



 PLAYWORKS
SCHOOL
RE-OPENING
WORKBOOK!

Author

Jill Vialet
Playworks Staff

Illustrator

Abby VanMuijen

Designer

Marc Yu

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PRE-COVID TRANSITION



COVID TRANSITION



Introduction: Transitions

This is a moment of unprecedented transition for the US – and for the world more broadly. Re-opening the economy – and our schools – will involve decisions based on incomplete information that must be made in an environment that, at best, would be described as uncertain. This workbook is an effort to bring a little bit of ease to this transition by offering up some guidance around how infusing play and playfulness into the process can help.

Ease may feel like a funny goal in this moment when the stakes feel so high and emotions are running so strong. But the idea of making the inevitably difficult process of re-opening schools less painful has a lot to offer it, not the least of which is setting the process up to succeed.

Twenty-four years of leading Playworks has provided us with the opportunity to see the very practical ways that play contributes to building schools where students feel a sense of belonging, agency and sustained motivation. Beyond its impact on students, we've seen how building a playful school culture directly benefits the grown-ups involved as well, ultimately changing their relationships with students and thus their experience of work.

Back in the very early days of Playworks when we were still called Sports4Kids, we had a partnership with a program called Seneca Center. Seneca is still around – they’re now called the Seneca Family of Agencies – and they run amazing programs for kids with mental health issues. In the 90’s when we were working with them, we had a staffer named Justin Robinson – he went by JRo – who was placed at one of their schools with the assignment of modifying our recess program to fit within the Seneca model. JRo had a big head of curly hair, and there were numerous conversations with the Seneca staff about their concerns that agitated students might pull it.

The most memorable thing about this partnership, however, was when JRo described at one of our staff meetings how the faculty at Seneca handled transitions. JRo explained that according to his Seneca co-workers, transitions were when things were most likely to break down and thus deserved special attention. They had established a whole protocol around preparing the students before leaving their classroom - reviewing what they were about to do and all the steps involved – mindfully making their way through space to the playground and then circling up once arriving to acknowledge having arrived and to review what was coming

next. Similarly, at the end of every recess, the students would circle back up to provide some closure and to review the transition back into the classroom – going through all the steps and calling out ways they would need to adjust their behaviors, modulating their voices and energy levels as they went back inside.

It all seems blindingly obvious from the vantage point of two decades later, but those shared lessons became integral to our understanding at Playworks of how best to set kids up for success at recess.

If you haven’t spent a lot – or any – time thinking about recess lately, it would probably startle you to learn how frequently we have been told over the years that students simply didn’t know how to play. We’ve also heard that student behaviors were so challenging that schools had elected to eliminate or withhold recess because it was simply too risky, or too likely to interfere with teaching and learning, or too much of a distraction. Lately, we have become increasingly concerned that our return to schools in this Covid-adjustment period we will again raise concerns that letting students out to play is simply just too much.

The lessons from Seneca about transitions

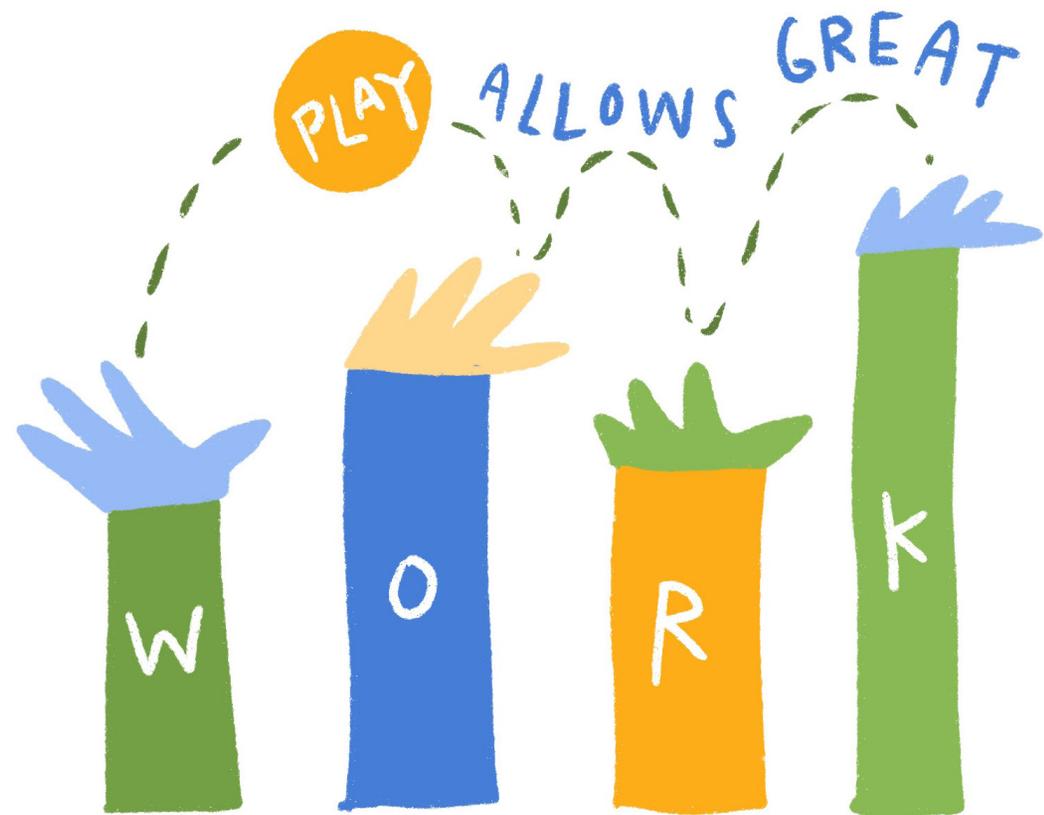
have implications for grown-ups as well. From little things like the beginnings and endings of meetings, to big things like starting and stopping relationships, transitions are very often when things break down. And just like with children, playfully and intentionally designing these transitions for adults can do a lot to ensure that things go more smoothly.

PLAY ISN'T THE OPPOSITE OF WORK.

One of the biggest challenges we have faced at Playworks over the years has been overcoming people's assumption that play is the opposite of work, that it takes away from learning and that it creates an environment that is lacking the 'seriousness' that redressing academic inequities demands. Bringing up the importance of play in the midst of considering the challenges we face in mitigating the health risks of Covid-19 feels similarly fraught.

The answer to these concerns is the same. Brian Sutton-Smith said it best perhaps: "The opposite of play is not work.¹ The opposite of

play is depression." Play does not detract from learning, it is learning. Play does not diminish seriousness, it encourages a level of intrinsically motivated engagement that makes seriousness possible. And play does not distract from addressing the very real health risks of Covid-19, it offers a strategic approach for doing exactly that by designing student practices that are based on an understanding of rules, rituals and referees that has survived evolution.



¹Brian Sutton-Smith, *The Ambiguity of Play*, Harvard University Press, 1997

This is not an academic treatise on play or game theory, though we will reference some of the lessons from those disciplines. It's not a book about brain science or biology – though again, when it serves our arguments, we will happily include them. This is intended to prompt the imagination of a popular audience that is justifiably concerned about how we re-open schools in a way that is best for our students, our educators and for society at large.

Our experience running Playworks has demonstrated that play has everything to teach us about managing risks, generating new possibilities, dealing with the unexpected and navigating ambiguity - and thus could not be more timely. We are also convinced that if we fail to incorporate play into the re-opening of schools, we will miss an important opportunity to attend to our children's physical and emotional wellbeing and inadvertently compound the situation's challenges.

This is an invitation. In the midst of all the craziness, this is an invitation to consider the possibility that play and playfulness have a significant contribution to make in how we approach the re-opening of our schools. Fundamentally, this is an invitation to trust your intuition – as an educator or a parent

or a person who cares about kids - and to simultaneously respect the concerns of the moment by closely adhering to the protocols called on by health professionals, while centering the importance of relationships in emotionally managing the situation. This is an invitation to suspend your disbelief that there is any way to do this that is joyful.

At Playworks we have practical experience leveraging the power of play to radically transform school environments – starting with school playgrounds and spilling into classrooms, hallways, cafeterias and gymnasiums. We have discovered time and time again that thoughtfully designing play opportunities for kids, and prioritizing student agency and leadership in how this play happens, contributes measurably to students' social and emotional wellbeing, not to mention their learning. And we are confident that there is an application for this knowledge in this particular moment.

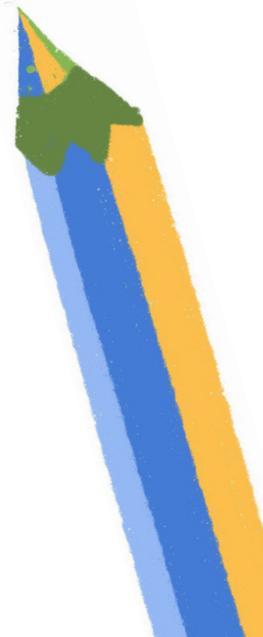
Admittedly, this is an unprecedented situation, and so the ideas contained herein are being offered up for your consideration as you develop your plans to meet the regulations that schools and districts have developed. As such, we also want to invite you to contribute meaningfully to our understanding of what

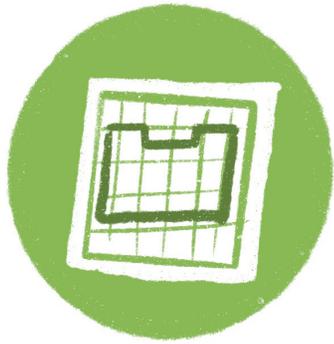
works and what doesn't. Our commitment in this moment is to learn and to share our learnings. Based upon the stories that we hear about things educators actually try, both successfully and not, along with the lessons learned from the real experiences of re-opening (and then possibly re-closing and re-re-opening), we will compile a more comprehensive response to the moment to be published by Jossey-Bass in the Summer of 2021. If you are open to being a part of this effort we would be extremely grateful. You can sign up to be involved on our website at: www.playworks.org/workbook

We really want to learn more about what you're thinking and trying - and to encourage you to share your ideas so that other people can learn with you.

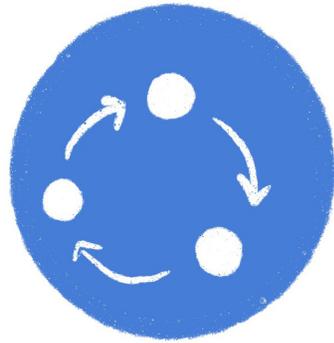
Besides signing up to be a part of our on-going research at www.playworks.org/workbook you can share visuals on our Instagram @playworksreopeningworkbook and use the hashtag #playworksreopeningworkbook on Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn posts - and wherever else your social media wanderings take you!

SHARE
YOUR
IDEAS





SPACE



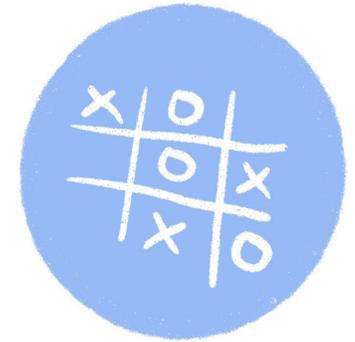
RITUAL



RULES



REFEREES



RECESS &
GAMES

About This Workbook

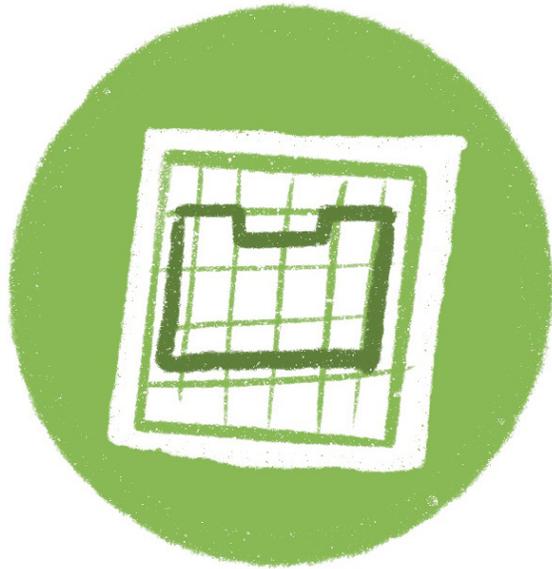
This workbook is divided into five sections: Space, Rituals, Rules, Referees and Recess and Games. In each of the first four sections we offer ideas, suggestions and activities to help you frame the approach your school takes to realizing the guidance that is being offered by the CDC and your local health authorities. Because what we know about Covid-19 is changing so rapidly, it is possible that something we suggest in this initial book will become outdated before we are able to address the changing information. If at any time you feel as though our guidance contradicts

what you are being instructed to do by health professionals it is critical that you follow the guidance of the health professionals.

In Space, Rituals, Rules and Referees, we'll offer suggestions for ways to approach the safety guidance you receive in different phases of the re-opening: prior to students returning – either physically or remotely, once students have returned, and as things shift and adapt. We'll also call out different audiences – students, teachers, parent/families, administrators and para-educators – with an eye towards prompting your thinking across roles, and recognizing that

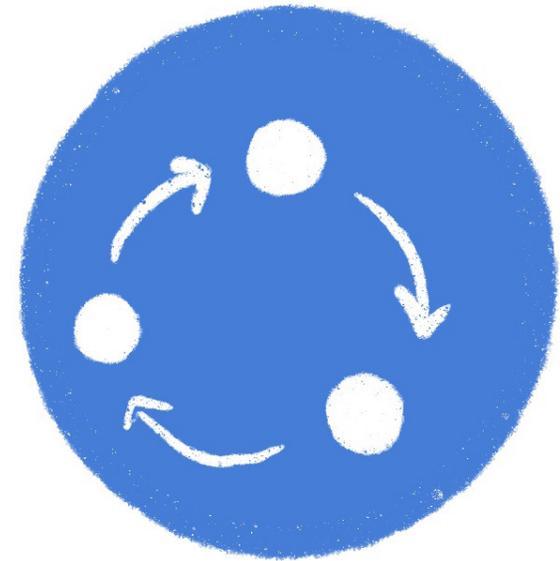
this is a moment in which the roles we have traditionally played may need to shift.

The Space, Rituals, Rules and Referees sections all have interactive activities that are described in the body of the narrative and then supported with reproducible worksheets that provide instructions, space to do the exercises, and a place for notes to yourself (ideas that arise or questions that need more consideration) at the end of every section. We also provide a second worksheet page that is intended to help you translate the first activity into concrete action – affectionately referred to as the Magical Bonus Concrete Activity Page. Additionally, we’ve included a Gratitude Bubble on this page to nudge you to remember to make a little extra effort to express thanks in this moment.



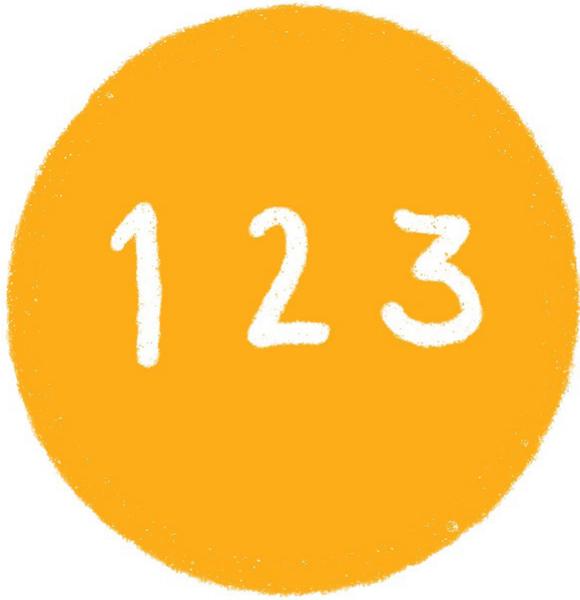
SPACE

In Space, we'll look at where learning happens - inside, outside and remote, considering the flow and experience of human bodies that you want to promote. To do this, we'll take you through some exercises that can help you re-imagine how these spaces are used and engage students in co-designing your space use plans. We'll also take a closer look at the attributes of different spaces, considering ways to make the most of these qualities as opposed to forcing different spaces to be proxies for things they are not.



RITUAL

Rituals, will offer ideas for explicitly addressing our collective needs through activities, habits, celebrations and routines. From the First Day to the schedule, and from handwashing to passing in the halls, designing rituals to foster buy-in and engagement represents a powerful opportunity to infuse the school environment with a bit of magic.



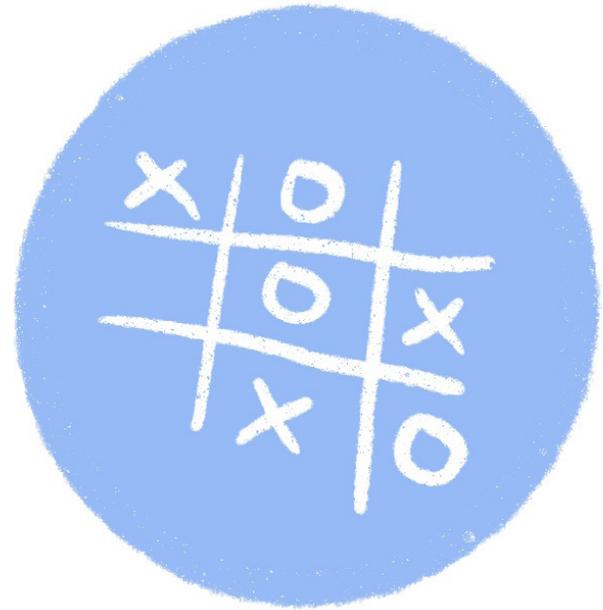
RULES

In Rules, we'll wrestle with the question of how to translate the constraints that Covid-19 requires of us into rules that students understand and around which they feel ownership. How might we turn staying 6' apart into a game? How might we shift the feelings around wearing a mask from "have to" to "get to"? How might we get hundreds of kids excited about washing their hands both thoroughly and efficiently multiple times throughout a school day?



REFEREES

In Referees, we'll talk about grown-ups and students and sharing responsibility – and gratitude - for keeping people physically and emotionally safe. We will describe how the design of these expectations creates huge opportunities to promote learning, empathy and engagement. The section on Referees will also consider how re-imagining our different roles can lead to building an experience that not only serves students well, but also addresses the very real needs of educators and parents in this stressful time.



RECESS & GAMES

Finally, in the Recess and Games section we will offer up tactical suggestions for managing recess along with a library of our favorite activities. The game library includes activities adapted to meet physical distancing requirements while still promoting social connection, along with modifications so that games that can be played at home.

HOW TO USE THIS WORKBOOK:

DOWNLOAD AND/OR PRINT:



1 JUST THE NARRATIVE



2 JUST THE WORKSHEETS



3 JUST THE GAMES

4 THE WHOLE THING

LISTEN:



NARRATED BY THE AUTHOR!

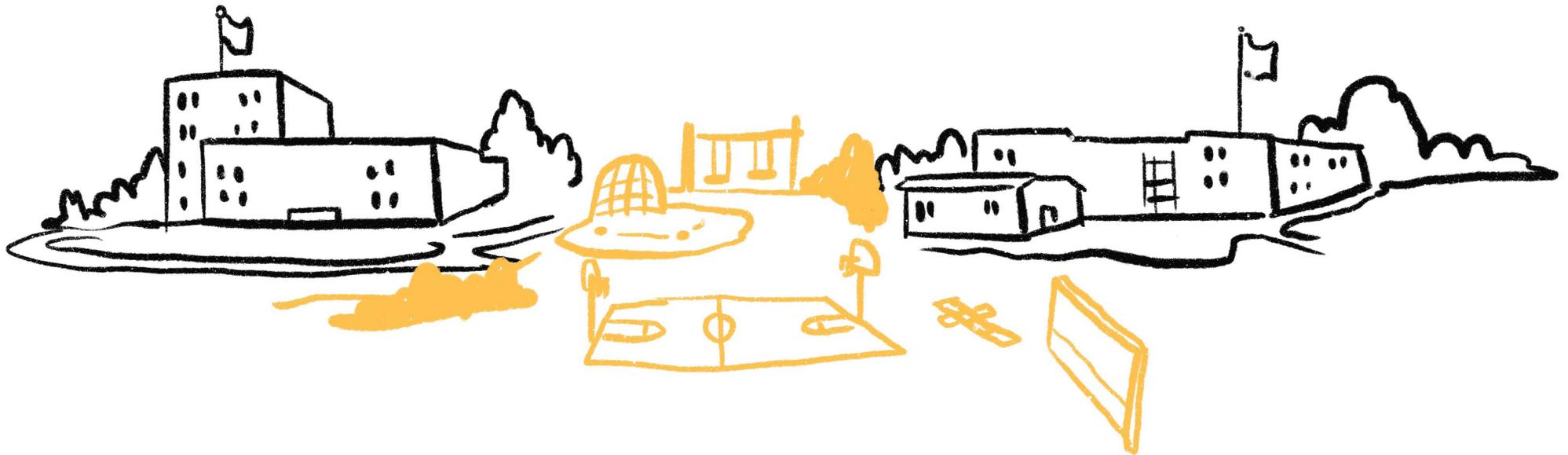
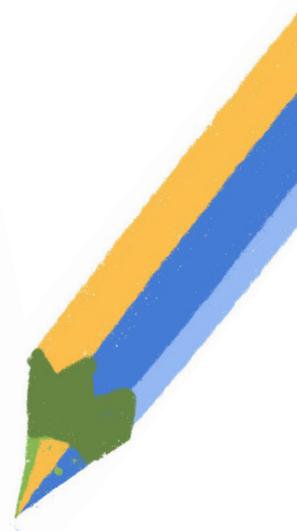
5 THE ULTRA EXCELLENT AUDIO VERSION!

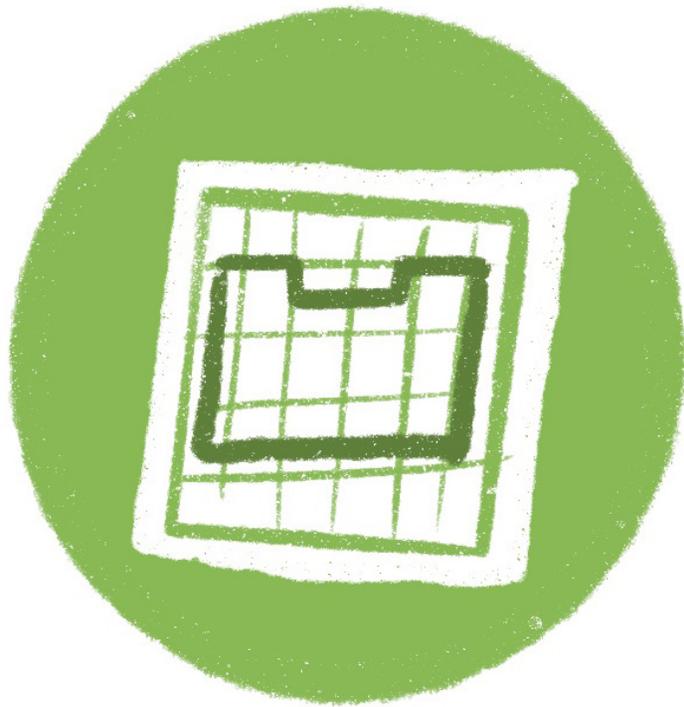
This workbook is intended to be interactive, and to this end the layout has been designed to be both print and user friendly. In terms of printing, we've created two options. The first option is that you print out the whole shebang. The narrative sections are organized as a double page layout and the worksheet activity pages and Recess and Games guide are single page layout. In order to save trees, we suggest printing double sided. The second option allows for printing out the more interactive pieces – the worksheets and games – while reading the narrative piece online. We've also designed the book to be printed in black and white, but if you're going to print one page in color, we recommend the Emotion Wheel at the end of the Referees section.

A third option - for those of you who favor a podcast-approach to consuming content - is to download the narrative as audio files and listen while you go about your business! More information on all the options can be found on our website at www.playworks.org/workbook

We hope this workbook offers you some inspiration and encouragement as you approach the challenging tasks this moment requires. We are eager to be of service and to learn from your experiences so that moving forward we can share the best practices that enable the healthy social connection education requires. We are also confident, based on 24 years of partnering with schools, that if any group of humans can rise to this occasion, it is our teachers. Time and time again we have witnessed educators do whatever it takes to support our students and it is our privilege to be your partner in this work now. Thank you.

THANK
YOU!





SPACE

The very first place that Playworks ran a program was at a school in Berkeley, California that was temporarily housing two schools while the visiting school's building was being retrofitted. The situation was less than ideal because of space constraints, but the two schools managed to achieve a quiet détente, with the exception of sharing the playground.

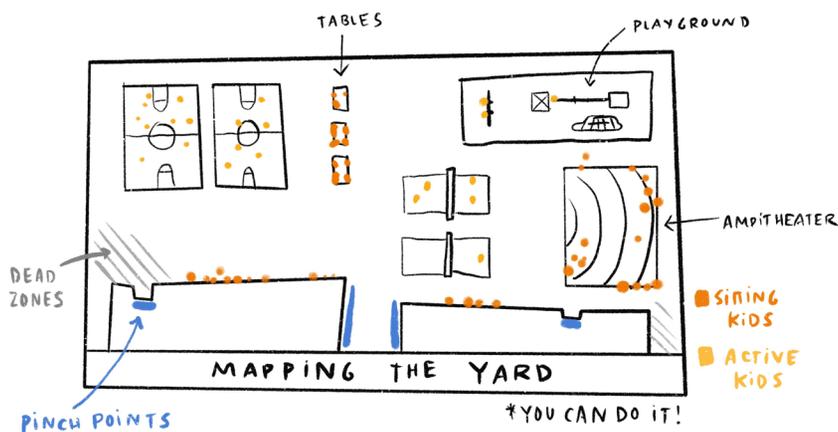
All of the students were understandably a bit put out – the ones whose school was being retrofitted were in an unfamiliar place, and those whose school had been “invaded by newcomers” were feeling crowded. Initially told that the groups were never to intermingle, the kids complied and played in their designated areas.

Playworks' recess coach – a woman named Andrea - worked with the teachers and administrators from both schools to devise a plan, mapping the yard and sequencing both activities and transitions to and from classes and the cafeteria. As the year progressed, the tensions between the two staff would wax and wane, but the students themselves began to interact in passing, and ultimately asked Andrea if they might occasionally play together. With permission from the principals, Andrea organized a lunchtime kickball game that brought the older kids into contact with one another, and ultimately became such an important focal point of the schools, it managed to also bring the staff together when they came out to see for themselves.

In the years since, we've encountered any number of situations where navigating the school space was held up as the defining

obstacle to achieving healthy play. From rooftop playgrounds in New York City and San Francisco, to having portable classrooms plopped in the middle of the schoolyard unexpectedly mid-year, play's inherently adaptive nature has been flexed to address the challenges. Many the side of a portable has been transformed into a wall-ball court and "fire feet," a rapid foot shuffling that combines high leg activity with slow physical motion, can enlarge even the tightest of spaces.

The biggest obstacles to space management, we have found, are usually human. From schools merging to charter schools renting out space from traditional schools, the "facility" challenges which have stuck out as stickiest have most often been those where the issues of space were bumping up against deeply felt emotions.



And it is precisely for this reason that we recommend that schools start by "Mapping the Yard." Just as it sounds, we suggest that school leaders draw their outside play area, indicating on the map how the different areas are used throughout the day. People get very creative using different colors to map the concentration of activity and time – identifying pinch points, small areas where lots of kids have to pass through in a short window of time, and dead zones, areas that receive remarkably little use. Once the map of how things currently are is created, we ask school leaders to draw out a map of how they'd like the space to be used and to invite the teachers and students to engage in the mapping exercise as well.

There are a few different lessons that this exercise offers. The first is that many people are immediately intimidated by anything that involves drawing and that the older we get, the more likely there will be resistance to thinking visually. The second observation is that for a lot of people, it simply never occurred to them to think about this space as a design lever in creating the experiences they seek. A lot of the teachers think of the playground as a "given," and see the patterns of play that emerge organically as fixed and somehow immutable.

Many, if not most, admit to never having considered it before.

This moment, as you are thinking about the return to school, is the perfect time to map your space. Our suggestion is that you embark on a pretty ambitious mapping exercise, including indoors, outdoors and separately, the remote space that you either will, or may, be using at some point during the year. And we'd recommend bringing a similar approach to the one we use in Mapping the Yard.

We've included a mapping worksheet to help you get started at the end of this section. Start by drawing out how you have historically used your indoor and outdoor spaces. Play around with noting how students and teachers flow throughout these spaces throughout the day. It may be useful to make lists of the strengths and challenges that these different spaces offer. What works? What doesn't?



Once you have the historic uses, create a blank map – an outline - of the indoor and outdoor spaces (xeroxed multiple times). This provides a great canvas to explore different scenarios and options and creates an opportunity to engage other staff in thinking about how you want to prepare your space before students physically return to school. Making your ideas visible in this way can also help you see things differently and communicate your ideas more powerfully. The maps you create in these exercises can also be useful as you move forward throughout the year. Consider how you might want to display these original maps as artifacts that can be celebrated and revisited as tools that help your community adjust as things change or if/when challenges arise. And if you are going to have an environment in which parents are asked not to come into the building, how might you use the maps to invite their participation in a more distanced way?

Mapping is also a great opportunity to get people up and moving around – both in meetings among staff prior to students' return, and with the students once they are in session. Asking students to measure the space using their own bodies as opposed to a measuring tape creates an excellent way to introduce different math and problem-solving

skills. Having students work in small groups - working collaboratively while observing physical distancing requirements – can provide a chance for them to practice with the new rules while engaged in a project that invites them to be a part of solving for the challenges these requirements present.

The Value of Multiple Perspectives

One of the most important things to consider when space planning is the question: “How do we let people contribute?” The process you put in place for “deciding” on how space will be laid out and used can be a springboard for inviting the community – staff, families, students – to be actively engaged in co-constructing the re-opening of your school. While at first blush this may seem like more work, it also represents an opportunity to engage people in a way that will ultimately contribute to their understanding and acceptance of the decisions made – saving you time and stress in the long run. Co-constructing the new environment also creates a path forward for adapting decisions when the situation changes.



Navigating ambiguity is challenging in the best of times, and people tend to respond to moments of extreme uncertainty by either operating in absolutes or avoiding decisions altogether. But this is not a moment when either response will serve us well. As futurist Bob Johansen puts it, “the future will reward clarity but punish certainty.”² This is neither a time for retreating into a room to “figure it all out,” nor for burying one’s head in the sand. Ensuring that the decision-making process is a visible one that engages a wide variety of perspectives can help bring greater clarity to the process.

Engaging everyone in the design of the new environment has the added benefit of bringing multiple perspectives to bear that may contribute to better decisions. What are teachers worried about? What do students know about their own experiences of navigating the spaces? What have parents heard their kids’ discussing?

A great exercise to help in the exploration of other perspectives is shadowing. The Shadow a Student Challenge is an initiative to inspire administrators to spend a day once a year literally shadowing a student as a tool for promoting a deeper understanding of the

student experience. As we re-open schools, dedicating the time to shadowing a student represents a great way to better understand the impact of the changes you put in place and to better anticipate where things are likely to break down.



Barry Svigals, the architect who helped redesign the elementary school in Newtown, Connecticut after the school shooting there has spent much of the last few years thinking about the challenges inherent in, as he puts it, “designing simultaneously for fear and joy.” He describes schools as “a problem in choreography,” and focuses on students’ physical experience of a space - looking at everything from the portal – how it feels to enter a school – to heat mapping more fugitive or counter-spaces like hallways and bathrooms as a way to better understand how a building’s layout contributes to social interactions.

² Bob Johansen, *The New Leadership Literacies: Thriving in a Future of Extreme Disruption and Distributed Everything*, Berrett-Koehler Publishers Inc., 2017

In this Covid-responsive moment, these “counter-spaces” – think recess, buses, afterschool, bathrooms, cafeterias, doorways and hallways – will become far more significant, and require far more attention. This is important not only because it will require focus and choreography, but also because these are places where students have traditionally had more freedom and choice. Whether it is conscious or not, greater regulation of these spaces will have an impact on the student experience and their sense of agency. The extent to which students can be engaged in designing both the changes and the regulation of these changes may have a significant impact on compliance and, more importantly, how it feels to be at school.

Inside, Outside and Remote

Another key to effectively mapping and planning your available spaces is recognizing the attributes of a given space - be it in the classroom, the hallway, on the playground, in the cafeteria, or in a Zoom room. The school experience can be qualitatively improved by focusing on maximizing a given space’s strengths as opposed to trying to force a space to be a proxy for something it isn’t. Said another way, a Zoom room isn’t a classroom,

but it does have some cool attributes unto itself. What kind of learning can students do at home that they can’t do in school? The cafeteria might not be where you are going to eat lunch given Covid-19, but how else might you use a big space like that? If being outside is viable from a weather perspective, what kind of teaching and learning can you do best out of doors?

Think-Pair-Share

What follows is a list of space prompts to consider as you prepare for re-opening and to experiment with when students return. Consider using a Think-Pair-Share approach to exploring these ideas. Think-Pair-Share (TPS) is a collaborative approach to problem-solving that, while often used for students, can be very effective with grown-ups, too. This strategy involves initial individual reflection on a problem or a question, followed by a paired discussion and then a larger group conversation. The partner discussion is intended to maximize participation and presenting to the larger group as a team can ease anxiety around group engagement while promoting greater investment in the process.

The questions below are broken down into topics for staff, older students, younger

students, and for students to discuss with their families. The TPS worksheet that follows can be copied or distributed virtually.

For staff:

How might we decorate the entry in a way that calls attention to the idea of returning to school? What experience of re-entering school do we want to create for the students?

How might we commemorate the first day of school if we are starting remotely?

For staff and older students:

If we use a schedule that involves different shifts, how might we create space for students to socially connect with students outside their class? How might we use asynchronous activities? How might students connect remotely? What activities would lend themselves to being done while physically distanced and outside?

What are non-traditional uses for spaces – like the cafeteria – that would allow you to repurpose these spaces safely?

What are alternative uses of existing resources – like school buses being used as wifi hotspots – that might address a new need?

For staff and students of all ages:

How might we make standing in line more fun? How might we design the way we enter and exit the building? What games could we play while in line? How might we turn it into a competition? What songs could we sing?

How might we use the space in a way that helps with being cleaned?

If we are going to eat lunch in the classroom, how might we shift the space for lunchtime to make this experience more special?

What are the options for using the outside for class time?

How might you use color coding, signage and directional markings – on the walls and floors – to help with the flow of human bodies?

For students with their families:

If parents and other family members are not going to be allowed into the building, how

might we design a drop off and pick up routine that works and feels good?

What activities might you do at home with your family that you could share with other students and their families?

When learning has to be remote, how might your family set up your space and a schedule that makes it possible for everyone to be able to focus?

When recess happens virtually, how might you invite other members of your family to participate?





SPACE: THINK, PAIR, SHARE!

INSTRUCTIONS: ① REFLECT INDIVIDUALLY ON THE PROMPTS ② PAIR UP & DISCUSS WHAT YOU'D LIKE TO SHARE WITH THE GROUP - CHOOSE 3 INSIGHTS ③ BASED ON THE DISCUSSION, WHAT PROTOTYPES WOULD YOU LIKE TO TRY?

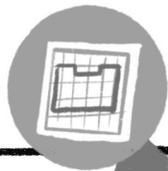
WORKSPACE:

① WHAT I THINK:

② WHAT MY PARTNER THINKS:

② WHAT WE WANT TO SHARE:

③ IDEAS TO TRY:



MAGICAL MAKE IT CONCRETE ACTIVITY SHEET

**SPACE:
MAPPING**

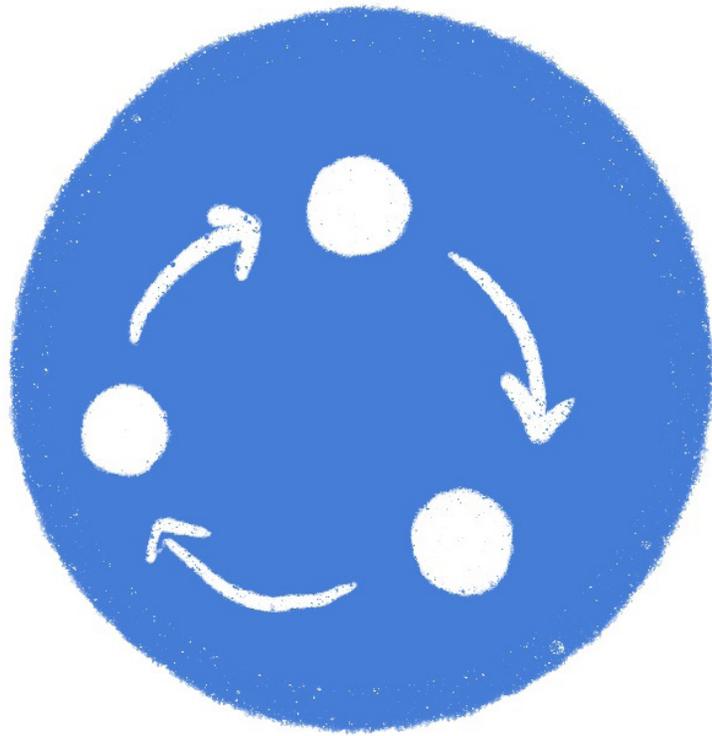
INSTRUCTIONS: DRAW A MAP OF THE SPACES WHERE TEACHING & LEARNING WILL TAKE PLACE AS YOU REOPEN. THIS MIGHT BE INDOOR & OUTDOORS AT SCHOOL AND/OR YOUR REMOTE SPACES. WHAT CAN YOU DO TO MAKE THESE SPACES SPECIAL? ENCOURAGE PARTICIPANTS TO MAKE & SHARE MAPS TOO!

MY SCHOOL:

MY REMOTE SPACE:

THIS MAKES ME
THINK I SHOULD
THANK:





RITUAL

In 2004, prior to Playworks providing programs outside of the Bay Area, we were invited to come to Baltimore to meet with some leaders at the Johns Hopkins Institute for Summer Learning. We decided to bring a team of four staff: our founder Jill Vialet accompanied by three others – David Gallagher, Paul McAndrew and Lamar Kendricks.

Since we had been considering the possibility of expanding nationally, this was a good time to make some school visits so that we could better understand how – and if – our approach might work in other parts of the country. At their first principal meeting, Jill and Lamar found themselves waiting in the school office. Eventually the principal, Mr. Thomasberger, showed them into his office and seated them in kid-sized chairs, making Lamar's large 6'2" frame look almost comical. Jill launched into a description of the Playworks model, explaining the different program components and how we worked with schools in California.

Mr. Thomasberger nodded throughout, but when Jill concluded, he simply shook his head and offered up, "Well, it all sounds great, but it would never work here."

Jill asked a follow up question to better understand this reaction: "Is it the cost?"

"No, it's not that," Mr. Thomasberger explained. "We don't have recess."

Up until this point, Lamar had literally said nothing other than "hello." But in response to Mr. Thomasberger's statement, he leaned forward in his tiny chair and asked, "But what

about when they go out for break time?" Mr. Thomasberger was a bit surprised by Lamar's somewhat abrupt question, but explained patiently, "We don't have recess. They don't go out."

Lamar wasn't convinced. "But what about the kindergarteners?"

Mr. Thomasberger shook his head no.

Lamar pressed on, "What about when they're done with lunch?"

Mr. Thomasberger was now getting a bit annoyed with Lamar's questions and responded definitively, "Our students don't go outside. Our students don't know how to play."



And that was when Lamar visibly dug in. "Mr. Thomasberger," Lamar replied, his tone shifting from befuddled to imploring, "let me take your students out for recess today."

The principal shook his head dismissively. "Not possible," he said. "The playground is a mess and it's not in the schedule."

But Lamar wasn't to be dissuaded. "Just fifteen minutes during one of your lunch periods. Jill and I can wait. We'll even go outside and help get the yard ready."

Lamar wasn't going to give up, and after much back and forth, and clearly against Mr. Thomasberger's better judgment, it was decided.

When lunch time came around, Mr. Thomasberger escorted Jill and Lamar to the cafeteria where 120 4th and 5th graders were bouncing off the walls. There were two lunch ladies dressed in starched white uniforms standing at each of the exits and the din made it almost impossible to converse. Amidst all of this, Lamar strode to the middle of the cafeteria and clapped his hands rhythmically. A few kids looked in his direction, but the chaos continued. Undaunted, Lamar repeated the clap. This

time a few more kids looked at Lamar, some repeating the rhythm. On his third attempt, the vast majority of the students repeated the clapped rhythm and the space fell silent, with the door-guarding lunch ladies looking visibly concerned.

Lamar used his best playground voice to introduce himself, "Hi, I'm Coach Lamar!" He paused, waiting for a greeting in response and, getting none, he tried again. "Really? C'mon, I'm visiting all the way from California – is that the welcome I get? Let's try that again. Hi. I'm Coach Lamar!"

The students responded, admittedly with a skeptical tinge to their voices, in unison, "Hi, Coach Lamar..."



Lamar smiled approvingly and pressed on. "OK, your principal has invited me to take you all out for recess today," (there was a spontaneous and incredulous cheer in response to this news) "and I need you to do three things to make it happen. First, I need you to finish up your lunches. Second, I need you to clean up your area. And third, I need you to line up by class so that we can all go down to the playground together. I really need you to do this well so that we can show Mr. Thomasberger you can handle it."

And just like that, the kids had eaten up, cleaned up and lined up. Lamar and Mr. Thomasberger led the students down to the playground, where Lamar circled the students up. "Here's the deal: there are basically two major rules. First, no throwing up and second, no bleeding."

The kids were now officially convinced that Lamar was from another planet. He laughed, "OK, not really, but you get my drift, right? We're going to be safe and have fun and so I'm going to ask you to use good judgment while we're out here playing so that you can get to do this again. We're going to break into three groups, so let's count off by threes." Lamar pointed to each student as they went

around the circle counting 1-2-3. "And now I want the one's to come with me to play Gaga Ball, the two's are going to go with Jill to play Switch and the threes are going to start with Mr. Thomasberger on the play structure."

The kids started to move, but Lamar caught them up. "Wait, wait, wait. We don't break out into groups until I say the magic word. What should that be today?"

One student quickly offered up "Throw-up!"

Lamar responded, "I think that's technically two words, but let's go with it. Throw-up!"

The students ran to the three designated areas and with a bit of instruction moved quickly into playing. About seven minutes in, Lamar called out "Superhero pose!" and stood like a Heisman Trophy statue, with all the students immediately freezing into different variations of heroic stances.

He switched the group stations and allowed the students to play for the remainder of the fifteen minutes before clapping rhythmically as he had done in the cafeteria. This time, all of the students immediately copied the rhythm and froze quietly.

"Let's circle up!" Lamar then took the students

through a quick debrief of their time, with each student saying one word describing their experience as they went around the circle. "You all were amazing today but I need one more favor from you. Line back up by class and go back into the building the same way you came out here. I need you to show Mr. Thomasberger and your teachers that you got this!"

The students did exactly as they were asked. Mr. Thomasberger smiled at Lamar with a look of begrudging respect, "We should talk," he said to Jill.

The best part was the reaction of the two lunch ladies who came literally running across the school yard to give Lamar a hug and express their thanks. "Will you be back tomorrow?"

While rituals are frequently associated with the religious, the dictionary defines them as ceremonies consisting of a series of actions performed according to a prescribed order. In its adjectival form, it is defined as "arising from convention or habit." And while Lamar's adventure at the elementary school in Baltimore was neither conventional nor habitual, he did manage to engage the students by employing a number of different ritualistic elements. From the rhythmic clapping to the circling up to the

superhero poses, Lamar's efforts to ensure that the students were engaged - and not merely compliant - was facilitated by his use of these tools.

As we prepare to re-open schools, it is worth considering the moments that might benefit from the intentional design of rituals to ease transitions and promote understanding and engagement. From a celebration marking the First Day back - remotely if that is how you are re-opening or physically when that is allowed to happen - to moments recognizing the shifts between in-person and remote learning, creating ceremonies to bring attention to these moments can make a huge difference in setting both students and educators up to succeed.

Rituals are also important in building trauma-sensitive environments. We'll talk more about this in the Referees section, but rituals can significantly improve the experience of school for students who have been exposed to trauma by creating routines that give them greater visibility into the process and a greater sense of control over the world around them.



Play theorists have long compared play and religious rituals, the most notable being Johan Huizinga who compared play to the sacred in his 1938 book *Homo Ludens*:

*"All play moves and has its being within a playground marked off beforehand either materially or ideally, deliberately or as a matter of course. Just as there is no formal difference between play and ritual, the "consecrated spot" cannot be formally distinguished from the playground. The arena, the card-table, the magic circle, the temple, the stage, the screen, the tennis court, the court of justice, etc., are all in form and function playgrounds, i.e. forbidden spots, isolated, round, hallowed, within which rules obtain. All are temporary worlds within the ordinary world, dedicated to the performance of an act apart."*³

Rituals are essentially a form of play that enable teams to get in sync both emotionally and mentally. Intentionally designing activities that promote this level of alignment and cooperation, while perhaps requiring a greater outlay of effort initially, represents a significant opportunity to promote engagement in the long run. Just as physically mapping the space allows for a better understanding of space as a design lever, rituals allow for the mapping of time, intentionally creating experiences that help you achieve your goals.

Many school staff already have rituals that they don't think of as rituals – from the staff meeting to professional development days, setting up classrooms before school starts to packing up at year's end. This year represents an important opportunity to make some conscious decisions about how you are going to set up, meet and adapt to change.

If you are bringing on new staff in this moment, how might you quickly make them feel a part of the team? If check-ins are more difficult because of the new schedule, does it make sense to create a buddy system? What are the major timeline markers for this year and how do you want to acknowledge them?

Storyboarding to co-design Rituals

We talked about developing maps as artifacts in the section on spaces. In this section we want to encourage you to consider prototyping different activities - essentially creating experiential artifacts intended to elicit feedback from the participants, with the feedback being the most important part of the process. Testing intentionally and obviously imperfect artifacts invites authentic and honest engagements with the ideas involved, and is a powerful springboard for creating a sense of belonging among participants. People know they truly belong when their opinions are solicited and acted upon.

**PEOPLE KNOW THEY TRULY BELONG WHEN
THEIR OPINIONS ARE SOLICITED AND
ACTED UPON.**

What follows is a list of suggestions for designing and testing playful rituals. Your goal isn't to get these absolutely right from the start, but to experiment with ceremonies and activities that give both students and staff cues for how best to interpret the moment, along with the opportunity to make sense of, and prepare for, change.

In looking at these, we'd like to propose you consider using a storyboarding approach as a first step. This is a way to make your ideas more tangible by drawing out the steps in a person's experience. The key is to draw out each step as a way to refine the idea.

To do this, start by choosing an imaginary participant and try to get as specific as possible – for example, a 2nd grade girl named Jenna who loves four square and drawing. For any scenario that you choose to explore, map out each step of your imaginary person's experience – literally as step-by-step as you can make it – from their perspective and with as much detail as you can imagine. It's good to make notes about what you think they might be feeling throughout the experience. Be sure to indicate the key decision points and maybe jot down some notes about alternative experiences your person might have had if other decisions

had been made. Don't worry at all about your sketching – a good stick figure is all you need.

Once you have the story mapped out, share what you've created with your team or have your students share with their classmates, paying special attention to the different decision points and the alternative experiences you imagined. If you're feeling bold, you can even invite groups of staff and students to act out the storyboard to make the experience that much more real.

The First Day

The First Day back to school is always an important one, and this year will be no different. Whether you are opening remotely or in-person, the first day back from the Covid-19 closures represents a singular opportunity to signal to students, staff and families how you hope to proceed with the school year. We know you have a lot to consider about the first day. Are you going to acknowledge all that has transpired while you have been apart? Are you going to give people a chance to connect with their classmates and teachers from the previous year to achieve some closure? How do you want to introduce everyone to the new procedures that are in place and the expectations you have

around how these procedures will be adhered to? How are students and staff expected to navigate the inevitable variations in rule interpretations? And what can students and staff and families expect about how future changes will be communicated? What is the new schedule? Once you have physically reopened, what happens if the school has to close again, or if someone gets sick and cannot come to school? If you are going to give students and staff a voice in determining how things are different, this is the place to start.

While it might be ideal to have absolute answers to these questions, it is probably more realistic to acknowledge that you have a plan, but recognize that it will be important to remain flexible (Remember: “The future will reward clarity and punish certainty...”). A ritual on that first day – and maybe the whole First Day is one giant ritual – that clarifies the plans that you do have, inviting participants in to understand and ask questions and to engage with the plan – represents an important chance to show rather than tell how this year will be different. Preparing rituals could help your staff and students transition together in a way that feels good and stabilizes the approach you are hoping will see you all through.

Consider the following:

- How and who do we invite to participate in the first day ritual? Do parents and families have a role to play, even if they are asked not to be physically present on the school grounds?
- How do you ensure that the folks who are the most nervous about staying safe are allowed to ask for - and get - what they need?
- What physical activities and artifacts might you incorporate - building a portal, creating maps, signage and color-coding – that send visual signals helping staff and students interpret expectations both verbally and non-verbally?
- If students are being broken into smaller groups, what asynchronous activities might you have them engage in that still allow for connection with their friends not in their pod?
- What opportunities can you create for students to talk about what they experienced while sheltering in place?
- What activities might contribute an element of magic to the proceedings?

- How might you engage students in translating the physical constraints that Covid-19 requires into behaviors and practices and in determining how to hold one another accountable to these agreements?

Shifting from Remote to In-person and Back Again

Just as you might design a ritual to transition from the classroom out to recess - and back again - a ritual that marks the transition from in-person learning to remote can also help students and staff feel more prepared to navigate the different demands that these two environments require. The rituals can be differentiated for schedules that are hybrid as opposed to schools where there is a need to close again because of a resurgence of Covid-19. It's also worth considering having some sort of ritual for students and staff who need to stay home because they - or someone in their family - are sick.

Developing rituals for these occurrences can help to make the process more visible to students and to mitigate the worries that students may have. One important aspect around creating activities to acknowledge these transitions will be including the opportunity for students to ask questions and to have the process reviewed. Rituals around these experiences also can help communicate adaptations

that may need to occur during the year as the situation changes.

Examples of activities/rituals might include closing and opening circles where students can share something they are looking forward to, a game of charades where students act out something that happened, interviews with family members, writing letters to people who need to resume sheltering in place and a virtual potluck, encouraging students and staff to virtually share their favorite foods from home.

Cleaning

There will be potentially a lot of cleaning that needs to happen as a part of re-opening schools - from the classrooms to the hallways to recess and PE equipment. Rituals can help to support - and express appreciation for - the cleaning staff and others who may have to deal with these heightened demands. These might be designed in conjunction with the custodial staff who could advise on the set up that would be most helpful, and identifying student roles such as helping with recess equipment management. Weekly gratitude reflections - creating cards and other art to share with people in the community who are helping to keep everyone safe - can also shift the dynamic

so that there is a shared sense of responsibility for these tasks.

Handwashing

Frequent handwashing throughout the day is going to require some significant coordination. Making it fun – adding a song element like “**Slippery Fish**” for the younger students or an intramural competition for the older students – can ensure greater buy-in. Shared student responsibility and oversight – a handwashing equivalent to crossing guards – that is shared and where there is a formal “changing of the guard” (like at Buckingham Palace) can also make the process more manageable.

Eating Lunch

If your school is electing not to use the cafeteria, but rather to have students eat lunch in the classroom, rituals around how that transition happens and creating weekly special events – eating with the teacher, a virtual lunch guest, or themed lunch discussions – can offer some differentiation from continued time in class. It’s also worth having the students take on leadership for managing classroom clean-up after lunch.

Recess and asynchronous games

More specific guidance on recess and games is offered at the end of this guide, but some rituals around recess – like the transitions from the story about Lamar – can really help to ensure that the shift from classroom to playground and back again goes well. If your school is coordinating recess in smaller groups, students may be disappointed that they aren’t able to connect with other friends. Setting up virtual tournaments or activities that allow the different groups to participate in the same activities but asynchronously – and to then discuss virtually – can re-create some of the experience of social connection that they are missing.

Engaging Parents and Families

In an effort to prevent the spread of Covid-19, many schools will elect to prohibit parents and other adults from entering the school buildings. Creating other rituals that invite family members into the classroom virtually can help to mitigate anxiety this may cause (especially for the parents of younger students), and may additionally create a good bridge for the support that may be needed for remote learning. Having students lead these family info sessions – sharing the school maps they make,

interviewing family members about their favorite books, leading an online lesson for parents – can be a great tool for promoting greater empathy for everyone involved.





RITUALS: STORYBOARDING

INSTRUCTIONS: CHOOSE AN IMAGINARY PARTICIPANT AND A SITUATION (THE FIRST DAY, SHIFTING FROM REMOTE TO IN-PERSON, CLEANING THE CLASSROOM, ETC.) AND STORYBOARD THEIR EXPERIENCE. WHERE MIGHT A RITUAL IMPROVE THEIR EXPERIENCE?

WORKSPACE:

YOU GOT THIS! →

HOW TO DRAW A PERSON:

•	i	⊂	⊂
---	---	---	---

IMAGINARY PARTICIPANT: _____
SITUATION: _____

ONCE UPON A TIME...	AND EVERY DAY...	UNTIL ONE DAY...	AND EVER SINCE THEN...
BECAUSE OF THAT...	BECAUSE OF THAT...	UNTIL FINALLY...	RITUAL IDEAS:



MAGICAL MAKE IT CONCRETE ACTIVITY SHEET

CHEER DESIGN

INSTRUCTIONS: CONSIDER ONE OF THE EXPERIENCES FROM YOUR STORYBOARD. DESIGN A CHEER TO SUPPORT THE EXPERIENCE!

1 THEME IDEAS:

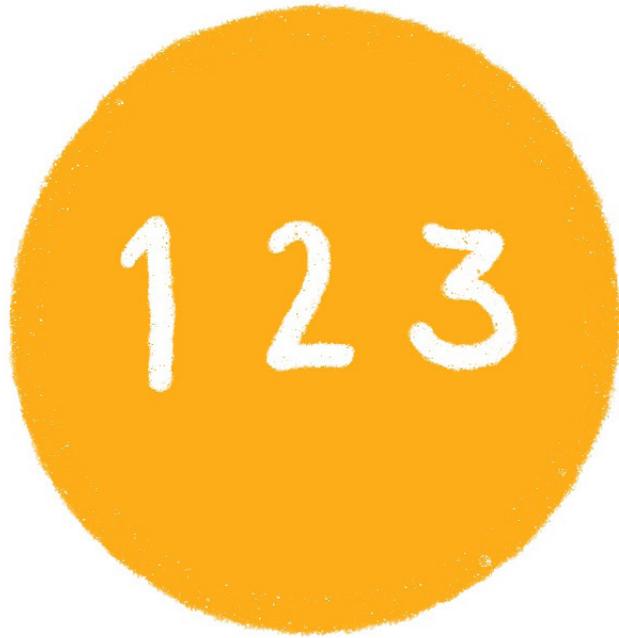
2 LYRIC IDEAS:

4 THE CHEER!

3 MOVEMENT / SOUND IDEAS:

THIS MAKES ME
THINK I SHOULD
THANK:

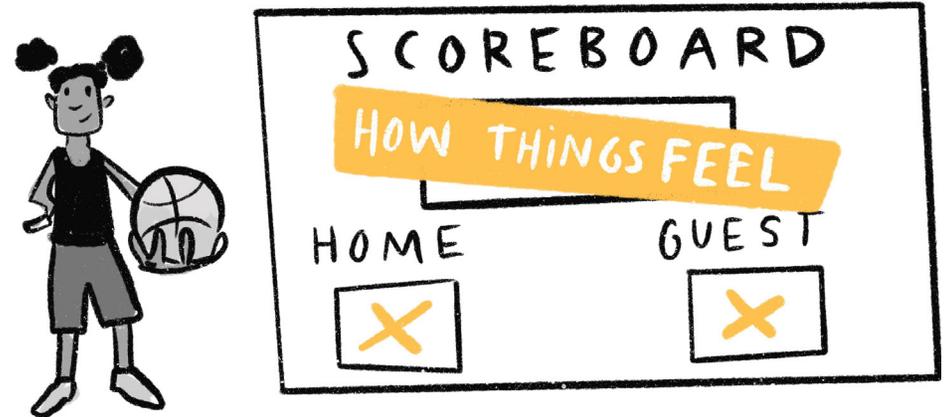
THE
GRATITU-
DICORN!



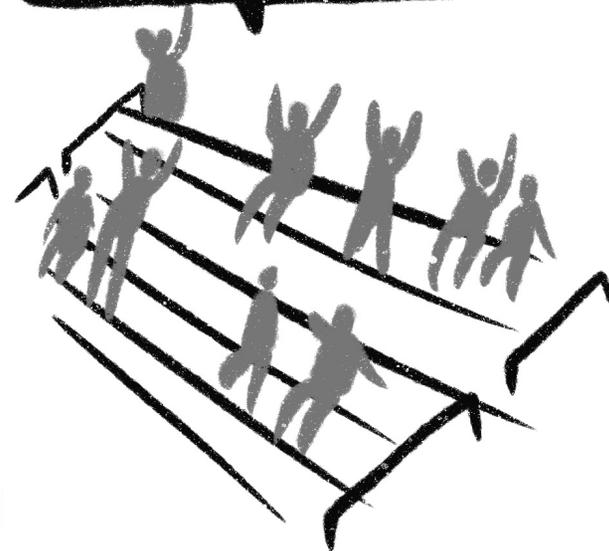
RULES

During the third year of running Playworks – then Sports4Kids – we decided to offer a girls’ basketball league. It was inspired in large part because we were noticing that regardless of who our staff person was, boys were more likely to jump into recess activities than girls were. We were interested in shifting that pattern by providing girls with an opportunity outside of recess – a basketball team – to build social connections that might spark and support participation at recess. The leagues

were ultimately very successful, but along the way there were some bumps and these bumps seemed to stem largely from the issue of keeping score.



GREAT PASS!



While we are fans of competition – it’s probably fair to say that some Playworks staff border on being obsessed with competition – our experience has been that sometimes it can get out of hand. And that is precisely what happened when we launched our first league. So, we talked about it – with the kids and the families - and while not everyone agreed, we ultimately decided to stop keeping score. Keeping score was a distraction from the joy of playing that wasn’t contributing as much as to the experience as it was taking away. Our intention was to run a league that introduced the girls to the game, the skills, and the experience of being on a team, and so we simply stopped keeping an official score.

The results were fascinating. Once the initial grumbling stopped, the whole focus of the game shifted – for the girls, the coaches and the fans. It should be noted that many of the girls did still try and keep score in their heads, and there were innumerable instances of girls erroneously insisting that their team would have won, if we’d been keeping score.

Perhaps most notably, though, the behavior that shifted most was that of the families in attendance. When we were keeping score, the cheering and comments that emanated from the fans were focused 100% on the winning and

losing. Grown humans actually cheered when 9 year old kids missed a shot. But when we took the scoring out of the equation, the cheering started to focus on great passes – made by either team – and there was a palpable sense that we were all in it together.

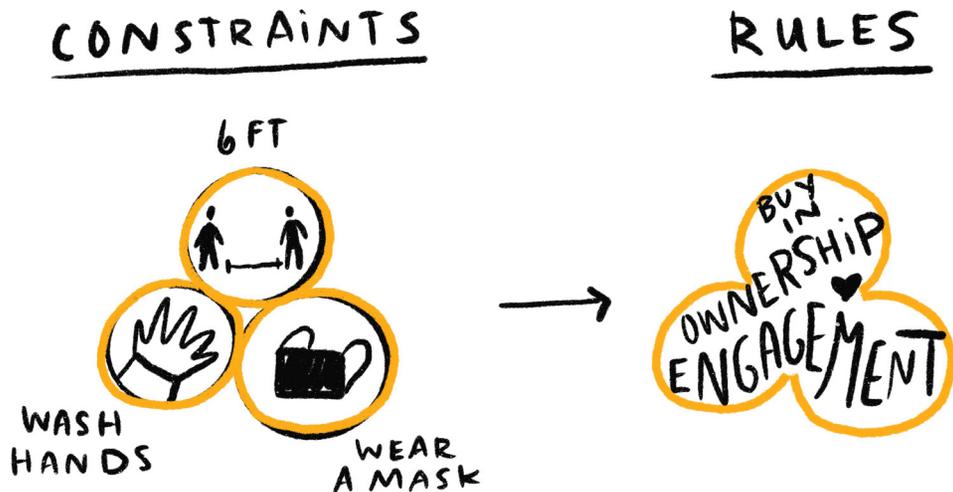
It should also be noted that as Playworks has grown, we’ve let the different regions determine how they want to handle the question of keeping score. Many do, some don’t. A few run regular seasons without keeping score and introduce a tournament at the end of the season that includes score-keeping, in the belief that they have had the opportunity during the regular season to build skills and relationships and expectations around behaviors that set the score-keeping experience up for success.

At the heart of this whole conversation is the question of how we translate what is required in this moment into rules - the critical word in this sentence being how. One of the things that has been made abundantly clear in all our years of running Playworks is the importance of how things feel. Paying attention to that, above all else, has been our single best predictor of success.

THE IMPORTANCE OF
HOW THINGS FEEL.

The interesting thing to consider in translating the requirements of Covid-19 into rules for how a school operates – just reducing it to the purely technical and logistical – is that there’s really not that much to consider. We are being asked to make decisions in a situation that is defined by uncertainty and incomplete information, so unless you feel a bit uneasy, you are fooling yourself. But, as of this writing, the things we seem to actually know are:

1. Masks are good
2. Being outside is better, and
3. As always, it’s useful to wash your hands.
4. It’s really hard not to touch your own face.



We titled this chapter “Rules” because rules are central to play. We know of lots of groups who avoid all the negative connotations of the word by focusing on agreements or guidelines, but we wanted to lean into claiming rules, not as something limiting, but like the three-point line in basketball or the 5-7-5 syllable structure of a haiku, as something that has the potential to spark creativity.

Russian developmental psychologist Lev Vygotsky described play as “imagination in action,” and as a means for children to make sense of the world. Vygotsky also saw play as the process by which children learn the skills of self-regulation. He explained that in play,

“at every step the child is faced with a conflict between the rule of the game and what he would do if he could suddenly act spontaneously. In the game he acts counter to what he wants . . . [achieving] the maximum display of willpower.”⁴

For schools to be successful in creating the conditions that do not contribute to the further spread of Covid-19, they are going to need students’ assistance through self-regulation. That is, in the end, the only way this thing works. So, given this, and given all the challenges of

just running a school when things are “normal,” what should you do? What rules should you put in place, and how in the world do you ensure that they are followed? In some ways, the questions that Covid-19 raises about how to run a school are surprisingly similar to the regular issues that educators face.

The folks at [Center for Inspired Teaching](#) have framed it as the tension between engagement and compliance. Their vision for teachers is that they become “Instigators of Thought,” humans whose job description is focused on promoting authentic engagement and getting kids to think for themselves. This moment, if it does nothing else, offers an extraordinary opportunity to do exactly that. Just as we have suggested that you co-construct the space and the rituals for this new phase of educating, we strongly advocate for co-creation of the rules that will guide you in this time.

Starting from scratch isn’t necessary though. A great place to start is with the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP)’s [COVID-19 Planning Consideration: Guidance for School Re-entry](#). They offer principles and age specific recommendations. And our Recess Considerations and Games section also provide some great guidelines with which

to start. That said, there is a lot to be gained from considering how your school may want to customize the rules and practices that you adopt.

Making up the Rules

Game designers have a lot of different theories about what makes for a great game, but there is general agreement on four essential components. A game needs a goal, rules (things you can do), restrictions (things you cannot do), and acceptance of these previous three things by the players. In preparing the rules for your school re-opening, it is useful to think along these same lines. Can you get really clear about the goals? What things are students and teachers allowed to do – and what are they not allowed to do? And, finally and perhaps most importantly, what needs to happen to ensure students and teachers accept these goals, rules and restrictions?

It’s worth noting some of the other characteristics that game designers call out as important, including surprise, consistency, inclusiveness, creative control by the participants, freshness and tension. It may seem like a stretch to consider how making up rules around Covid-19 for your school might

incorporate students' creative control, surprise or freshness – and you may feel (understandably and justifiably) that you really, really don't want any added tension. Our hope in simply raising the qualities that contribute to a good game is to prompt a mindset that is open to something slightly more creative.

At Playworks, we also rely on a framework we call the six simple principles of play to guide us in designing activities and events:

Taken in combination, the game designers' focus on making sure that you have clear goals, rules, restrictions and acceptance, along with these basic principles of play, provide a solid approach to translating the restrictions of Covid-19 into practices that are set up to succeed. That said, it feels important to acknowledge that there are justifiable worries specific to this moment that add difficulty points to actually putting these ideas into place. Safety worries are real – as they always are in schools – but the stakes feel higher in this moment.

Safety and risk are complicated issues in any undertaking involving kids. We need our children to experience physical and emotional risk if they are to grow up and

6 SIMPLE RULES OF PLAY

- 1) PLAY SHOULD HAPPEN EVERY DAY
- 2) CHOOSE PLAY, CHOOSE HAPPINESS
- 3) KIDS HAVE THE TOOLS TO RESOLVE CONFLICT
- 4) ADULTS PLAY TOO – AND MODEL TRUST, POSITIVITY & INCLUSION
- 5) PLAY IS NOT A REWARD TO BE REVOKED
- 6) EVERYONE IS WELCOME TO PLAY ♥

become functioning adults, but it is also our responsibility to protect them from excessive risk. Different people have different risk tolerances and there are no absolutes in determining the appropriate level of risk in the best of circumstances.

In a Covid-responsive world, there will inevitably be tensions among people who have a wide variability of comfort with different risks, accompanied by the inevitable awkwardness of learning new social practices. Are you comfortable with me being without a mask if I am 6' away and we are outside? How do you communicate friendliness when wearing a mask? How much information should co-workers share about their respective social bubbles? If

I'm a parent and my child is at school, what are the implications for my family in relationship to other families in my child's classroom?

Assumption Storming

Assumption storming is a design technique that is essentially a brainstorm session in which you list out the assumptions for your project. In this moment, assumption storming represents an important opportunity to consider all the ways your school has historically operated – all the assumptions about how school works – and to consider how some of these previously non-negotiables might now be reconsidered. Assumption storming can also be a useful in sparking innovation by flipping assumptions. For example, one opportunity for sparking creativity around Covid-19 compliance might include first having your staff list out all the assumptions they have around complying with the physical distancing requirements and then “flipping” them – stating the opposite as an assumption.

For example, assumptions might include “The youngest students are incapable of staying 6’ apart,” “Teachers are going to have to spend a significant amount of time ensuring compliance with the social distancing rules,” and “Students

aren't going to want to wear masks.” Flipped, the assumptions are “The youngest students are going to be the best at social distancing,” “Teachers won't be the primary people ensuring compliance with the social distancing rules,” and “Students are going to be excited to make and wear masks.” While the initial “flipping” doesn't get directly to the heart of how these changes might occur, it does create an important mindset shift that can help with generating innovative solutions.

What follows is a list of areas ripe for assumption storming.

Spitting

One idea is to start your rule-making process with guidance around spitting. Intentionally starting with something that is likely to prompt giggles and some groans of “Ooooh, gross!” has the benefit of disrupting the usual classroom conversation for the better. It's also fairly non-controversial as rules go, especially important in this moment, and, as such, offers up a good opportunity for developing and testing a process. Have your students list out all their assumptions about spitting and then try flipping them. Based on the assumptions and the insights that flipping them offers, what rules

would they propose? What are the assumptions about what happens if someone does spit? What are the assumptions about helping people remember? Lastly, what, if any assumptions do the students have about how you might revisit the rules to discuss if they're working and how you might fix the rules if they're not working?

6' apart

- *What are your assumptions about adults maintaining the adult-to-adult distance?
- *What are your assumptions about desk set up?
- *What are your assumptions about who is enforcing physical distancing?

Handwashing

- *What are your assumptions about the number of times each person is going to wash their hands each day?
- *What are your assumptions about waiting in line to get to the sink?
- *What are your assumptions about how the younger students will be organized to wash hands?

Masks

- *What are your assumptions about who will wear masks?
- *What are your assumptions about students wearing masks?
- *What are your assumptions about how it will feel wearing a mask?
- *What are your assumptions about how families will feel about masks?

Transitions

- *What are your assumptions about hallways?
- *What are your assumptions about the beginning and ending of the day?
- *What are your assumptions about student roles in handling different moments of transition?

Lunch

- *What are your assumptions about eating lunch in the classroom?
- *What are your assumptions about how school lunches work? What happens if a student forgets her lunch?

123

RULES:

ASSUMPTION STORMING/ FLIPPING

INSTRUCTIONS: LIST THE ASSUMPTIONS YOU HAVE ABOUT HOW COVID-19 WILL IMPACT YOUR RE-OPENING/RETURN TO SCHOOL. THEN, STATE THE OPPOSITE (FLIP IT!) WHAT IDEAS DO YOUR FLIPPED ASSUMPTIONS GIVE YOU?

WORKSPACE:

MY ASSUMPTIONS

HOW WILL STUDENTS & ADULTS RESPOND?

WHO WILL BE RESPONSIBLE FOR SAFETY & COOPERATION?



FLIPPED ASSUMPTIONS

EXCITING IDEAS!



RULE PROPOSALS

INSTRUCTIONS:

TAKE 1-2 OF YOUR IDEAS FROM THE ASSUMPTION-FLIPPING EXERCISE AND PROPOSE A FEW RULES THAT WOULD HELP MAKE THEM HAPPEN!

EXCITING IDEA #1:

PROPOSED NEW RULE:

WHO IS THIS RULE FOR?

WHEN WILL YOU NEED TO REVISIT THIS RULE?

EXCITING IDEA #2:

PROPOSED NEW RULE:

WHO IS THIS RULE FOR?

WHEN WILL YOU NEED TO REVISIT THIS RULE?

THIS MAKES ME
THINK I SHOULD
THANK:





REFEREES

Coach Kaitlin had only been working at her school in Fall River, Massachusetts for a few weeks when a couple of teachers pointed out a student named Adonis and warned her that he could be disruptive. Kaitlin didn't think too much about it, other than to be slightly relieved that Adonis didn't seem particularly interested in the activities she was running out on the playground. But in the spring when Kaitlin announced she would be organizing a co-ed volleyball team to participate in the Playworks

league, Adonis showed up and announced his interest in being on the team.

Sure enough, Adonis proved to be kind of difficult to work with. He was openly disrespectful on occasion and had a hard time getting along with his teammates. Kaitlin did all the things we had coached her to do, redirecting him as possible and focusing on things he did right, and slowly but surely she began to notice modest, incremental improvements. It wasn't a dramatic shift until the sixth week of the season when Adonis had a really exceptional game. Not only did he play well, serving for seven consecutive points, but he was positive with his teammates, liberally dispersing high fives, and gracious with the opposing team. Kaitlin was feeling incredibly proud of herself, and even acknowledged feeling a bit smug when thinking about the teachers who had initially tried to warn her.



The 7th week of the season was the final week, and the game fell on the evening before Kaitlin was scheduled to announce her last squad of Junior Coaches for the year. Junior Coaches are the youth leaders that Playworks relies on to support our school staff, and our primary strategy for ensuring that kids really come to have ownership over recess. It's a big honor among students and a highly coveted role. Kaitlin was seriously considering making Adonis a Junior Coach.

But on the evening of the last match, the wheels came off the cart. Adonis didn't just lapse back into his old disruptive ways, he was more challenging than Kaitlin had ever seen him, throwing the ball at one of the players from the other team, calling his teammates names when they lost a point, and ultimately storming out of the gym - loudly and dramatically - during the end of season awards ceremony.

OUR JOB IS TO SEE
THE BEST IN KIDS

Later that night, when Kaitlin was making the list of Junior Coaches that she would post the next day, she was at a loss. She couldn't imagine inviting Adonis to be a Junior Coach after his display that evening. What message would it send to the other kids? Or for that matter, to Adonis? But then she thought about what she had heard Playworks staff say over and over: that our job is to see the best in kids, no matter what they did. And so, almost against her better judgment, Kaitlin put Adonis on the list. "Our job is to see the best in kids"

The next day Kaitlin posted the list on the Playworks bulletin board, and all the kids rushed to the board to see if their names were there - everyone except Adonis. Kaitlin watched as the other kids moved away - some excited to be chosen, others disappointed - and slowly, and only after everyone else was gone, Adonis went up to confirm what he knew to be true. Kaitlin could see from his body language that he was just going up to confirm that he wasn't on the list. In that moment she understood Adonis' behavior the evening before as an effort to control the outcome. Even if it wasn't the outcome he really wanted, at least he would know what was coming.

Seeing his name on the list visibly surprised Adonis and he turned around quickly to see if anyone was watching. He walked directly over to Kaitlin and said “Coach, can we talk outside?” He then headed out the double doors and onto the playground, not even looking back to see if Kaitlin was following. When Kaitlin caught up to him, she didn’t know what to expect.

“Coach K,” Adonis began hesitantly. “Well, I just wanted to say thank you for having me on your volleyball team.”

Kaitlin responded, “Of course, Adonis, it was a pleasure to have you on the team.”

Adonis appeared genuinely confused by this response, and teared up as he asked, incredulously, “It was?”

Kaitlin said later that she knew that no matter how it turned out, she had made the right decision including Adonis as a Junior Coach. That no ten-year-old should ever wonder if it was a pleasure to have him on your team. At least for that moment, she had made sure that Adonis knew that she believed in the best in him.

When students ultimately do return to school,

there is good reason to believe that many of them will be bringing along a fair bit of trauma. From more extreme experiences of food and housing insecurity and violence to the more mundane (but potentially traumatic nonetheless) experiences of missing friends and routine disruption, it is highly likely that re-opening will be significantly impacted by the behavior issues that these experiences trigger.

It seems worth mentioning that, just as this applies to students, many educators and administrators returning will also be experiencing their own trauma. New staffing structures will exacerbate this, compounded by the likelihood that many teachers may be either unable – because of health or age reasons that make it unsafe – or unwilling to return, creating a demand for new and less experienced teachers in a moment that is even more demanding than the past.

There was some debate internally around titling this chapter “Referees” – grounded largely in concern that it sounded too authoritarian and not enough like an ally or champion for the players. We use the term in the sense of a referee as “one to whom a thing is referred.” The titling is also a nod to Brian Sutton-Smith’s writing, insisting that children who “are introduced into civilization under the control

of ludic regulations (rituals, rules, referees and so on)" are "likely to be more sophisticated in their mature social lives and more diplomatically adept in the everyday social relations."⁵

The goal of this section is to prompt consideration of how you might create shared responsibility for referee-ing amongst both staff and students. How might families be engaged to help bridge remote and in-person learning, providing supports that encourage engagement, as opposed to enforcement?

The role of referees is best considered as an adjacency to rule design. Referees are critical to the process of framing the goals, establishing the rules and restrictions and then ensuring acceptance. Intentionally designing the process for referee-ing, along with designating the humans responsible, can dramatically change the experience for everyone involved. And agreeing to revisit the referee experience creates the expectation at the outset that the role of referee will be dynamic, giving students a greater sense of visibility into the process.

Are the referees getting the support they need?

Are there ways that they might engage differently with the rules?

Are the rules changing?

Are other people interested in taking turns as referees?

Empathy interviews

This moment represents an important opportunity to reconsider all sorts of roles. Even if you do nothing radically different with the roles you already have, this is a chance to consider how you might acknowledge and intentionally design different experiences to ensure that everyone at your school feels as though they belong and are invited to make the best contribution they can. To generate ideas on how best to create the conditions that enable this, we recommend starting with empathy interviews.

Empathy interviews can be conducted by your staff and by students and family members, and even just a handful of 20 minute conversations can have a significant impact. Whether the interviews are of peers or across groups that interact less often – for example having students or teachers interviewing custodians, the school

⁵ Brian Sutton-Smith, *Play Theory: A Personal Journey and New Thoughts*, American Journal of Play, Vol 1, No. 1, 2008

secretary or the cafeteria staff - the goal is to promote understanding of the current situation and its challenges from a different perspective. Like the shadowing activity we described in the Rituals section, empathy interviews are intended to surface aspects of the experience that might not be evident at first glance and to reveal solutions that might not be discovered otherwise.

Good empathy interviews focus on open-ended questions that encourage the interviewee to talk about – and sometimes even discover – what is important to them. Questions focus on how the interviewee feels, and the interviewer is encouraged to both listen deeply to responses, while also observing body language and reactions that either confirm – or sometimes contradict – what is being said.

The interviewer should strive to create a comfortable setting for the interviewee – easing into the conversation by sharing some basic information and finding connection, and starting out with questions that encourage a positive experience – like asking the interviewee about an experience that delighted them, and encouraging the interviewee to “show” (using stories) as opposed to “tell” whenever possible.

It can be helpful to do empathy interviews in pairs with one person asking the questions and the other person taking notes. And ask if it’s OK to take pictures. Having a phone picture of the person you interviewed can help later when you are thinking about/discussing the things you learned in the interview.

Some important tips to keep in mind:

- *Keep your questions short and open-ended
- *Ask one question at a time
- *Encourage stories
- *Don’t suggest answers. When in doubt, stay quiet
- *Explore feelings
- *Seek clarification – don’t assume you know
- *If the conversation gets stuck, ask why
- *Express your gratitude

Below are some suggested people to interview along with some starter questions to consider. Many of the questions work equally well for different people and you likely have other questions you’d also like to ask. Go forth and empathize!

Custodian

Can you walk me through your average day before Covid-19?

What would I find surprising about your work?

How are you feeling about your job in this moment?

Principal/AP

Tell me a story about a time when you felt like you were really successful in your job.

How did you get involved in education?

What worries you most about re-opening our school?

School Secretary

How did you become a school secretary?

What's your favorite part of working in a school?

Cafeteria Staff

What other jobs have you had? How does this job compare?

Tell me a story about a memory you have of the cafeteria?

How did you feel coming back to school after the closure?

Substitute Teachers

What is the most surprising thing about being a sub?

How did you decide to become a substitute teacher?

Can you describe your job for me? How do you think the teacher you are substituting for would describe it?

Para-professionals

Tell me about a memorable day at school.

How does it feel to be a para-educator?

How does this job compare to other jobs you have had?

Nonprofit/Afterschool Partners

Describe the first time you ever came to this school.

Could you share how you feel about your work right now?

What's your favorite part of your job?

Parents/Family Members

What are you most excited about doing when Covid-19 is over?

What's your best memory from when you were in school?

What worries you about me going back to school?

Students

Tell me a story about something that happened during shelter-in-place

What were you looking forward to most about coming back to school?

What did you like about not having to go to school?



REFEREES: EMPATHY INTERVIEWS

INSTRUCTIONS: INVITE SOMEONE FROM THE SCHOOL COMMUNITY TO HAVE A CONVERSATION WITH YOU ABOUT RE-OPENING. PREPARE YOUR QUESTIONS AND ENCOURAGE STORYTELLING & REFLECTIONS ON YOUR INTERVIEWEES FEELINGS. TAKE NOTES AND BE SURE TO ASK "WHY" WHEN SOMETHING SURPRISES YOU. AS ALWAYS, BE SURE TO EXPRESS YOUR GRATITUDE!

WORKSPACE:

I'D LIKE TO HAVE A CONVERSATION WITH:

- _____
- _____
- _____

NOTES FROM OUR CONVERSATION:

HOW DOES THIS PERSON FEEL?

QUESTIONS I HAVE FOR THEM:

WHY?

WHAT DOES THIS PERSON NEED?

Magical Bonus Make It Concrete Activity

One way to translate the empathy interviews into something concrete is by creating a classroom charter or a school mission. Both are similar in that they hold out a vision for how they want the classroom – or school – to feel and all that they want the students and staff to achieve – and then work backwards to determine the rules and promises and guidelines that will help make it happen.

There are lots of resources online for this process, we recommend Yale's RULER Program as a great place to start. Instead of typical classroom rules that are teacher-directed, the CHARTER is an agreement that is based in feelings. The process starts with the question 'How do we want to feel at school?' and then, 'How will we make sure to feel these feelings?'

For pre-K- 5, each class works together to build their own CHARTER which is then signed by all students and teachers, who share equal ownership in its values. Since the CHARTER is created completely by the students, and rooted in their feelings, they feel bound to it in an authentic way.



MAGICAL MAKE IT CONCRETE ACTIVITY SHEET

CLASSROOM
CHARTER

INSTRUCTIONS:

USE THE EMOTION WHEELS ON THE NEXT PAGE TO HELP YOU ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS:

HOW DO WE FEEL
RIGHT NOW?

HOW CAN WE MAKE SCHOOL
A PLACE WHERE WE FEEL
HOW WE WANT TO FEEL?

HOW DO WE WANT
TO FEEL AT SCHOOL?



THE EMOTION WHEEL!

USE THIS WHEEL
TO HELP
YOUR STUDENTS
(AND YOURSELF)
IDENTIFY HOW
THEY'RE FEELING.

I'M FEELING...



① CHOOSE A COLOR IN THE MIDDLE ② CHOOSE ANY 3 WORDS ON THE OUTSIDE OR MAKE UP YOUR OWN!
* SOMETIMES IT HELPS FOR ADULTS TO GO FIRST.

Footnotes

Page 8 “The opposite of play is not work...”
Brian Sutton-Smith, *The Ambiguity of Play*, Harvard University Press, 1997

Page 34, “The future will reward clarity...”
Bob Johansen, *The New Leadership Literacies: Thriving in a Future of Extreme Disruption and Distributed Everything*, Berrett-Koehler Publishers Inc., 2017

Page 55, “All play moves...”
Johan Huizinga, *Homo Ludens: A study of the Play-element in Culture*, Beacon Press, 1955

Page 77, “At every step...”
LS Vygotsky, *Play and its role in the mental development of the Child*, 1933

Page 96, “are introduced into civilization...”
Brian Sutton-Smith, *Play Theory: A Personal Journey and New Thoughts*, *American Journal of Play*, Vol 1, No. 1, 2008



PLAYWORKS

SCHOOL

RE-OPENING

WORKBOOK!



Follow us on Instagram @plaworksreopeningworkbook

[#playworksreopeningworkbook](https://www.instagram.com/plaworksreopeningworkbook)



SPACE: THINK, PAIR, SHARE!

INSTRUCTIONS: ① REFLECT INDIVIDUALLY ON THE PROMPTS ② PAIR UP & DISCUSS WHAT YOU'D LIKE TO SHARE WITH THE GROUP - CHOOSE 3 INSIGHTS ③ BASED ON THE DISCUSSION, WHAT PROTOTYPES WOULD YOU LIKE TO TRY?

WORKSPACE:

① WHAT I THINK:

② WHAT MY PARTNER THINKS:

② WHAT WE WANT TO SHARE:

③ IDEAS TO TRY:



MAGICAL MAKE IT CONCRETE ACTIVITY SHEET

SPACE: MAPPING

INSTRUCTIONS: DRAW A MAP OF THE SPACES WHERE TEACHING & LEARNING WILL TAKE PLACE AS YOU REOPEN. THIS MIGHT BE INDOOR & OUTDOORS AT SCHOOL AND/OR YOUR REMOTE SPACES. WHAT CAN YOU DO TO MAKE THESE SPACES SPECIAL? ENCOURAGE PARTICIPANTS TO MAKE & SHARE MAPS TOO!

MY SCHOOL:

MY REMOTE SPACE:

THIS MAKES ME
THINK I SHOULD
THANK:





RITUALS: STORYBOARDING

INSTRUCTIONS: CHOOSE AN IMAGINARY PARTICIPANT AND A SITUATION (THE FIRST DAY, SHIFTING FROM REMOTE TO IN-PERSON, CLEANING THE CLASSROOM, ETC.) AND STORYBOARD THEIR EXPERIENCE. WHERE MIGHT A RITUAL IMPROVE THEIR EXPERIENCE?

WORKSPACE:

YOU GOT THIS! →

HOW TO DRAW A PERSON:

•	i	⊆	⊆
---	---	---	---

IMAGINARY PARTICIPANT: _____
SITUATION: _____

ONCE UPON A TIME...	AND EVERY DAY...	UNTIL ONE DAY...	AND EVER SINCE THEN...
BECAUSE OF THAT...	BECAUSE OF THAT...	UNTIL FINALLY...	RITUAL IDEAS:



MAGICAL MAKE IT CONCRETE ACTIVITY SHEET

CHEER DESIGN

INSTRUCTIONS: CONSIDER ONE OF THE EXPERIENCES FROM YOUR STORYBOARD. DESIGN A CHEER TO SUPPORT THE EXPERIENCE!

1 THEME IDEAS:

2 LYRIC IDEAS:

4 THE CHEER!

3 MOVEMENT/SOUND IDEAS:



123

RULES:

ASSUMPTION STORMING/
FLIPPING

INSTRUCTIONS: LIST THE ASSUMPTIONS YOU HAVE ABOUT HOW COVID-19 WILL IMPACT YOUR RE-OPENING/RETURN TO SCHOOL. THEN, STATE THE OPPOSITE (FLIP IT!) WHAT IDEAS DO YOUR FLIPPED ASSUMPTIONS GIVE YOU?

WORKSPACE:

MY ASSUMPTIONS

HOW WILL STUDENTS & ADULTS RESPOND?

WHO WILL BE RESPONSIBLE FOR SAFETY & COOPERATION?



FLIPPED ASSUMPTIONS

EXCITING IDEAS!



RULE PROPOSALS

INSTRUCTIONS:

TAKE 1-2 OF YOUR IDEAS FROM THE ASSUMPTION-FLIPPING EXERCISE AND PROPOSE A FEW RULES THAT WOULD HELP MAKE THEM HAPPEN!

EXCITING IDEA #1:

PROPOSED NEW RULE:

WHO IS THIS RULE FOR?

WHEN WILL YOU NEED TO REVISIT THIS RULE?

EXCITING IDEA #2:

PROPOSED NEW RULE:

WHO IS THIS RULE FOR?

WHEN WILL YOU NEED TO REVISIT THIS RULE?

THIS MAKES ME
THINK I SHOULD
THANK:





REFEREES: EMPATHY INTERVIEWS

INSTRUCTIONS: INVITE SOMEONE FROM THE SCHOOL COMMUNITY TO HAVE A CONVERSATION WITH YOU ABOUT RE-OPENING. PREPARE YOUR QUESTIONS AND ENCOURAGE STORYTELLING & REFLECTIONS ON YOUR INTERVIEWEES FEELINGS. TAKE NOTES AND BE SURE TO ASK "WHY" WHEN SOMETHING SURPRISES YOU. AS ALWAYS, BE SURE TO EXPRESS YOUR GRATITUDE!

WORKSPACE:

I'D LIKE TO HAVE A CONVERSATION WITH:

- _____
- _____
- _____

NOTES FROM OUR CONVERSATION:

QUESTIONS I HAVE FOR THEM:

WHY?

HOW DOES THIS PERSON FEEL?

WHAT DOES THIS PERSON NEED?



MAGICAL MAKE IT CONCRETE ACTIVITY SHEET

CLASSROOM CHARTER

INSTRUCTIONS:

USE THE EMOTION WHEELS ON THE NEXT PAGE TO HELP YOU ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS:

HOW DO WE FEEL
RIGHT NOW?

HOW CAN WE MAKE SCHOOL
A PLACE WHERE WE FEEL
HOW WE WANT TO FEEL?

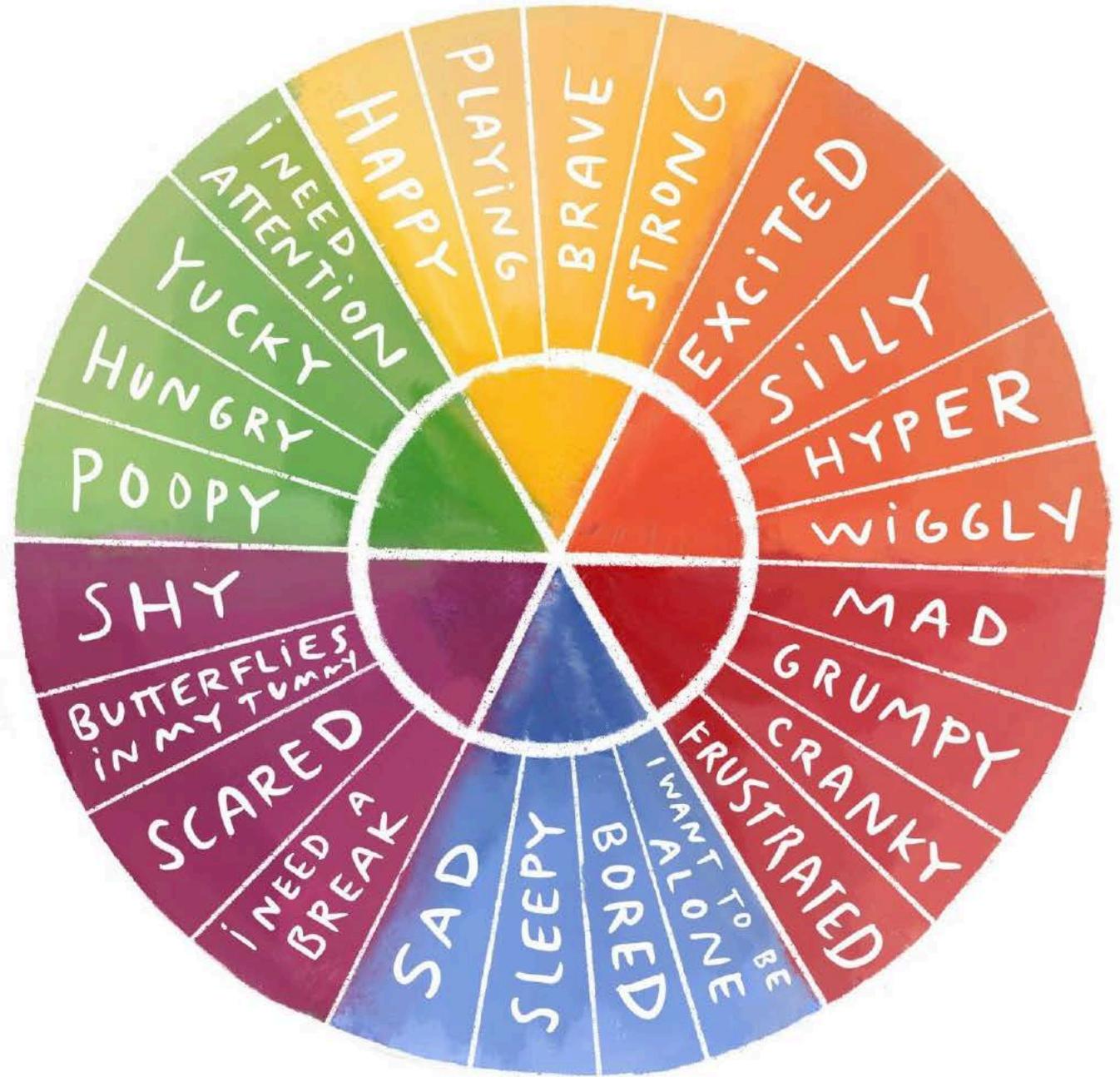
HOW DO WE WANT
TO FEEL AT SCHOOL?



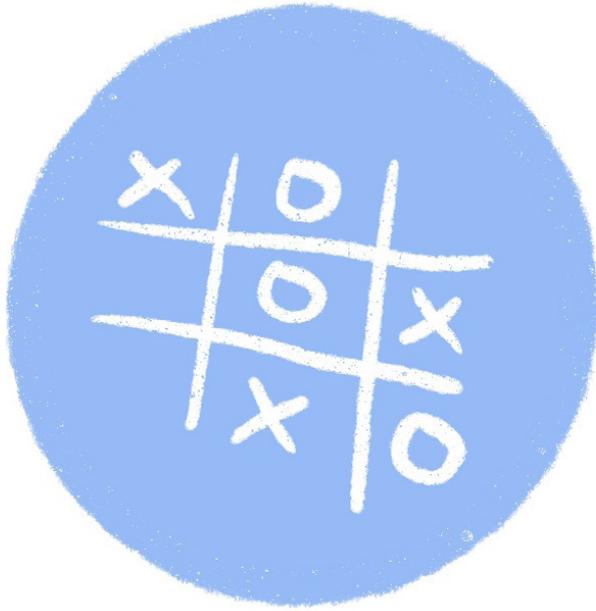
i'M FEELING...

THE EMOTION WHEEL!

USE THIS WHEEL TO HELP YOUR STUDENTS (AND YOURSELF) IDENTIFY HOW THEY'RE FEELING.



① CHOOSE A COLOR IN THE MIDDLE ② CHOOSE ANY 3 WORDS ON THE OUTSIDE OR MAKE UP YOUR OWN!
* SOMETIMES IT HELPS FOR ADULTS TO GO FIRST.



RECESS & GAMES

Below are descriptions of 4 different school configurations for recess considerations – In-school pod-focused, In-school socially distanced, Virtual Zoom recess and Virtual Google Classroom. For each configuration we have offered suggestions to consider (as relevant) for sanitizing, scheduling, space, and adult participation/student leadership. Consider using these as a discussion starter for a staff meeting before school starts and revisiting

as the school year proceeds. This information can also be shared with families and students to help them understand and engage with the process. Consider keeping notes on your experiences with each of these configurations as you experiment with them.

In school, as a “Pod”

Insulated bubbles (“pods”) of students where they only see their pod, but they are able to socialize normally within the pod.

Sanitizing

- Washing all hands before and after recess
- Sanitize equipment after recess

Scheduling

- 20-30 mins per class/pod of actual outside play time (not including transition time)
- Ideally only having one pod out at a time
- If not possible, creating zones for pods to stay separated
- If needed, pod can rotate who gets to go outside each day (with other pod staying in classroom)

Transitions:

- Either have 5 minutes between recesses
- Or have a “traffic pattern” so pods don’t use

- same entry / hallway
- (insert exercise here?)

Space

- Create zones for each class/pod at recess
- Basketball court sized area for each class/pod
- 2-3 games available in the zone daily
- (refer back to mapping exercise?)

Equipment

- Recommendations for utilizing the play structure
- Avoid using play structure for start of year
- Potentially rotating use of play structures later in year based on CDC recommendations
- Equipment for each class
- Jump Ropes (1 per 5 students)
- Hula hoops (1 per 2-3 students)
- Multiple colors of cones (1 cone per student)
- Gator ball
- Soccer ball
- Basketball
- Playground ball
- Chalk

Adult Participation/Student Leadership

- Bring equipment
- Set up activities
- Model positive behavior (verbal appreciations)

- Play games with your students
- Lead Transitions
- Clean/Sanitize equipment before and after recess

In school, but socially distanced the entire time

Insulated bubbles (“pods”) of students where they still remain socially distanced (6’ apart) and wear masks at all times.

Sanitizing

- Washing all hands before and after recess
- Sanitize equipment after recess

Scheduling

- 20-30 mins per class/pod of actual outside play time (not including transition time)
- Only one pod allowed outside at a time
- Using classroom for recess when schedule doesn’t allow all pods to go outside separately

Transitions:

- Either have 5 minutes between recesses
- Or have a “traffic pattern” so pods don’t use same entry / hallway

Space

- Outdoor
- Basketball court sized area for each class/pod
- 2-3 games available in the zone daily
- Indoor
- If possible, identify indoor spaces within the building that are large enough for students to socially distance while playing (ie: cafeteria, stage, library) and can be cleaned between uses
- If space allows, create a circle area where students can be socially distanced within the classroom (away from their desks)
- If no other option, use games that can be played while students sits or stands at their own desk within the classroom

Equipment

- Recommendations for utilizing the play structure
- Avoid using play structure for start of year
- Potentially rotating use of play structures later in year based on CDC recommendations
- Equipment for each class
- Jump Ropes (1 per 5 students)
- Hula hoops (1 per 2-3 students)
- Multiple colors of cones (1 cone per student)
- Soccer ball
- Chalk

Adult Participation/Student Leadership

- Bring equipment
- Set up activities
- Model positive behavior (verbal appreciations)
- Play games with your students
- Lead Transitions
- Clean/Sanitize equipment before and after recess

Virtual, live recess via Zoom

All students are attending school remotely from their own homes. Built into the students weekly schedule and engage an educator to lead a live activity daily.

Schedule:

- Class fits 20 minutes into their daily schedule for a recess break lead by their teacher or specific staff member at the school
- Recess is scheduled for the same time every day to establish consistency
- Classes can have recess individually or in conjunction with other classes

Space

- Students and teachers use the space within their home

- Assume that students have limited space when playing the game

Equipment

- Games should have limited or no equipment
- Use everyday household objects when possible
- Adult Participation/Student Leadership
- Teachers/staff plan and lead games/brain breaks during the 20 minute time period

Virtual, embedded into Google Classroom

All students are attending school remotely from their own homes. Embed Recess Activities / Games into Google Classroom or shared in weekly resources to be played at home

Schedule:

- Designate time each day for students to play on their own with the provided resources

Space:

- Students and teachers use the space within their home
- Assume that students have limited space when playing the game

Equipment

- Games should have limited or no equipment
- Use everyday household objects when possible

Adult Participation

- Teachers/staff designate time for play each day
- Teachers/staff share out resources with students and families each week
- Teachers/staff create a challenge for students to learn and play a new game each week



The Playbook: Games Anyone Can Play

At Playworks, we believe every child should experience safe and healthy play every day. Playworks' evidence-based programs have been proven to get kids moving, while teaching them social-emotional skills like cooperation and conflict resolution. Now more than ever, these skills are essential to helping kids across the country combat stress and anxiety and successfully navigate the uncertainty and change associated with the COVID-19 crisis.

The games in this guide can be played anywhere, and we have assembled them to work as well at home as they do at school. In these settings, the challenge is not just to introduce games kids will love, but also to ensure that children can play in the space safely and in accordance with all CDC guidelines.

Making playtime run smoothly often starts with game rules, while still keeping it fun. In the following pages, you will find the rules of games that require little to no equipment, can be played with one child or a few, and can be led by families, teachers, caring adults, and peers.

For more than 24 years, Playworks has helped schools and youth organizations through on-site staffing, consultative support, staff training, and most recently, online learning. We are a mission-driven nonprofit committed to the power of play.

This Playbook is only one of many resources available online from Playworks.

For more games including a searchable game library, visit

<https://www.playworks.org/game-library/>

For guidance on how to include play in a safe return to school, visit

<https://www.playworks.org/news/safe-return-to-play-recess-guidelines/>

Have fun! The Playworks Team

Most games can be played inside or outside. CDC recommendations for interaction include: wear masks, play with groups of ten or less, stand at least 6 or more feet apart from each other, wear gloves if sharing an object or give everyone their own object, if possible, or clean hands thoroughly before and after play, clean and disinfect equipment frequently and thoroughly. For the most up to date guidelines visit [cdc.gov](https://www.cdc.gov).

4 Square

of people to play: Any Size

Best for ages: 6-10

Equipment needed: Rubber Ball/Ball that can bounce Setup/Teaching Time: 10 minutes

Before You Start

- Set up a box with 4 squares (like a grid); outline with tape, cones or chalk.
- Label the squares 1, 2, 3, 4.
- The player in square 1 is the server - they start the game.

Set Up

- 10' x 10' box, with four 5' x 5' squares.

How to Play

- Player in Square 1 drops the ball so that it bounces once, and then hits it underhand into another square.
 - Ball must bounce only once in each square.
- Each player needs to hit the ball with one or two hands into another player's square once it has bounced in their own square.
 - If the ball bounces twice or more in a player's square, they return to the recycle line.
- If the ball hits a line or hits out of bounds, the player who hit the ball returns to the recycle line.
- If a player holds the ball, or hits it without the ball bouncing in their square, the player returns to the recycle line.
- Anytime a player returns to the recycle line, players shift in squares. All new players enter in Square 4, other players in the game rotate clockwise. (If you are in Square 4, you would go to Square 3, etc.).

At-Home Accommodations

- Use balled up socks and play hot potato style.
- Use a table and small bouncy ball and play hand-ball style!

Modifications for Social Distancing

- Wipe down equipment and area before playing.

Challenge ideas

- Work on math by counting by 2's or 3's, etc. when you hit the ball
- Use your non-dominant hand only to hit the ball.
- Stand on one leg at all times.

Game Variations

- Have two people in each square to work as a team to hit the ball!

4 Square Categories

of people to play: 4

Best for ages: 7+

Equipment needed: Playground ball, 4
Square Court (see setup)

Setup/Teaching Time: 5 minutes

Before You Start

- One player is in each square and the other players wait in line.
- The player in Square 1 is the server. That player begins the play of the game.

Set Up

- A standard 4-Square area is one large square, 10' x 10' divided into four smaller squares (5' x 5'), and each box is labeled 1, 2, 3, 4. The box labeled "1" contains a smaller service box (1.5' x 1.5') located in the far outside corner of the square.

How to Play

- Before play begins, the server calls out a category (ex: colors).
- To start play, the server will say something within the category (ex: blue), and then bounce the ball in their square and hit it into someone else's square.
- When it bounces in a different square, the person in that square must say another thing within the category (ex: green) before hitting it into someone else's square.
 - The ball can only bounce once in any square.
 - If a player fails to say something in the category, they must return to the recycle line and wait for another turn
- Each player needs to hit the ball with any part of their hand into an opposing player's square after it has bounced only once in their square
- If the ball lands on a line, or goes out of bounds before it bounces, the player who hit the ball needs to return to the recycle line for another try. If a player hits the ball and it bounces again in their square, they also need to return to the waiting line.
- If a player catches or holds the ball, that player needs to return to the recycle line.
- If the ball bounces more than one time before it is hit into another square, the player who let the ball bounce needs to return to the recycle line for another try.

- If the ball is returned before it is allowed to bounce, the player who returned the ball early needs to return to the recycle line.
- Anytime a player moves out of the game into the recycle line, a square is left open. The person in front of the line advances to Square 4, and the remaining players advance clockwise to close the gaps between 1 and 4.
 - The player in Square 1 gets to stay there as the server until they make a mistake and have to return to the recycle line!

At-Home Accommodations

- Rather than a ball, use balled up socks and play the game similar to hot potato.

Modifications for Social Distancing

- Make sure you wipe down your equipment before and after each use and wash hands after playing.
- Space out squares further apart - at least 6 feet between players.

Challenge ideas

- Try super challenging categories - or do math problems, geography, etc. to use school content!

4 Corners

of people to play: Any Size

Best for ages: 6-10

Equipment needed: None

Setup/Teaching Time: Less than 5 minutes

Before You Start

- Split players into 4 groups.
- Select a player to be in the middle.
- Assign each corner a number: 1, 2, 3 and 4.

Set Up

- Use any area with four corners (ex: living room, classroom, etc.).

How to Play

- The player in the middle closes their eyes and counts slowly from 1-10.
- While they are counting, all other players must either move to a different corner or stay in their current corner.
- If players did not find a corner by 10, they must sit down where they are.
- After counting, the player in the middle keeps their eyes shut and either points their finger to or calls out a corner number. They may then open their eyes!
 - If your corner is selected, you must sit down.
 - If the player in the middle points to a corner that is empty, everyone is back in!
- Middle player will count again and repeat the previous steps.
- Last player standing begins in the middle for the next round!

At-Home Accommodations

- Instead of using corners, find 4 colored objects to use (when your color is called, you sit down).
- Instead of getting out each round, players in the chosen corner could play Ro-Sham-Bo with the caller to determine whether or not they stay in the game or switch places to become the caller(s).

Modifications for Social Distancing

- Players must be standing at least 6 feet apart.
- Players must each be standing on an object near their corner (ie: chair, step stool, step, etc.).

Challenge ideas

- Give them less than 10 seconds to get to a corner!
- Must be at a new corner each round.
- Instead of numbering the corners, have each be a different state, state capitol, or color to involve school content.

Game Variations

- Person in the middle can pick the loudest corner, quietest corner, etc.
- Change middle person every round.

Ah-So-Co

of people to play: 5+

Best for ages: 8+

Equipment needed: None

Setup/Teaching Time: 5 minutes

Before You Start

- Have the group stand in a circle. Explain that “energy” will be directed around the circle with three different words/actions: “Ah”, “So” and “Co”.
- First pass begins with an “Ah” accompanied by placing a hand above the head with the fingers pointing at the person on either side. Pass word and movement around the circle in the same direction.
- Pass “So” accompanied by putting a hand across the stomach to the person on either side.
- A “Co” is done by pointing with both palms together to anyone in the circle, who then passes an “Ah” to someone else around the circle. Make sure that there is eye contact with the person receiving the “Co”.
- The actions must always go in the same order: “Ah”, “So” then “Co.”
- Once everyone is familiar with the words and movements begin the game.

Set Up

- Designate playing space large enough for the group to form a circle.

How to Play

- The leader begins with an “Ah” and passes it to the person either to their left or right.
- It is up to the person who receives it which direction to pass it, with a “So”.
- The next person must “Co” it, sending it to someone across the circle.
- “Ah” and “So” can be sent in either direction.
- If a person hesitates, they must go around the outside of the circle and may try to trick the others still in the circle by saying the words “Ah”, “So” and “Co” in the people’s ears.
- Once there are only two people left, have them Ro-Sham-Bo (rock, paper, scissors) to determine a Ah So Co Champion! Restart with everyone joining back in. The Ah So Co Champion may begin the game!

At-Home Accommodations

- Clear space for a circle.

Modifications for Social Distancing

- Keep 3-foot distance between the people next to you.
- No physical contact.

Challenge ideas

- Time yourselves to see how long you can go without some hesitating or making a mistake.
- See how fast you can get through 10 rounds.

Game Variations

- Each player takes a turn being the heckler outside the circle.
- Use other words/movements in place of Ah, So and Co.

Animal Kingdom

of people to play: 3+

Best for ages: 5+

Equipment needed: Object to mark the ground, e.g. hula hoop, newspaper, placemat

Setup/Teaching Time: 5-10 min

Before You Start

- If you are playing with young children, identify 3 or 4 animals that the children recognize and know the sounds of to use during play.

Set Up

- Make a circle with one player who is "it" in the middle. Place the marker on the ground underneath one of the players in the outside circle.

How to Play

- The player in the middle closes their eyes, and everyone else begins to walk in a circle around them, chanting, "KUM-cha, KUM-cha, KUM-cha, KUM-cha", stepping onto the marking object when they come to it
- Keeping their eyes closed, the player in the middle calls, "STOP" and everyone must freeze.
- The player in the middle then names an animal.
- Whoever was standing on the marking object when they froze must try to make the sound of the animal named - without saying anything else!
 - Only the person standing on the marking object should make a noise!
Everyone else must be as silent as possible.
- The player in the middle gets one chance to guess who is making the animal sound. They can ask for the sound to be repeated once before they make their guess.
- Switch new players into the middle for each round.
- Keep in mind that although players should not speak as it will give away the answer, fun is the point of the game and everyone should be allowed to giggle freely!

At-Home Accommodations

- If you do not have anything to use as a floor marker, you can have the middle player spin 3 times with their finger pointed out. Make sure your circle is big enough so they may do this safely!

Modifications for Social Distancing

- Ensure that your players maintain an appropriate distance, about two arms-lengths away.

Challenge ideas

- Allow the person who is "it" to name fictional creatures, or ones whose noise we do not know (e.g. unicorns, t-rex, hippogriff) so that players must make up the sounds as the game goes.
- Do not allow players to say words such as "oink", "arf", "tweet" - only allow them to imitate the sound to the best of their ability.

Game Variations

- If you have a lot of players, allow the person in the middle multiple guesses.
- With children 5 years old or younger, select a limited list of animals to play with that they are familiar with, e.g. pig, chicken and horse.

Annie I Over

of people to play: 2+

Best for ages: 5+

Equipment needed: A small ball and a structure to throw it over

Setup/Teaching Time: 2 minutes

Before You Start

- Make sure you have a building, house, playground structure, or fence that you can throw the ball over.

Set Up

- Two evenly-divided teams stand on opposite sides of a structure, with one team holding the ball.

How to Play

- Divide the group into two teams.
- Each team stands on opposite sides of a structure.
- Use Ro Sham Bo to decide which team throws first.
- The Throwing Team yells "ANNIE I OVER!" as a player throws the ball over the structure to the team on the other side.
- If a player on the Catching Team catches the ball before it hits the ground, the catching team runs around the structure to tag the other team's players or hit them with the ball.
 - In this case, the Throwing Team should run to the other team's side to be "safe."
- If no one on the Catching Team catches the ball before it hits the ground, it is their turn to yell "ANNIE I OVER!" and throw the ball back to the other team.
- The Throwing Team needs to be prepared to catch a ball coming back over the structure, or to run around the structure safely to the other side if the other team tries to tag them.

At-Home Accommodations

- You can play over a house, garage, fence, or any other structure that you can safely throw a ball over.

- If no structure is available set up a large rectangle and play around it! Use your imagination to throw the ball high over your invisible castle!

Modifications for Social Distancing

- No Tagging! Play with one ball for each player. Players **MUST** throw a ball at other players below the shoulder instead tagging.
- Be sure to clean all equipment and wash hands before and after each game.

Ball Toss Race

of people to play: 4+

Best for ages: 7+

Equipment needed: Small ball

Setup/Teaching Time: 2 minutes

Before You Start

- Have the group get into a circle and have one or more balls (appropriate size for throwing and catching) ready.
- Go around the circle allowing everyone to say their name so that the others can hear.

Set Up

- Designate a space for the group and one or more balls that can easily be thrown/caught—bean bags, tennis balls, dodgeball or other.

How to Play

- The leader begins by throwing, rolling, or bouncing a ball (depending on the age and skill level) to another player while saying the other person's name loudly. Explain that it is very important to remember who you have passed the ball to.
- Keep passing the ball around the circle so that everyone has received the ball one time. You can have players sit down or cross their arms once they have received the ball to make sure nobody gets it twice.
- When the last person gets the ball, have them pass it back to the leader.
- Now without the ball and in the same order, have each player say out loud who they will pass the ball to so that the pattern of the ball's movement is established.
- Once everyone remembers who to pass to, try again with the ball and see how fast they can go.
- After trying a couple times, ask the group:
 - Who has an idea for how to get the ball to everyone more quickly?
 - What do you think about adding a second ball?
 - Shall we time ourselves and then try to beat our time?

At-Home Accommodations

- Play the game with balled up socks!

Modifications for Social Distancing

- Stand farther apart.
- Make sure you wash the equipment before and after use and wash your hands.

Challenge ideas

- Add more balls - if you have ones of different shapes and sizes, use them all!
- Have multiple patterns going at once, or try to establish a new pattern and then return to the first pattern - try to see if the group remembers!
- Instead of calling out names, establish a category (ex: animals, states, etc.).

Beans on Toast

of people to play: 2+

Best for ages: 5+

Equipment needed: None

Setup/Teaching Time: 5 Minutes

Before You Start

- Choose one person to lead the game and remind the group to focus on playing safely

Set Up

- Find somewhere to play that allows everyone to have some space to move
- The leader should stand in front of the group so that they are visible to everyone

How to Play

- The leader's job is to call out different types of beans. Each bean will have an action associate with it. When the bean is called out, the group does the action for that bean. The goal is to follow the directions as quickly as possible and without making any mistakes. If you are able to go the longest without making a mistake, you get to be the new leader.
- Teach the various beans one at a time. Practice each one and add in new beans until you have a list of 3-4 that the group knows. Here are a few to start with:
 - String Bean - Stand straight and tall with your hands together over your head
 - Chilly bean - Shiver like you're out in the cold
 - Dancing Bean - Show one of your best dance moves
 - Green Bean - Run in place as fast as you can
 - Red Bean - Stop running and freeze
- The leader should call out the beans and mix up the speed and order. Example: "String Bean, Green Bean, Red Bean, Red Bean, Chilly Bean"
- If at any point someone does the wrong action they should step out and sit next to the leader.

- Aside from the various beans, the leader can also call out “Beans on Toast.” When you hear “Beans on Toast,” fall to the ground as quickly (and safely!) as you can.
- The leader will watch for the last person to fall to the ground. If you’re the last one on the ground, step out of the game, sit next to the leader, and help them come up with new bean ideas.
- As you play, add in more beans, create your own beans and actions, and try to trick the group any way you can!

Challenge ideas

- What creative beans and actions can you come up with?
- As the leader, can you trick everyone all at once?
- How many commands can you follow before making a mistake?

Game Variations

- Instead of sitting out when a mistake is made, have players perform an action, such as 5 jumping jacks, to re-enter the game

The Big Cheese

of people to play: 3+

Best for ages: 5+

Equipment needed: None

Setup/Teaching Time: 3 minutes

Before You Start

- Practice the call and response of "I am the Big Cheese," with all players responding "You are the Big Cheese."
- Introduce 3 different movements: Cheddar Cheese (hands circled in front), String Cheese (arms stretched overhead), Stinky Cheese (waving hand in front of nose)

Set Up

- All players stand in a straight line, in a semi-circle or circle so you can see everyone and who's made which sign. Choose who will be the first "Big Cheese"

How to Play

- The leader begins each round by saying "I am the Big Cheese!" and the other players respond "You are the Big Cheese!".
- The leader then counts "1...2...3!" On the "three," players pick one of the 3 predetermined movements to show (Cheddar, String, or Stinky Cheese). At the same time, the Leader shows one of the 3 movements.
- Players who make the same movement as the leader are recycled (or out).
- The object of the game is for players to stay in the game by doing a different sign than the leader. The last player standing gets to be the next "Big Cheese."

At-Home Accommodations

- Play sitting down if space is limited indoors.

Challenge ideas

- Play the game while standing on one leg!
- Challenge the players to come up with more cheeses and associated actions.

Game Variations

- Students can complete an action (example: 5 jumping jacks) to re-enter
- Connect game to what kids are learning in class (plant cycle, larva cycle, etc)

Blizzard

of people to play: 1-10

Best for ages: 5+

Equipment needed: 1 piece of paper

Setup/Teaching Time: 1-2 minutes

Before You Start

- Find an open space large enough for the group to stand in a circle.

Set Up

- Take the piece of paper and create small rectangles (about 2 inches wide by ½ inches tall). You can rip the paper or cut it with scissors. These rectangles will be the “snowflakes.”
- Stand with the group in a circle in the middle of the designated open space.

How to Play

- For the first round, choose someone to hold one of the “snowflakes.” When everyone is ready, throw the “snowflake” as high as you can into the air.
- As the “snowflake” floats down, work together with your team to catch it before it hits the ground.
- If you are able to catch it before it hits the ground, you move up to the next level! To move to the next round, everyone shouts “Just One More!” Add one more “snowflake” --this will be thrown with the first “snowflake.”
- During the second level, you must catch BOTH “snowflakes” to move up, during the third level you must catch ALL three to move up, the fourth you must catch ALL four... and so on.
- If at any time you throw the “snowflakes” into the air and the team is unable to catch ALL the “snowflakes,” that’s alright! Try that level again using the same number of “snowflakes.”
- Keep playing and get creative with how you work together to catch them all!

At-Home Accommodations

- Try dropping them all from a higher spot for everyone below you to catch. Make sure you consider safety when choosing a higher spot to drop “snowflakes” from!

Modifications for Social Distancing

- Play with your own set of “snowflakes” or on a team of 2 and compete to see who can catch the most.

Challenge ideas

- How many “snowflakes” can your group work up to?
- How many can you catch without using your hands?

Game Variations

- Play in smaller groups, with a partner, or on your own.
- Cut paper into decorative “snowflakes” to use! Make this an activity before the game.

Booty Ball

of people to play: 2+

Best for ages: 5+

Equipment needed: Small ball

Setup/Teaching Time: 2 minutes

Before You Start

- Set up a rectangular area divided into two areas, each large enough for half of the group to comfortably sit with space for each player.
- Set up chairs facing outward to enclose playing area and act as the "net"

Set Up

- Designate your playing area with chairs serving as the "net".
- One team sits on each side of the "net".

How to Play

- Divide the group into two teams, with one team on either side of the "net."
- Everyone sits on their team's side, spaced out evenly on the floor.
- Drop the ball into play in one of the team areas.
- Players attempt to hit the ball to the other team, over the chairs which are dividing the court.
- Players may hit the ball with arms, legs, or any body part, but may not lift their bottom off of the ground.
- There are only three hits allowed per side, so help the players count aloud.
- Players try to keep the ball volleying back and forth as long as possible.

At-Home Accommodations

- Play the game with balled up socks!
- Can use a coffee table or couch instead of chairs!

Modifications for Social Distancing

- Sit farther apart.
- Make sure you wash the equipment before and after use and wash your hands.

Challenge ideas

- Add the serving component like in volleyball and award points following regulation rules.

Boppity Bop Bop Bop

of people to play: 3-10

Best for ages: 6+

Equipment needed: None

Setup/Teaching Time: 5 mins

Before You Start

- Go over instructions. Provide examples of each sequence and use call and response to make sure players know how to play the game.
- All ties are resolved with Ro Sham Bo, therefore make sure everyone knows how to play. (Ro Sham Bo is another name for Rock, Paper, Scissors).

Set Up

- The group should be standing in a circle, at least arm-distance apart.

How to Play

- The group gathers in a circle, with one person in the middle (selected by the game leader).
- The player in the middle walks up to/points to a player in the circle and says "Boppity Bop Bop Bop." If the player in the middle completes the phrase before the other player says "Bop," the two switch places. If the player on the outside says "Bop" before the middle player finishes the phrase, the game continues with the same player in the middle.
- The player in the middle can fake out players on the outside by simply pointing and saying "Bop" to a player in the circle. If the outside player says "Bop," the two players switch places.

At-Home Accommodations

- Ball up a sock to use as a soft throwable object versus pointing at players. The person in the middle can throw the ball to the person before they say the phrase.

Modifications for Social Distancing

- Instead of standing in a circle, you spread out the group throughout the room.

Challenge ideas

- Make up a different phrase or add rules!

Charades Relay

of people to play: 5+

Best for ages: 8+

Equipment needed: None

Setup/Teaching Time: 5 minutes

Before You Start

- Review the basics of charades!
 - One person acts out a word or phrase without speaking while the team tries to guess what the word is.
- Prepare a list of words/phrases from among several categories (see below).
- Decide what movement people will do (ex. speed walking, tip toeing, etc.)

Set Up

- Divide the group into 2 or more teams.
- Have everyone spread out so they cannot overhear the surrounding teams.

How to Play

- This game is a charades race and the categories in the sample below are Fast Food, Electrical Appliances, and Cartoon Heroes. Teams compete against each other trying to be the first to guess all items on the same list.
- To start, ask one member from each team to come to you. Tell them the first word and return them to their group to begin acting it out.
- Once a member of the group guesses the word correctly, someone new from that team returns to you for the next word. They must tell you the first word before receiving the second word.
- No one can come up a second time until everyone has had a turn acting out a word from the list
- The game is over once a team completes the list

Sample List:

- | | |
|--------------------|---------------------|
| 1. Superman | 10. McNuggets |
| 2. Curly Fries | 11. Batman |
| 3. Storm | 12. Scooby Doo |
| 4. Blender | 13. Ipod |
| 5. In-n-out | 14. KFC |
| 6. Blow Dryer | 15. Captain America |
| 7. Incredible Hulk | 16. Taco |
| 8. Dishwasher | 17. Wii |
| 9. Milk Shake | 18. Wonder Woman |

At-Home Accommodations

- Each team can have their own room in the house so other teams cannot hear them
- Remind the group not to run. Choose a safe mode of movement (ex: speed walk, tiptoe, walk like a penguin, walk like a zombie, moonwalk, walk with high knees, walk sideways like a crab, squat and walk like a duck, etc.) for them to use while retrieving their next word.

Modifications for Social Distancing

- Make sure each team has plenty of space to spread out from each other so they can remain 2 arms-lengths apart throughout the game.
- Remind the group that although this is a race, there will be no pushing/shoving.

Challenge ideas

- Choose easier or more difficult categories.
- Choose a shorter or longer list.
- Choose to reveal the category or keep it secret.

Game Variations

- Players must also complete an exercise before receiving the next word (ex: 5 jumping jacks, be more successful than you in roshambo, etc.).

Clean Your Room

of people to play: 2+

Best for ages: 5+

Equipment needed: Soft, throwable objects, e.g. balls, stuffed toys, frisbees, balled up socks, paper balls

Setup/Teaching Time: 5 min

Before You Start

- Go over safety rules: players should not throw objects AT other players.
- Designate an appropriate space like the living room, a bedroom or backyard.
- Remove breakable objects like lamps and plants from the play area.

Set Up

- Make a boundary across the middle of your play space.
- Split players into two teams.
- Place an even number of objects on either side of the boundary.

How to Play

- Set a timer for 1 minute.
- Players must race to “clean their room”, clearing all objects from their side by throwing them onto the other team’s side.
- When the timer goes off, count the objects remaining on each side to determine who was most successful.
- Reset the objects and start a new round! Don’t forget to say “Good Game” to the other team when you’re done playing!

At-Home Accommodations

- Paper balls work well for playing at home as they will not knock household items over!

Modifications for Social Distancing

- Be aware that both teams will touch the objects being thrown--choose objects you can sanitize if possible!
- Keep players two arm-lengths away from each other.

Challenge ideas

- Only allow players to hop, crawl, etc to make it more difficult!

Game Variations

- Change the amount of time that players have to compete!

Concentration Ball

of people to play: +2

Best for ages: 6+

Equipment needed: Soft ball that can be easily thrown or caught Setup/Teaching Time: 30-60 seconds

Before You Start

- Explain how to make a good underhand toss with eye contact.
- Explain that players have to say the intended recipient's name before throwing.
- Make sure players know to throw gently!

Set Up

- Identify an open area where players can form a small circle.

How to Play

- You pick a theme such as animals, cars, sports, colors, fruits, singers, etc.
- One person starts with the ball and says something that fits the theme (such as "cat" if the theme were animals), then says the name of someone in the circle and tosses them the ball.
- That person must say the name of a different person/object/animal in the theme, followed by the name of another player, and toss the ball to that person.
- You may not repeat answers and you only have 3 seconds to say yours!
 - If a player repeats an answer or can't complete their turn within the allotted time, they must complete 5 jumping jacks before rejoining the circle!
- Once three people get stuck, switch to a new theme!
- If someone drops the ball or misses a catch, they are the only one who should chase the ball to put it back in play.

At-Home Accommodations

- If there is no ball available, roll up a sock to use as a soft throwable object.
- If using a ball or soft object, avoid areas with windows, glass objects, etc.
- Play sitting down if space is limited indoors!

Modifications for Social Distancing

- Instead of throwing a ball/soft object, one can point or throw an imaginary ball.
- Can be played via Facetime, Google Hangout, Zoom, etc. Instead of throwing the ball players can simply say the next person's name.

Challenge ideas

- Endurance: Try to get to 20 total of whatever theme is chosen! (Example: 20 animals are named before someone makes a mistake or takes longer than 3 seconds to respond).
- Timed: try to get 20 total of whatever the theme is spoken within 20 seconds!

Game Variations

- For younger players, you may have them hand or roll the ball to each other instead of throwing.
- Add a rule that you may not throw the ball back to the person that tossed it to you!
- Elimination Round: If someone takes too long, they are eliminated. The last person in the game gets to pick the next theme. All players rejoin for the next round!

Did Ya Ever?

of people to play: 2+

Best for ages: 7+

Equipment needed: None

Setup/Teaching Time: 1-2 minutes

Before You Start

- Find someone or a group to play with!

Set Up

- “Did Ya Ever?” is a word game that can be played anywhere - even virtually. Play with a small group in person or play on a video call with a few friends.

How to Play

- The goal of the game is to create silly and ridiculous stories - one word at a time.
- One person starts the game by saying “Did Ya Ever?”
- The next person says one word to continue the sentence.
- The next person says the next word and so on...
- Keep adding words to the story and see where it goes! Anyone can start a new story by saying “Did Ya Ever?”

At-Home Accommodations

- Play during a meal or in the car.

Modifications for Social Distancing

- Make sure everyone has a 6-foot bubble around them.

Challenge ideas

- How ridiculous can your stories get?

Game Variations

- Allow anyone to add to the story instead of going in order.

Do This, Do That

Number of people to play: 2+

Best for ages: 5-8

Equipment needed: None

Teaching Time: 1-2 minutes

Set Up

- Identify a small open area where players have at least an arm's-length distance away from one another.

How to Play

- Invite one person up to the front of the group as the leader, or a parent/guardian can begin the game.
- The goal of this game is for the group to listen to the leader and imitate whatever movement the leader is doing when they say "Do This!", but not to get tricked when they say "Do That!"
 - "Do This!" When the leader says "Do This," followed by a movement, then the rest of the group must mimic the movement/facial features.
 - "Do That!" If/when the leader says "Do That!" everyone must **NOT** mimic the movement that the leader does.
- The leader should choose an action that involves a fair amount of movement. The movement should be silly and fun, and involve as many body parts as possible, as long as players can perform the movement safely!
- If a player makes a mistake and "does that," then they get a high five and they are out until the game restarts.

At-Home Accommodations

- Play sitting down if space is limited indoors.

Modifications for Social Distancing

- Instead of getting a high five when you're out, they get an "air high five", and/or the group says "good job nice try."
- Avoid movements that involve touching the face, mouth, eyes, lips, or nose.

Challenge ideas

- See how fast you can get people to “do this”!

Game Variations

- Players must complete 5-10 jumping jacks in order to get back into the game rather than sitting out until the round ends.
- Whoever is out first gets to be the person leading the game during the next round.

Evolution

of people to play: 5+

Best for ages: 5 - 9

Equipment needed: None!

Setup/Teaching Time: 5 minutes

Before You Start

- Identify the boundaries of the play space and any potential safety hazards.
- Make sure everyone knows how to play Ro Sham Bo (Rock Paper Scissors).
- Review the motions for each evolution level (Egg, Chicken, T-Rex, Rock Star, Superhero) and the order they follow.
 - Egg: Crouch down with your hands on top of your head to make an egg shape.
 - Chicken: Bend your arms into chicken wings and cluck like a chicken.
 - T-Rex: Make tiny T-Rex arms and stomp around.
 - Rock Star: Hold an air guitar and play a face-melting solo.
 - Superhero: Tie on a cape and hold out your arms like you're flying.

Set Up

- Players spread out in the play space.

How to Play

- All players begin the game as an Egg.
- The goal is to evolve all the way up to a Superhero!
- In order to evolve, players look for other players who are on the same level as them (e.g. Eggs look for Eggs, Chickens look for Chickens) and challenge them to a game of Ro Sham Bo.
- Whoever wins the Ro Sham Bo gets to evolve to the next level; the other player must stay at the same level and find a new Ro Sham Bo partner.
- The Evolution Order is as follows:
Egg → Chicken → T-Rex → Rock Star → Superhero
- Superheroes have a special job: Instead of finding other Superheroes to play Ro Sham Bo, they fly around looking to help other players! Superheroes play Ro Sham Bo against another player until that player wins and gets to evolve.

At-Home Accommodations

- Carefully move furniture to create a more open play space.
- Practice each motion before playing so everyone knows how to stay safe.

Modifications for Social Distancing

- Make sure not to touch other players' hands while playing Ro Sham Bo.

Challenge ideas

- If a player isn't successful in a game of Ro Sham Bo, they have to go down one level instead of staying the same!

Game Variations

- For younger players, try using fewer levels so it's easier to remember the order.
- Add in your own evolution levels and make up a funny motion to go with them!

Freeze Dance

of people to play: +2

Best for ages: +3

Equipment needed: Music-playing device Setup/Teaching Time: 5 minutes

Before You Start

- Make sure you have a safe space for dancing!

Set Up

- Identify an area for dancing
- Play the music loud enough for those playing to hear

How to Play

- In this activity, everyone dances as the music plays.
- When the music stops, each player must freeze immediately and hold that position until the music begins again.
- If a player does not freeze immediately, they do 10 jumping jacks during the start of the next round and then can rejoin the dance.
 - Since this is an aerobic game, it is better for players to remain in the game rather than getting “out.”

At-Home Accommodations

- Have players take turns selecting songs.

Modifications for Social Distancing

- Find a space big enough for players to stay far away from each other, and no partner dancing!

Gaga Ball

of people to play: +2

Best for ages: +8

Equipment needed: Soft, hittable ball

Setup/Teaching Time: 5 minutes

Before You Start

- Identify the boundaries and any safety concerns in the play area.

Set Up

- Use a playing area with clear boundaries - preferably circular, approx. 15 feet wide.

How to Play

- Everyone stands along the boundary. The leader drops the ball in the center and as it bounces three times, players say 'ga-ga-ball' aloud as a group. This signals the beginning of play.
- Players use their hands to hit the ball towards other players. The goal is to hit other players with the ball from the knee down!
 - If a player is hit with the ball from the knee down, they are out. When they are out, they go to the boundary line and help keep the ball in the play area by acting as a wall or a cushion.
- You can only hit the ball with an open hand. No catching, throwing, or holding the ball.
- You can only touch the ball one time in a row. The ball needs to hit either a boundary or another person before you can touch it again.
- Explain that one more goal of the game is to prevent the ball from leaving the play area. Rather than jumping away from a ball that will go out of bounds, players should try to hit it into play.
- Play ends when there is only one player left, or when time has been called.

At-Home Accommodations

- Use couches as "the walls."

Modifications for Social Distancing

- Wipe down the ball before and after play.

Challenge ideas

- Give yourself a time challenge to see how many people you can get out in 3 minutes.

Game Variations

- Rather than sitting out, players must complete 5 jumping jacks in order to get back into the game.

Giant

of people to play: 4+

Best for ages: 4+

Equipment needed: None

Setup/Teaching Time: 3 minutes

Before You Start

- Identify the clear boundaries of the game and make sure players know of any off-limits spaces (under furniture, leaving the room etc.).
- Make sure all students understand how Villagers get “caught” and how to get back in.

Set Up

- Identify an area where players can safely crawl. Ideally there will be obstacles to crawl around.
- Identify where Villagers go when they get caught.

How to Play

- The Leader is the Giant, all other players are Villagers.
- The Giant starts on the edge of the space and says “Fee, Fie, Foe, Fum, Freeze!” to start the game. Villagers may crawl around the space until the Giant says “Freeze!”
- While frozen, Villagers must stay totally still and silent!
- After saying “Freeze!”, the Giant can take up to three giant steps to tag as many frozen Villagers as possible. Villagers cannot move away from the Giant!
- Villagers must return to their seat (or the designated “caught” area) when they are:
 - Tagged by the Giant.
 - Caught moving by the Giant OR any adults in the room.
 - Caught making noise by the Giant OR any adults in the room.
 - Caught moving on their feet (running) instead of crawling by the Giant OR any adults in the room.
- After the Giant takes three steps and tags as many Villagers as possible, the next round will start! The Giant will start from the place they ended after their three steps. The Giant will say the phrase, and Villagers can move until the Giant says “Freeze!”

- Repeat until either all Villagers have been tagged OR the Giant was unable to tag a Villager in that round.
 - Tagged Villagers may return to the game after a round when the Giant is not able to tag anyone (and no one is caught moving or making a noise)!

At-Home Accommodations

- This game can be played inside or outside! Choose a space where players can crawl safely. If you are using a smaller room, have the Giant take smaller steps or heel-toe steps!

Modifications for Social Distancing

- Remove tagging and have the Giant close their eyes while saying their phrase. After saying "Freeze!", the Giant will open their eyes and take their three steps. While doing this, the Giant should try to catch villagers moving or making sounds!

Challenge ideas

- Challenge the Giant to take more or less steps each round!

Game Variations

- Select a new Villager to be a new Giant after each game!
- Have Villagers move in a different way - Heel-to-Toe walking, Fire Feet, hands must touch the floor, etc.
- Roll a dice to see how many steps the Giant can take!
- When the Giant tags a Villager, the Giant must win a round of Ro-Sham-Bo (Rock Paper Scissors) to be successful. Otherwise, the Villager "escapes!"

Huckle Buckle Beanstalk

of people to play: 3+

Best for ages: 5+

Equipment needed: A small unique object to hide (beanbag, marker, etc.)

Setup/Teaching Time: 5 minutes

Before You Start

- Remind everyone to be fair and honest during the game - especially when the object is being hidden.
- Remind the person hiding the object to remember where they put it.

Set Up

- Decide on a starting area for each round. This could be a spot in the room such as a couch or your desk. This is where everyone will stand while the object is being hidden.
- Choose one person to hide the object first.

How to Play

- To begin, have everyone in the starting area put their heads down and close their eyes.
- One person will take the object and hide it in plain sight somewhere in the room. The seekers shouldn't need to touch, rearrange, or open anything in the room to find the object.
- Once the object is hidden the hider can return to the starting area and let everyone know they can begin searching.
- The goal of the game is to find the hidden object as fast as you can and keep it a secret from other players.
- When you find the object, don't give away its location - don't point at or pick up the object. Simply make your way back to the starting area. Once you are back at the starting area, say "Huckle Buckle Beanstalk!"
- Keep playing until everyone has found the object. Then, choose someone new to hide the object. Make sure everyone gets a chance to hide it.

At-Home Accommodations

- Play in a specific room or throughout the house.

Challenge ideas

- Can you hide your object in a spot no one can find?
- How quickly can you find the object?

Game Variations

- Allow the object to be hidden out of plain sight - in a box, under a pile of clothes, etc.
- Have multiple people hide an object then race to see who can find someone else's object first.

I see, I see

of people to play: 5+

Best for ages: 3+

Equipment needed: No equipment needed

Setup/Teaching Time: 5 minutes

Before You Start

- Make sure players know to not make any physical contact with each other.

Set Up

- Designate an appropriate play area with clear boundaries.

How to Play

- Players begin walking around the designated area (use movement modifications to make this more playful: examples include a runway walk, slow-mo walk, zombie walk, etc.)
- When the leader says the words "I See, I See." the players freeze. After the players freeze, they will ask the leader, "What do you see?"
- The leader will then say, "I See _____."
- Whatever the leader says, the players act it out in the designated area.
 - An example dialogue/sequence for the game:
 - Leader: "I See, I See!"
 - Players: "What do you see?"
 - Leader: "I see a superhero flying in the sky!"
 - Players then act like superheroes flying in the sky.
 - After the players have successfully acted, the leader will then repeat the phrase, "I See, I See" and the game will continue with new actions.

At-Home Accommodations

- Play sitting down if space is limited indoors

Modifications for Social Distancing

- Have players standing/sitting in certain spots of the designated area. Players cannot wander from that spot or move closer to each other.

Challenge ideas

- Challenge players to be really silly with their actions. Their goal can be to make the other players laugh! The player with the silliest action gets to be the new leader.

Game Variations

- Connect the game to animals you see at the zoo, characters you see on tv, or anything players are interested in!

Night at the Museum

of people to play: 2 or more

Best for ages: 5+

Equipment needed: None / optional: object for the janitor to hold (cone, marker, anything they can pretend is a flashlight).

Setup/Teaching Time: 2 Minutes

Before You Start

- Identify the boundaries and any safety concerns in the play area
- Talk to players about what statues do: Do they move? Do they touch each other? Do they make a lot of noise? But we all know they come alive and move around the museum at night, right?
- Remind players to be safe and be aware of objects and other players around them. We want to ensure players do not run into each other.
- Have players practice appropriate statue poses.

Set Up

- Make sure the space is clear of obstacles and there are boundaries for where you will be playing
- Designate an area where players will go to do jumping jacks or other tasks when they get caught moving by the Janitor.

How to Play

- One person is chosen to be the Janitor.
- All other players are statues, and they can't let the Janitor catch them moving.
- The Janitor closes their eyes and gives the statues 10 seconds to move around the room and freeze in a statue pose.
 - Blinking, breathing, and sneezing do not count as moving!
- The Janitor will move slowly around the room, pointing their flashlight at the statues. If they shine the flashlight on a player and that player moves/laughs/etc., they will have to go to the designated area and do 5 jumping jacks (or complete a predetermined task) to get back into the game.
- Once there is only one player left, restart the game with that player as the new Janitor!

At-Home Accommodations

- If playing this indoors, encourage players to be sneaky when they're moving around. You do not want the Janitor to hear you moving!

Modifications for Social Distancing

- Instead of using a shared object to point in a certain direction, focus on eye contact between the Janitor and the statues to catch them moving.

Challenge ideas

- For older students, this game can be combined with other games - such as silent ball- for an added challenge.

Game Variations

- Players that have been spotted moving become Security Cameras! Security Cameras should have a designated place to stand (for example, along the wall). They help the Janitor by pointing silently when they see a statue move. The Janitor can look at the Security Camera to see where they are pointing!
- Use different themes for Museums! For example, if you are in a "Dance Museum," players try to dance behind the Janitor's back and freeze in dance poses. Other themes: Space, History, Dinosaur, Magic, Animal, or a favorite movie!

One Fish, Two Fish, Red Fish, Blue Fish

of people to play: 10+

Best for ages: 6-10

Equipment needed: Bean Bag or small shareable item

Setup/Teaching Time: 10min

Before You Start

- Players start on one side of the room, with the leader and object on the other.
- Explain that the object is the “egg” and you (the leader) are the “parent” fish trying to protect it.
- The object of the game is for the team to work together to get the “egg” from the leader and back across the starting line.
- Make sure to tell the players how they should move during this game! Make adjustments if necessary to promote safety. Example: Use tip-toes or walk in slow motion instead of running.

Set Up

- A clearly marked starting line (cones or tape) and clear, designated play area.
- A bean bag or small throwable object to be the “egg.”

How to Play

- To start the game, the leader turns their back to the players. The object should be on the ground directly behind them.
- With their back turned, the leader will say “one fish, two fish, red fish, blue fish.”
- When they finish saying the phrase, the leader will turn back around to face the players.
 - Players move during “one fish, two fish, red fish, blue fish” and freeze when the leader turns around.
 - Players may not move when the leader is facing them.
 - If the leader sees anyone move, they can send the entire group back to the starting line!
- Once players are close enough to grab the object, they must work as a team to transport it back to the starting line without the leader seeing it or seeing

anyone move. (Hint: players can place behind their backs so the leader does not know who has the object!)

- Once the object is gone, the leader gets one guess per turn to try to figure out who has it.
 - If they are correct, the object is returned and the game restarts!
- Each freeze someone new must have the object!
- If the leader does not guess correctly, no one is spotted moving, and the object makes it across the starting line, the team has been successful! Select a new leader and play again.

At-Home Accommodations

- Ball up a sock to use as a soft object!
- Play outside if space is limited indoors.

Modifications for Social Distancing

- Throw the object to each other instead of passing. Use a soft object such as a balled up sock for this!
- Make sure players are not clumped and are at least 5 feet apart.

Challenge ideas

- Players must use their non-dominant hand to pass the object.
- Give players a specific movement to use! Examples: skip, hop, bear crawl, etc.

Game Variations

- Set a number of passes before the object can make it across the starting line.

One Step Back

of people to play: 2+

Best for ages: 5+

Equipment needed: A tossable object like a ball

Setup/Teaching Time: 2 minutes

Before You Start

- Have all players stand in a circle, or an equal distance apart.

Set Up

- You'll need a ball or tossable object, and some space for everyone to spread out.

How to Play

- Start with a small circle--each person standing an arm's length apart. The leader starts the game by passing the ball to the person next to them. When each person gets the ball, their job is to pass it on to their neighbor.
- Once the ball makes it around the circle without anyone dropping it, the leader says "One step back!" and all players take one step back.
- Then, everyone passes the ball around the circle again. If the group successfully passes it all the way around without dropping it, the leader says "One step back" and everyone takes one step back--making the circle even larger.
- This continues until the ball is dropped, at which point we say "Good job, nice try!" and the group returns to the center to try again.

At-Home Accommodations

- You can use any tossable object to play this game. Balls work well outdoors, but if you're playing indoors, try using a soft object such as a balled up sock!

Challenge ideas

- Try playing this game while standing on one foot.
- Add throwing challenges to the game. For example, only throw with your non-dominant hand, or throw under your legs.

Game Variations

- Play “soccer style” and kick the ball on the ground instead of tossing it. If the next person has to take more than one step to receive the pass, start over!
- Play “football style” and punt the ball with your foot instead of tossing it. If the next person drops the punt, start over!
- Instead of taking just one step back each round, the leader can choose to say any number up to 10. All players will take that number of steps back!

Popcorn

of people to play: 1+

Best for ages: 5+

Equipment needed: 1 ball

Setup/Teaching Time: 1-2 Minutes

Before You Start

- Get a ball or soft throwable object and a few people to play with (you can also play this game on your own!)

Set Up

- Find an area with space for your group to make a circle - preferably with a high ceiling. Playing outside works great, too!

How to Play

- One person starts the game by throwing the ball in the air, clapping one time, and then catching the ball.
- Once you've tried it one time, pass the ball to the person next to you in the circle so they can try. Continue this all the way around the circle, giving everyone a turn.
- If you drop the ball or don't clap the correct number of times, you were unsuccessful and that's okay.
- When it gets back to the first person, check in with everyone. If you successfully clapped and caught the ball, move up to Level Two. If you were unsuccessful, stay on Level One.
- Level Two means that you'll try to clap two times before catching the ball. Level Three means three claps, Level Four means four claps, and so on.
- Each time the ball comes to you, try the level you are on. If you're unsuccessful, stay on the same level and try again when the ball makes it back to you.
- The goal of the game is to see how many claps you can work up to and still catch the ball each time.
- If you're playing on your own, just work your way up and see how many claps you can get to!

At Home Accommodations

- Ball up a sock or crumple up a piece of paper to use as a ball.
- Play outside for more space.

Challenge ideas

- How many claps can you do?
- How quickly can you get to __# of claps?
- What other actions can you do while the ball is in the air? Spin around, clap behind your back, etc.

Game Variations

- Give everyone a ball and race to a certain number of claps.
- Partner up and pass to your partner. They'll try to clap before they catch the ball.

Recycle Ball

Can be played as just a game OR to help clean up!

of people to play: 2

Best for ages: 3+

Equipment needed:
Playground ball/soft throwable object
and recycling bin or box

Setup/Teaching Time: 5 minutes

Before You Start

- Everyone should sit in a big circle.
- Emphasize the importance of cheering others on and using positive language!

Set Up

- Place a recycling bin/bucket/basket in the middle of the circle.

How to Play

- The ball is passed around the circle while the group sings a song. When the song ends, whoever is holding the ball gets to stand up and try to throw the ball into the recycling bin!
- Practice passing the ball hand to hand while singing a song. Song examples: "Happy Birthday," "Alphabet Song," "Row Your Boat."
- Emphasize that the only time someone should stand is if they are holding the ball at the end of the song.
- The player holding the ball at the end of the song gets to stand up to toss the ball/object into the bin.
- Only the leader can get up to retrieve the ball from the recycling bin.

At-Home Accommodations

- Ball up a sock to use as a soft throwable object rather than a ball.
- Clean up fun! - Use this game to return toys into toy box/basket, clean up after a meal, etc.

Modifications for Social Distancing

- Players should maintain at least 6 feet of distance while sitting in the circle.
- Toss or roll the object (practice tossing “nicely” with the idea that the person can catch the object).

Challenge ideas

- Give yourself a time limit of 30 seconds to make it around the circle!
- Try to finish the game with everyone standing on one leg!
- Players can only use their non-dominant hand.
- If all the toys are picked up and the room passes “inspection,” you earn a “reward”- (rewards can be a parent reading a book to them, making homemade cookies, 15 min of tablet/electronic time, etc.)

Game Variations

- Let each player try tossing into the bin before starting the game and make sure everyone shouts “Good Job _____, Nice try!” for each person.

Red Light, Green Light

of people to play: 2+

Best for ages: 4+

Equipment needed: None

Setup/Teaching Time: Under 5 minutes

Before You Start

- Make sure everyone knows the rules and what happens if players move on a “Red Light.”
- Make sure everyone knows how to move safely throughout the designated space.

Set Up

- Clearly define the playing area with a designated start line and finish line. (You can use a wall, a natural boundary, or cones).

How to Play

- Begin with everyone along the start line.
- When you say, “Green Light” everyone will move towards the finish line.
 - Make sure you tell players how they should be moving during the Green Light! Let them know if they should be using running feet, walking feet, or another option like skipping.
- When you say, “Red Light” everyone must immediately stop and freeze.
 - If you see players are still moving after you call “Red Light,”, they must go back to the starting line.
- Start a new round when everyone gets across the finish line or when most players make it across the finish line.
- The first player to reach the finish line can be the new leader! If they have already had a turn, the next player to cross the finish who has not yet been the leader should have a turn.

At-Home Accommodations

- Use walking feet if playing indoors.

Modifications for Social Distancing

- Spread players out on the line to increase distance between players. Have players stand at least two arms-lengths away from each other.

Challenge ideas

- Introduce new colors of light to include different types of movement! For example:
 - Run on Green Light
 - Walk heel to toe on Yellow Light
 - Bunny Hop on Purple Light
 - Other movements: skip, gallop, tip toe, etc.

Game Variations

- The leader can designate themselves as the finish line. This enables the game to move around so that when players get close to the finish line (the leader), the finish line moves farther away.
- For the hearing impaired, you can turn your back towards the group for red light and turn around (face your group) for green light.

Rock, Paper, Scissors, Stretch

of people to play: 2

Best for ages: 6+

Equipment needed: None

Setup/Teaching Time: 3 minutes

Before You Start

- Make sure everyone knows how to play Rock, Paper, Scissors!
 - Rock: make a fist with your hand. This is more successful than Scissors.
 - Paper: hold your hand out flat. This is more successful than Rock.
 - Scissors: make a scissor shape with your first two fingers. This is more successful than Paper.
 - To play, chant "Rock Paper Scissors Go!" while gently placing a closed fist on your open palm. On "Go," reveal your choice of Rock, Paper, or Scissors.

Set Up

- Identify an open space where both participants will have room to stretch out their legs.

How to Play

- The goal of the game is to stay balanced without falling over. Try to stay balanced longer than your partner!
- Start out by facing your partner. Play a game of Rock Paper Scissors.
- Each time you win a game of Rock Paper Scissors stay where you are--you don't need to move your feet!
- Each time you lose a game of rock paper scissors stretch out by one foot length.
 - One way to do this is to simply take a step back with your back foot, keeping your front foot in the same spot. Each time you lose a game, your back foot goes further back and your front foot stays in the same place!
 - To more precisely stretch out the same distance each time try this: swing your front foot behind your back foot and touch your toe to your heel. Leave that foot there and slide your new front foot up to your partner's toes.

- Keep playing Rock Paper Scissors and stretching out after each round! The game goes until someone falls over, holds onto something for balance or can't stretch any further.

At-Home Accommodations

- Consider moving furniture to make sure each partner has enough space to stretch.

Challenge ideas

- How far can you stretch?
- Can you play a perfect game without ever having to stretch out?

Game Variations

- Play with 3 people at once. Stretch out for each person who beats you in Rock Paper Scissors. For example, if two people play paper and one plays Rock, the person who played Rock would take two steps back!

Sequence Touch

of people to play: 3+

Best for ages: 5+

Equipment needed: None

Setup/Teaching Time: 5 minutes

Before You Start

- Make sure the players know the boundaries, the starting and ending locations, and any safety concerns in the play area.
- Explain the importance of self-awareness as well as being aware of players around you.
- Demonstrate how to avoid other players when running towards objects you will be tagging.
 - Keep your head up.
 - You don't have to move in a straight line. Move side to side to avoid other players.
 - Modify movements for this game if necessary! Have players waddle like a duck, skip, bunny hop, or walk like a zombie.

Set Up

- Designate an area that has objects to run to and tag. (basketball hoop, fence, wall, grass, etc.)
- Check for understanding and questions.

How to Play

- Before you start, choose a magic "go" word so players know when to start! For example, "Today's magic go word will be 'banana!'"
- Be sure players know the designated ending location.
- The leader will list several objects and say the magic word to start the game.
 - For example:
 - "Fence, basketball hoop, grass. Banana!"
 - Players will run to touch those objects and return to the ending location as quickly as possible.
- The object of the game is to remember to tag all of the objects listed by the leader as quickly as they can before returning to the designated area.

At-Home Accommodations

- For limited space/indoors, use walking feet, hopping, or other modified movements.
- Choose objects to tag that are not breakable and are large enough that the surrounding area doesn't get too crowded.

Modifications for Social Distancing

- Players must stay arms length apart.
- Have players touch objects with elbows or feet.
- Instead of tagging objects, players must stand next to and point at them.
- Choose colors instead of items to keep players from touching and spread out.
 - For example, touch something purple. All players must find something different that is purple to touch or point to.

Challenge ideas

- Set a time limit. For example, all players must touch the objects and be back to the designated area before the leader counts to 10.

Game Variations

- The last player to return to the designated area must do 5 jumping jacks or say "I'm awesome" 5 times before the next round.
- The first player to return to the designated area gets to be the new leader, allowing all players to have a turn.
- Animal Sequence Touch! Leader picks an animal for all players to imitate. Players must move like that animal and make its noises while moving to tag the objects.

Seven

of people to play: 2+

Best for ages: 6+

Equipment needed: None

Setup/Teaching Time: 2 minutes

Before You Start

- Choose one player to start the game.

Set Up

- Arrange all players in a circle (sitting or standing).

How to Play

- The goal of the game is to work together as a group and count up to 7.
- Starting with the number 1, go around the circle and count up to 7 by having each person say one number. If there are fewer than 7 players, continue to go around the circle again (as many times as necessary!) to reach 7.
- When you get to 7, stop counting. The next person in the circle will come up with a sound or action to replace one of the numbers between 1 and 7.
 - For example instead of saying the number 3, make the sound of a cow, or instead of the number 5, do a jumping jack.
- When the group knows the new rule, begin counting again starting at 1.
- When it comes to the number a rule was created for, make the sound or do the action instead of saying that number.
- If someone forgets the sound or action for a number, say “good job, nice try” and the group starts over from 1.
- Each time you get to 7 without making a mistake, add another rule (each new rule is added to your current rules - it doesn’t replace rules already in place).
- Go until every number has been replaced!

At-Home Accommodations

- Play around the dinner table or in the living room.
- Play it virtually! Start a video call with a few friends and decide on an order to go in.

Modifications for Social Distancing

- To play with social distance, make sure all players in the circle are at least 6 feet apart from their neighbors.

Challenge ideas

- Can your group make a rule for every number?
- Try playing with more numbers than seven (10, 15, or 20). How many rules can your group remember?

Game Variations

- For a silly twist, if someone giggles laughs or makes a mistake, have them do a lap around the group or 5 jumping jacks before continuing.

This is My Nose

of people to play: 2+

Best for ages: 8+

Equipment needed: None

Setup/Teaching Time: 3 minutes

Before You Start

- The group stands shoulder to shoulder.
 - All players stand in a straight line, in a semicircle, or a circle so the leader can see everyone and identify who's made which sign.

Set Up

- A space big enough for everyone to line up or circle up in comfortably!

How to Play

- The goal of this game is for the leader (the person in the middle of the circle) to try and trick someone in the circle into saying the wrong body part (Example: calling their nose a nose when they were supposed to say elbow!).
- The leader starts in the center, walks up to a player in the circle, points to their elbow and says: "This is my nose."
 - The player must point to their nose and say: "This is my elbow."
- The leader goes up to another player, points to another body part and misnames it.
- In order to move out of the middle, the leader must make a player in the circle mess up by saying/pointing to the wrong body part. The leader can then join the circle!
- When a player makes a mistake, they become the new leader and move to the center of the circle.

At-Home Accommodations

- Play sitting down if space is limited indoors.

Modifications for Social Distancing

- Players should stand/sit 2 arm's-lengths apart.

Challenge ideas

- Play the game while standing on one leg!

Game Variations

- Players can point to objects in the room rather than body parts.
- Choose a category of objects for the round. Examples: only say/point to kitchen objects, objects bigger than your head, etc.

Up, Down, Stop, Go

of people to play: 2+

Best for ages: 5+

Equipment needed: None

Setup/Teaching Time: 2 minutes

Before You Start

- Demonstrate the appropriate (opposite) actions for “up”, “down”, “stop”, and “go”.
 - “Up” - Players squat down
 - “Down” - Players jump, or stretch up as high as possible
 - “Stop” - Players move around the play area in a specific movement (walking, jogging, running, hopping, etc.)
 - “Go” - Players freeze
- Explain that players who make a mistake should complete a task (ex: 5 jumping jacks) before returning to the game.
- Do a practice round first so that all players understand the commands and the movements that go with them. Make sure players understand what to do if they make a mistake!

Set Up

- Have all players stand around the room and designate a caller.

How to Play

- Caller calls out the commands “up,” “down,” “stop,” or “go” one at a time.
- For the first few minutes, the caller watches the group and stops the game when a player makes a mistake, giving them time to complete their task (for example, 5 jumping jacks) and join back in.
- After a few minutes, the caller should not need to stop for mistakes and should continue calling while players who made a mistake complete their task. Those players should join back in as the game continues!

At-Home Accommodations

- Run in place rather than freely moving throughout the home.

Modifications for Social Distancing

- All players stand 6 feet apart.

Challenge ideas

- How many commands can the entire group get through before a mistake occurs?

Game Variations

- Use literal commands (up means up, down means down, etc). Use only two commands to start. Then mix up all four commands.
- Have the caller use various speeds.