

Games: Focus on Physical Activity

Simon Says

The familiar game of “Simon Says” actively involves students in performing actions that the teacher calls out while demonstrating. (For example: “Hands on head,” “Bend down,” “Clap your hands,” “Point to the ceiling.”) In this version, no one is eliminated. Anyone who misses a move steps to another part of the room and continues to play the game.

EXTENSION

- Students are asked to become different characters or to perform certain mime activities: for example, crawl like a cat, become a carpenter, climb a ladder, mix a witch’s brew, carry an umbrella, growl like a tiger, become the Big Bad Wolf.

Face to Face

Students find a partner and stand face to face. As the teacher calls out “face to face” or “back to back,” partners respond to each direction. When the teacher calls out “change,” everyone, including the teacher, seeks a new partner and stands either face to face or back to back. The one person who is left out becomes the new caller. (Since an odd number of players is needed to play the game effectively, the teacher can participate in the game accordingly.)

EXTENSION

- Repeat the game several times. Once students are familiar with it, the caller can shout out different instructions, such as “toe to toe,” “side to side,” “knee to knee,” “ear to ear.”

Safari

Students sit in a circle to form a jungle. They number off from one to five and give themselves the following identities: 1 - cheetah; 2 - elephant; 3 - ape; 4 - rhino; 5 - zebra. The teacher calls out an animal name, for example, “zebra.” All zebras then run around the outside of the circle and get back “home” as quickly as possible. The last person to reach home becomes the caller for the next round. Once students are familiar with the game, the teacher can call the names of two animals. When the word “safari” is called, all players must run around the circle and return home.

Tortoise and Hare

The group sits or stands in a circle. One ball represents the tortoise, and a second ball, the hare. The ball representing the tortoise is passed around the circle in a clockwise direction from player to player. The ball representing the hare can be thrown around the circle in any direction. The object of this game is for the hare to catch the tortoise. This occurs when one player is passed the tortoise ball and thrown the hare ball at the same time. The game is then repeated.

EXTENSION

- To make the game more complicated, a third ball is introduced as a second hare. Eventually, a fourth ball, representing a second tortoise, is introduced.

Building a Zoo

In this activity, students work spontaneously in a variety of group situations. They work with different people in each situation and should work with the same class member only once. The students' task is to create a zoo by using their bodies to represent various animals. On a signal, students work

- alone to make a mosquito,
- with a partner to make a swan,
- in groups of three to make a tarantula,
- in groups of four to make a giraffe,
- in groups of five to make an elephant,
- in groups of six to invent a "new" animal for the zoo

EXTENSION

- On a signal, students re-form groups to create animals. They are instructed to make the sound of the animal, move in slow motion as the animal (no sounds), move and make the sounds of the animal.

Drama Exploration: Focus on Movement

Letters and Numbers

This game requires students to interpret instructions imaginatively at the same time that they use their body for flexible movement. There are several variations that can be used.

- A letter is called out — students attempt to make their bodies look like the letter (they can do this on their own or with a partner).
- Students make the letter look a certain way according to instructions, for example, that the letter be as wide as possible or lowercase and as small as possible.
- In groups of three or four, students answer questions by using their bodies (e.g., What is the total age of your group?).

Writing Names without Pencils

Students work imaginatively to interpret instructions and develop movement skills. To begin, they write their names in the air. They are then directed to use only part of their bodies (e.g., their left ear, their right shoulder) to write their names. The activity can be varied through requests for large and small movements, the use of imaginary equipment (e.g., a feather, a hose), and name variations (e.g., writing their last name or the name of a friend).

EXTENSIONS

- Instead of their names, students spell different words.
- The game is done as a mirror activity, in which students copy a partner's movements.
- Students send messages to partners by writing in a mutually shared space.

Move Along!

This activity is best done in a large space, such as a gym. Encourage students to interpret the instructions in their own way and not be swayed from their interpretations by their friends' movements. Ask them to move from one side of the room to another in these ways:

- in slow motion
- with one foot and one hand on the floor
- with no feet touching the floor
- with their head on the floor
- backwards
- in a swirling motion
- like a kangaroo
- like a spider
- like a monster
- in as few moves as possible
- silently
- as if being chased
- as if moving through a thick fog
- as if they were in a blender
- as if their feet were tied together
- as if the floor was made of glue
- as if the floor was made of hot sand
- attached to a partner

EXTENSION

- Students, working in groups of four or five, tangle themselves up into a knot and solve the problem of moving across the room as a group.