getting their own hand slapped. Players lose by moving out of turn or getting their hands slapped. Be aware: This should not be played by people who do not want to be touched.

- **Balance**

Two people stand facing each other with their feet together and facing forward. They place their hands up to meet like patty-cake. The competitors take turns pushing each other's hands to make the other person lose balance. You may warn your students that creativity usually outweighs strength in this game (it's a good game to play when reading Hobbes!). Be aware: This game is not designed to be violent and can be successfully played by partners of any size. Students should only be touching each others' hands here, but be aware that some students may be uncomfortable with even that level of touch.

- **Eyes Up**

Stand in a circle with your eyes down at your feet. When the leader says "Eyes Up" everyone lifts their head and looks directly at another person in the circle. If any two people are making eye contact they are "out"--they remove themselves from the circle and the game continues with the remaining players. This is also a great game for splitting groups up into pairs for further activities.

- **My Dear Friend**

Everyone stands in a circle, with one person in the middle. They pick a person to stand in front of and say "my dear friend if you like me, please smile." The target has to try not smiling as they say "I'm sorry my dear friend I just don't like you." If the person smiles, they switch positions and become the person in the center. The center person can do anything except touch their target to get them to smile. You could also do this as a transition game while walking.

B. Longer games

■ Copycat

Everyone stands in a circle, one student who is “it” must leave the circle. One person is chosen to lead the group in a dance move (music would help here even just from a phone). “It” returns to the center of the circle as everyone is doing the same dance move. Every thirty seconds or so the leader should change up the move and everyone should copy. “It” needs to guess who the leader of the pack is.

■ The Wind Blows

Students sit in a circle with one standing in the middle. Those on the outside take off their shoes or leave some other marker on the ground to claim their spot. The student in the middle says “the wind blows for those who...” and picks a characteristic that applies to that individual. For example “the wind blows for only children” or “the wind blows for left-handed people.” Everyone who fits in that description must get up and find a new spot (marked by shoes or other personal objects), including the person in the middle. This will leave one person left out--they now stand in the center and come up with a new description for “the wind blows.”

■ Mafia

There are countless variations for playing this game, but here’s one that works well with teens. Have all students sit in a circle with eyes closed. The leader walks around and selects 1 “sheriff” by giving a student one tap on the head and 2 “mafia” by giving students two taps on the head (you can add more of each for much larger groups). Each round begins by you asking the sheriff to wake up and make a silent guess as to who is the mafia by pointing. The leader nods or shakes their head and the sheriff returns to sleep. Then the leader invites the mafia to wake up, and asks them to select someone to kill by silently pointing to one individual. They

return to sleep and the whole village wakes up. The leader announces that night's murder and the whole village must come to a consensus on who they think is a mafia member. The sheriff may announce themselves and their intel or may keep their identity quiet to protect themselves. Whoever the village decides is killed off, and then reveals their role. Everyone goes to sleep and the cycle repeats. The game ends when either the village has killed off all the mafia or the mafia has killed every villager.

- **The Mostest Game**

Divide your group into two or more teams with a panel of judges at the front of the room. For each round the judges will name a category and each team will send one representative to compete. The judges declare one winner per round and keep a running score. The fun comes from the silliness of the categories, such as: most flexible, smelliest feet, most annoying sound, funniest joke, best impression of X, most interesting fact, best dance move, most pushups in 1 minute

III. Activities for the dorm (Supplies mostly necessary)

- **Baking club**

With a few dollars invested on cheap baking pans, flour, sugar, and butter your residential staff can organize this easy activity in the dorm. Make it a competition by splitting into teams to make the same recipe with staff as judges. Take a cue from the Great British Baking Show by having students try to a “technical challenge”: try to bake something with only an incomplete recipe. Be aware of: student allergies.

- **Fashion show**

Use the hallway as your runway, pump some music and have students strut in their coolest or funniest gear. Make it a competition by dividing into teams and giving groups 10 minutes to dress their chosen model according to a specific theme or to match a character in a movie, TV show,

or book. Be aware of: students choosing themes or characters that are inappropriate or offensive.

■ **Talent Show**

This does not have to be a big formal event. Have students sign up and show off their cool or quirky talents over a dinner pizza party or before curfew.

■ **Sardines**

This is reverse hide-and-seek. Determine your boundaries and then choose one person to hide. Everyone else waits a minute or two with eyes closed and then roams the hall to find that person. When they do, they need to hide with that person, so that in the end you may have five people trying to hide under one bed before the last person finds them. Be aware of: respecting students' bodily autonomy and personal space and not letting the game disrupt other groups in the dorm.

■ **Trivia Night**

Have the students share in the responsibility of organizing this classic group game by having each student submit one question and its correct answer to the "trivia master" at the start of the game. Ask staff to add to the stack of questions or edit some of them for clarity. Trivia is most fun when there are questions on a mix of topics with varied levels of difficulty. Split students into small teams of about 5 students each, giving each group a piece of paper and a pen. The trivia master should ask a series of questions and then collect the responses (either broken up into rounds or all at once). Announce the correct answers and give prizes for the winning team.

For trivia question ideas:

- Music Round: Play short clips of music from a computer or phone and having students write down the artist they hear. As a bonus, pick songs that are related by some theme and give extra points to

the team that can identify the team (i.e. songs about work, covers of original songs)

- “This day in history”: Check www.onthisday.com and develop questions related to events that occurred on this day in history. For example “On April 2, 1917 which president asked Congress to declare war on Germany?” or “On April 2, 1513 Explorer Ponce de Leon claimed which current U.S. state for Spain?”
- Movie Quotes: Search online for some of the most famous. Give bonus points for the movie and the name of the character speaking.
- College trivia: use your own staff’s knowledge for developing some questions about your school
- If you lack materials: With smartphones: have students text in their question submissions to a central phone number (or skip this entirely). Create a separate google doc for each team to type in their answers.
- Without any material: instead of asking several questions in a single round and having students submit their answers via paper or on google docs ask questions one at a time and the first team to answer correctly wins. To make this slightly less crazy, give each team an object (a hat, shoe, bandana, shirt) that they raise when they’re ready to answer.

IV. Long-term games, and other community activities

A. Riddles, puzzles, and challenges

■ Riddle of the Day

At the end of class write a “riddle of the day” on the blackboard so students might discuss it over lunch or the rest of the day. Give a prize to the student who can solve it first. Countless online lists of riddles can help you find ones you like.

- **Rule Puzzles**

These riddles each have a rule that dictates when a statement is correct or incorrect. The leader starts by sharing a statement that is correct and eventually asks students to try giving correct statements. If students guess correctly several times they have probably figured out the rule (but they shouldn't share it out loud). Keep playing until every interested student has figured it out. This can be played over several days.

- **Jack and Jill**

Examples: Jack likes bananas and Jill likes apples; Jack like shoes and Jill likes feet; Jack likes Alabama and Jill likes Mississippi; Jack likes things cold and Jill likes things cool. (Rule: Jill likes words with double letters and Jack likes words without double letters)

- **Umbrella**

Example: "I'm going to college and I'm bringing...ummm....shower shoes!" (Rule: "I'm going to college and I'm bringing" must be followed with "um" to be correct, anything they want to bring is fine as long as they say "um")

- **Picnic**

Example: "I'm going on a picnic and I'm bringing apples" The leader can pick any secret rule they would like and each participant has to share what they would bring. The leader says "yes you can come" or "no you can not come" based on whether their item matches the secret rule. You can make the rule simple (objects must fit in a pocket) or highly challenging (each person's object must start with the last letter of the previous person's object).

- **SAT Word of the Day**

Pick an SAT word and challenge students to use it in natural conversation before lunch or during a specific activity. Give a prize for the student who had the best use of the word.

B. On-going activities

- **Theme days**

Have students come to class one day wearing their high school colors, paraphernalia for their favorite colleges or sports teams, or dressed as a historical figure. Have the students come up with the themes they like and be careful to outline what is or is not appropriate for wearing to class.

- **Hot Potato**

Come up with a small(ish) object that is the “hot potato” of the class. Over the course of the summer whoever finds the hot potato in their bag has to get rid of it by sneaking it into someone else’s bag. If they’re caught holding it or in the act of transferring it they face some kind of punishment (i.e. writing an ode to the hot potato, doing a funny dance). Be aware: make sure no one is forced to play who doesn’t want others going in their bags or would be too embarrassed to do the “punishment.” If it seems like it’s getting too distracting or ruthless, pull the plug!

- **Scholar Award**

A positive alternative to the hot potato is the scholar award. Pick some object to be the “scholar award” for your class--the funnier and more obscure the object the better. Have the TAs pick the first person to win and present the award at the end of the day. From there, have the awardee give it to the next person each day. Come up with a short statement about why the new person has earned the prize, highlighting values that your group admires (i.e. this person asked a lot of great questions when they

didn't understand something, this person helped me edit my paper, this person was really focused during the reading period).

■ **Assassin**

This is a super popular game for college students and high school seniors, but the hassle of monitoring the game's safety and keeping it out of the classroom may not be worth it. If you have a weekend with the kids on campus though it could be a lot of fun. To play, give each participating student a piece of paper with their "target" on it. They have until a set time to kill their target without getting killed first. When an assassin kills a person they inherit that person's target. Keep playing until there is only one player remaining. This game can last hours, days, or weeks depending on the students' strategies and pace of the game. In all scenarios the leader of the game needs to establish clear guidelines for the following:

- **Objectives:** First, make sure the participants know this game is about being sneaky, patient, and clever, not about using blunt force (perhaps make a connection to Hobbes?). The less anyone sees of the game, the better it is being played.
- **Weapons:** The methods of killing should reflect your group's values. While water guns and nerf guns were once the go-to weapons for this game, you can absolutely play this without any toy that resembles a gun. Some fake weapons used by groups on college campuses:
 - **Knives** (most popular): Rolled up newspapers, plastic spoons, popsicle sticks (hit only at a target's torso)
 - **Grenades:** water balloons (only outside, not when person is carrying laptops)
 - **Attack animals:** stuffed animals thrown at a target's torso
 - **Bombs:** setting off a target's phone alarm
 - **Poison:** non-permanent marker used to make an X on a person's limbs

- **Safe spaces:** Make a list of “off-limits” areas that include classrooms and bathrooms, or may even limit the game to only outdoor spaces on campus.
- **Safe times:** Participation during class and other academic activities should obviously be off-limits, but you might also establish a “time-out” each day so players can have a break
- **Other rules:** Students can get carried away so be clear about all rules. No damaging personal or campus property, no littering (i.e. pick up water balloon pieces), nothing that risks actually hurting someone.