

# Games

## Some reasons for games:

1. Games keep people occupied, but this should not be the only goal of games
2. People of all ages find games fun to play (you need different games for different ages). It is all right to play games just for fun. If campers have a good time they are more likely to come back and to ask a friend. Campers may never come to another ESA camp or church activity but they will associate the gospel with fun and having a good time. If later they need the Church, some Christian counselling, or be seeking answers they will have good memories of the times they had previously with the things of God and be more likely to get actively involved.
3. To build up team work and unite the group.
4. Introduce new people
5. Introduce new ideas
6. Give leaders a chance to use and develop leadership skills.
7. Build up relationships with campers. Having built up friendly relations with campers in game/recreation times they will be more likely to talk to you, the leader, about issues in their life and listen to what you have to say.
8. Most importantly to teach Biblical truths. This can be done by linking the studies/devotion to a particular aspect of a game eg using a boat race game or a storm game or a trust game, then talking about Jesus walking on the water. Or poison ball then a talk on sin. The limitation of this is only our imagination. This is a great way of teaching, because the campers have participated in part of the learning and may have experienced some emotions and gained understanding which makes the studies/devotion more powerful for them.

## What types of games are there?

Team building, Trust, Fun, Problem solving, Wide, Indoor, Outdoor, Physically active, Artistic, Loud, Quiet, Ice breaker etc. The list is huge and games can have various elements, for example an active, trust, team building game.

## Goals

It is good to set some goals for what you want to get out of a particular game eg a fun game or a team building game. You should let other leaders know where you are going with a game so they can help you get the most out of every game. If you set goals you can assess how it went so that you can improve next time.

## Running games

1. Make the rules simple. The younger the age group the less and simpler the rules.
2. Explain the rules clearly
3. Have silence while things are being explained (especially other leaders).
4. Give the group an opportunity to ask questions about the game when you have explained everything. This lets them understand the rules in their own way and stops them from interrupting while you are explaining the rules.
5. All participants need to know what is expected of them and others.
6. Set boundaries physically and emotionally.



7. All leaders need to be energetic and show interest in the game (even if you are not running the game).
8. Pick teams that are fair.
9. Be prepared well before the game (this is the ideal model). Have equipment on hand, don't run off getting things and leave the group standing there with nothing to do.
10. Changing the equipment or the theme can put a new twist on an old game (eg use a plastic chook instead of a ball).
11. Leaders should participate without dominating. Games are for the campers.
12. Help those who look left out or are struggling.
13. Be mindful of people with disabilities or problems and how to include them.
14. Be considerate of other groups if there are others near by or in the same building.
15. The game needs to be run in a safe manner for all involved, and spectators. This begins even before the game starts eg is the grass wet, is there room to play this game in the hall, are the windows too close, is safety equipment required etc? If you don't think it will be safe, change the location, rules, equipment etc but if you can't make it safe play a new game. Re-asses the safety as the game is running eg is it getting too dark, is it getting too rough etc don't be afraid to stop a game if you think it is unsafe even if people are having fun. This shows maturity and good leadership. Remember you are the responsible one.
16. Think about what a parent would be happy with.
17. Do not play games that encourage violent behaviour.
18. Do not play games that place people in emotional danger of feeling uncomfortable in the activity.
19. Assess that the amount of physical contact is appropriate. Some people are uncomfortable even with holding hands. As people get to know each other more there may be more scope for more contact.
20. Run games where all people can be involved. Left out people get bored and don't feel part of the experience. Some games may need to be adapted.
21. Be careful of 'elimination' games. They might be given a role on the side lines eg scorer, spotter, helper, cheering/chanting or swap over person etc. Those who get eliminated may feel that they are a failure/loser and only winners get to have fun.
22. Be careful of games that have winners and losers. Some people seem to never be the winner and this could lead to negative feelings for them. Groups that win are better than individuals that win.
23. Run all types of games as these will interest all types of people. Don't just run physical/active type of games; try to run some problem solving games or quiet games. Different people will be better at different types of games and this means more people get to have fun and the winners and leaders will get to swap around.
24. Know when to stop playing a game, leave them wanting more. This means you can play it next time and people won't get bored.
25. Draw out the points from the game, don't assume that everyone will make the link between what happens in the game and spiritual/life issues. Spell the lessons out so they understand.
26. You may have to abandon some of your old favourite games when you evaluate some of these points. That's ok, it's better to do that than compromise a trust or safety issue.

Have fun yourself!

