

THE  
AFTERSCHOOL  
GUIDE

FOR CREATING OUTSTANDING

INDOOR  
GAMES

A blue soccer ball is the central focus in the foreground, showing its hexagonal panels and a white laces detail. The background is a blurred indoor sports arena with warm lighting and spectators, suggesting a game in progress.



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# GUESSING games



## Doggy, Doggy, Where's Your Bone?

**How to Play:** One person is the “dog” in the center of the circle, with eyes closed and the bone behind his or her back. When the dog’s eyes are closed, someone takes the dog’s bone. Then everyone chants, “Doggy, doggy, where’s your bone? Somebody stole it from your home. Guess who? Maybe you!” The dog must guess who has the bone. If he or she is right, the bone stealer is now

the dog. If the dog gets it wrong, the dog closes his or her eyes and the students pass the dog bone around until the dog has counted out loud to ten. Then the dog must guess who has the bone.

*Variations: Play this in smaller groups so it is not as hard on the dog; to make it challenging, play in a large group and have the kids switch where they’re sitting each time the dog closes his or her eyes.*

## Eye Witness

**How to Play:** One person stands up and everyone looks at him or her. That person then leaves the room and changes something about himself or herself. (*Example: A shirt gets tucked in.*) When he or she returns, the group guesses what the person changed. Whoever guesses correctly gets the next turn.

## Guess Who?

**How to Play:** One person sits with his or her back to the group. One child is chosen from the group to say a predetermined phrase. The person sitting facing away from the group has to figure out who is speaking.

## Guess Who’s Missing

**How to Play:** The students sit in a group and close their eyes. The person running the activity walks around and taps one person on the shoulder. The person tapped leaves the room, or hides where where no one can see him or her. Everyone opens their eyes and tries to determine who is missing.

*Variation: To make it harder, have them stand up and move them around (while their eyes are closed), so they don’t know who is near them.*

## Mr. and Mrs. Judge

**How to Play:** Have a student be the “judge” and put his or her head down on the table. Choose a student from the group to come up behind the judge and disguise his or her voice and say, “Good morning, Mr. (or Mrs., if it’s a girl) Judge.” Then the student goes back and sits down in his or her original spot. Have the judge look up and try to guess, **within three guesses**, which student spoke. If the judge is right, the person he or she guessed will become the next judge. If the judge is wrong, he or she must do it again.

# RACE, TAG, & RELAY

## games



## Balloon Relays

**Supplies:** Balloons

**Set-Up:** Set up a relay course.

**How to Play:** There are three different types of relays.

- **Three-Head Relay** (*draw a face on the balloon*): Two students have to hold the balloon between their heads.
- **Balloon Smash:** Two students have to walk the course with the balloon between their backs. If they drop it, they start over.
- **Balloon and Plate Relay:** Let the students decorate their own balloon. This game is like the egg-and-spoon race, but balancing the balloon on a paper plate.

## Barnyard

**How to Play:** You will need pictures of several animals to show the child what he or she is for the game. Each child is shown a picture of an animal, with three children being shown the same picture. No one is allowed to tell another which animal he or she is. At the signal, each child makes the noise of the animal he or she has been given. The first group of three animals to find each other, and sit down, is the winner.

## Don't Wake the Dragon

**Supplies:** Tennis Ball (*or an item for treasure*)

**How to Play:** One student is the dragon and sits in an open area on a chair or cushion. The other students are knights who need to steal the dragon's treasure (*tennis ball*) without waking the dragon. The dragon goes to "sleep" (*teacher monitors to make sure they keep their eyes shut*). One at a time, a silent signal is given to each knight to try to sneak past the dragon and steal the treasure. If the dragon hears footsteps or a noise from the knight, he or she wakes up and roars. The knight is toast, and goes to the end of the line. A successful knight becomes the next dragon.

*This game requires the WHOLE group to stay quiet. It's a challenge, but it's great to see the different ways students try to sneak—we've had students "sniper crawl" across the classroom, take off their shoes, et cetera.*

## The Hula-Hoop Game/Circle the Circle

**How to Play:** Students hold hands in a circle. Two students lock hands through a hula-hoop. When the hula-hoop gets to each student, the student must pass through the hula-hoop without breaking hands.

*Variations: Add more hula-hoops or have more than one student go through a hoop at a time. Split the group up into two circles and have a race to see which group can pass the hula-hoop around the fastest.*



## Inch-by-Inch

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**Supplies:** Yarn

**Set-Up:** Random-sized pieces of yarn are cut up and hidden throughout the room (*can be an outside activity as well*), with some pieces hidden in easy-to-find areas and others in hard-to-find spots.

**How to Play:** Divide the students into two teams. Students try to find as many pieces of yarn as they can by the end of the time. The game usually takes five to ten minutes, or until you think they have found all of the yarn. Then teams tie all of the found pieces of yarn together and see who has the longest rope.

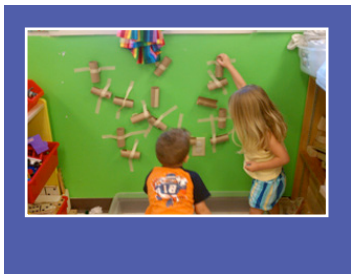
*As the yarn is cut into different sizes, quantity does not matter; the length of the string is what is important. How the yarn is tied also makes a difference in how long the rope is.*

## Indoor Snowball Fight!

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**Supplies:** Socks or knee-high nylons, boxes (*optional*)

**How to Play:** Create “snowballs” by using the old socks, rolled up, or knee-high nylons. If using knee-highs, stuff the toe with polyfil then tie a knot, add more polyfil then tie another knot, and repeat three or four times until the end of the knee-high. Cut between the knots on the knee high and you’ll have a few snowballs. Students could build forts out of boxes. Divide groups into teams and play a game of capture the flag.



### Marble Race

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**Supplies:** Empty toilet paper or paper towel tube (*for each child*), marble or small bouncing ball (*for each team*), masking tape

**How to Play:** Create a finish line with the masking tape on the floor, and position the teams on the other end with their cardboard tubes and marbles. The teams must work together to send the marble or ball through each tube and see who crosses the finish line first. If the marble touches the ground, the team must start over.

## Minefield

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**How to Play:** Students are placed in pairs. One partner keeps his or her eyes closed while the mines are set. (*Teachers rearrange furniture or chairs in the room to make an obstacle course.*) The other partner has to stay at the start line and direct his or her teammate through the course, using only vocal directions. If the teammate bumps into any obstacles, he or she is out. Play continues with the minefield being reset after each team.



### Paper Skating

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*This activity is best suited to a linoleum or wood floor.*

**Supplies:** Paper plates (*they make perfect ice skates!*)

**How to Play:** Who’ll skate the fastest from one end of the gymnasium to the other?

## Shuttle Tag

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**Supplies:** Small playing field.

**Set-Up:** Five students in playing field and a line of kids.

**How to play:** Teacher picks first tagger, who then calls the first type of tag style—run, crawl, hop, et cetera. The students then go until someone gets tagged. The person who gets tagged goes to the back of the line, and the next person in line becomes tagger and picks the next type of tag.

## Sonar Swim

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**Supplies:** Blindfold, objects that could be used to create sonar sound (*optional*)

**Introduction:** Talk with the children about sonar and echolocation, and how marine mammals and bats use it for sensing objects around them. Ask how useful this would be underwater or in the dark, and why it would be important.

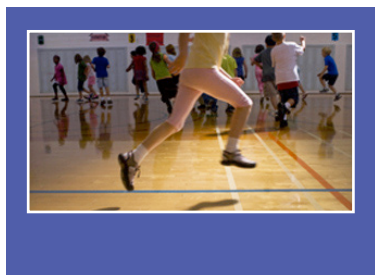
**How to Play:** Provide enough room for children to spread out, and define the boundary around the space. (*Space will depend on the number playing and their ages.*) Before the game begins, pick a child to be the marine mammal navigating by sonar, place a blindfold on him or her, and ask what marine mammal he or she wants to be. Move the child to the corner of the “ocean.” The child is to keep eyes closed at all times while blindfolded. | Ask the rest of the group to randomly spread out in the ocean, as obstacles. (*Younger children should have fewer obstacles in the ocean and older children need to stand closer together to make the course more challenging.*) Obstacles may not move once in place. Rearrange positions between rounds, so children cannot memorize a safe route through the obstacles. Emphasize to the other children the importance of being quiet unless they are the marine mammal (i.e., whale) or the echoing obstacle. The game will not work if there is noise. The children are to be quiet and still until picked to be the mammal or asked to move. | The whale will begin walking across the space, with his or her hands out in front to feel around. He or she will make a beeping sound to help move through the ocean. Whenever the whale beeps while facing in the direction of one of the obstacles, that child will immediately beep to reflect back the whale’s sound. Children who are obstacles will respond only when the moving whale is directly facing them. The object is for the whale to swim across the ocean without touching one of the obstacles. When a child bumps into an obstacle, he or she changes places with the obstacle. The children can rearrange, and the game can start again. Allow younger children to continue across the ocean. | Continue the rounds until everyone has had a chance to be a mammal or an obstacle.

*Variations: Children could use sticks, clickers, and other sound makers, as long as everyone is making the same sound. Involve older children in modifying the game to make it more challenging.*

# THROWING games



(ball)



## Balloon Volleyball

*No net or court is needed.*

**Supplies:** Balloons, Tape

**Set-Up:** Put two rows of tape in the center of the “court” area, as the net.

**How to Play:** If you step on the tape or you hit the net, it counts as a point for the other team—the same volleyball rules apply. The kids have a blast and get some exercise.

## Cone Blast

**Supplies:** Five to six cones, throwing balls

**Set-Up:** Space the cones evenly apart and place the throwing balls in the middle. Have five students at the cones, someone to be the ball retriever, and a line of kids along the wall.

**How to Play:** Pick students to fill all cones. When the teacher says, “Go,” students run to the middle to retrieve the throwing balls. Students must protect their cone with their feet while trying to throw the balls at their opponent’s cones. The ball retriever gathers balls that get away from the group. When a cone is knocked down, that person is out, the ball retriever is in, and the next person in line is now the ball retriever. The game continues until the teacher says, “Stop.”

**Common Rules:** Students must only throw balls at cones. Cones can be protected only by feet. If a player knocks over his or her own cone, he or she is still out.

## Hula Blockers

**Supplies:** Hula-hoop, Beanbags

**How to Play:** Each person has a hula-hoop to stand in, and cannot move out of that hoop. Students throw beanbags and try to land them in another player’s hula-hoop. Students try to knock incoming beanbags from landing in their hula-hoop. If a beanbag lands in a hula-hoop, that student is out.

## Silent Speed Ball

**Supplies:** Lightweight ball

**How to Play:** *NO ONE CAN MAKE A SOUND.* That’s the object of the game. Make a good throw around the room—you can’t throw back to a person who threw to you. If you miss the ball or make a bad pass, you are out and must sit down. Play until all students are sitting down. The last two left are the winners!

*Variations: Throw while moving in a circle, throw while standing on one foot, throw granny style, catch with one hand, et cetera.*

## SPUD

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**Supplies:** Ball (*large, soft ball preferred*)

**How to Play:** Give each child a number and write it on the palm of his or her hand with a washable marker. This number should be kept secret. One person starts with the ball. The other kids form a circle around that person. The center person throws the ball in the air and calls out a number. If your number was not called (including the thrower), you run in the opposite direction. If your number was called, you catch the ball and yell, “STOP!” as loud as you can. When you hear the word “stop,” you must immediately freeze where you are. The player who caught the ball can take three giant steps (*for younger kids we give them five*), toward any player. After the steps are taken, the player can throw underhand or roll the ball, trying to hit the frozen person. The frozen player cannot move his or her feet from the floor, but can duck and swerve to avoid being hit. If hit, he or she becomes the new ball thrower and gets a letter “S”. If not hit, he or she becomes the new ball thrower and the player who missed gets a letter “S”. When you get the letters S P U D, you are out. Play continues until there is only one person left.



## Snowball Fight/Trash in the Yard

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**Supplies:** Masking tape (*or something to make markings with*), Paper

**How to Play:** Divide students into two teams. Clear a space on the floor or gym. Use masking tape to make a dividing line on the floor for each team’s “space” or “yard.” Give each team a stack of paper (*great for your recycling basket*). Have each team crumple up each sheet of paper to make their stock of “trash” or “snowballs.” At the word “go,” each team bombards the other, trying to get all of the papers over to the other side. Periodically, the teacher could call a halt to see which side has more snowballs or trash on it. Play continues until one side is completely free of paper.

*Variations: **With older students:** If you get “hit” by a snowball, you are out for two minutes.*

***With the younger students:** If you get “hit” by a snowball, you go onto the other team.*



# miscellaneous games

## Busy Bee

**How to Play:** Everyone grabs a partner. The leader shouts out body parts, such as head-to-head, knee-to-knee, or foot-to-foot, and partners connect. When the leader shouts out “Busy Bee,” students must find a new partner.

## Clue Hunt

**How to Play:** This takes a lot of prep work, but come up with a “mystery” that the students have to solve—either a clue game type idea (*the Batmobile Matchbox car is missing: who took it, when, and from where*) or just a silly series of clues to follow. Give a hint to start, then students have to find the next clue. Some are rhymes they have to figure out, sometimes there’s something they have to do to get the next clue, sometimes they have a problem to solve, et cetera. If you want, split students into teams and have multiples of the same clues. Then it will be like the *Amazing Race*, and the team to finish first gets a prize.

*EXAMPLE: The Matchbox car is missing. Start by looking where the car should’ve been. Clue 2, in the car bin, reads, “I can take you on a trip, but you don’t go anywhere. You can learn new things or just lose your cares. Without me you’d be lost, and with me you are found. I can be your best friend even though my pages are bound.” Which should make them think of a book and head into the library for Clue 3, which is a picture cut into pieces showing the location of the next clue, and so on.*



## Dance Freeze Game

*This is a great game for youth to exercise and get some energy out.*

**Set-Up:** Youth need to space themselves out, so they don’t bump into each other.

**How to Play:** Turn the music on and let them go, just like in musical chairs (*you can play any kind of music, as long as it’s appropriate*). When you turn the music down or off, everyone freezes. Whoever is moving has to sit out until someone else has to sit out, at which time, he or she can get back into the game—there are no winners or losers. Set up a panel of three judges. Let them judge who can come up with the best dance routine.

*Youth learn to have patience, respect for one another, good sportsmanship, and leadership.*

## Dead Ant

**How to Play:** Children need to listen and move to the group according to the number of whistle blows or the number the leader shouts (1-5). Numbers should be called in random order, and this is the description of actions for each number:

- **If the leader shouts or whistles 5**, the children need to form groups of five. One person bends at waist, making a table. The other four pretend to eat off of the “table.” *Anyone left out of groups of five sits down and is done playing for this round.*

- **If the leader shouts or whistles 4**, the children get in groups of four and sit in a straight line, paddling a boat. Two oars left, two oars right. *Anyone left out of groups of four sits down and is done playing for this round, and joins the others sitting out.*

- **If the leader calls or whistles 3**, the children form groups of three, like a stoplight—one sitting, one kneeling behind, one standing behind with their hands out and “flashing.” *Anyone left out of groups of three sits down and is done*

playing for this round, and joins the others sitting out.

• **If the leader calls or whistles 2**, the children find a partner, hook elbows, and circle left before they change elbows and circle right. *Anyone left out of groups of two sits down and is done playing for this round, and joins the others sitting out.*

• **When the leader calls “dead ant,”** all children lie on their back with their feet and arms in the air, waving and kicking.

Then the game starts over.

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## Four Corners

**How to Play:** One person is “It” and closes his or her eyes. The rest of the class spreads out and goes to one of the four corners (*or four designated spots*) of the room. “It” calls a number (1-4), and children in that corner sit down. If they don’t sit down, they are out. Continue until there are six or eight students left, then tell them there must be only two students in each corner or, when there are four people left, one in each corner. The last person left gets to be “It.”



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## Freeze Dance/Statues

**How to Play:** As you play music, have students move in place or, if there is space, have them dance around the room. Every minute or so, stop the music; the students have to freeze in whatever pose they were in when the music stopped. If they move, they sit down and lose a turn.

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## Ghosts in the Graveyard

**How to Play:** Everyone lies on the floor on their back, completely still. The leader is “It” or picks three students to be “It.” The leader then walks around, trying to make students laugh or move. If they laugh or move in any way, they are out of the game and must return to their seat.

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## Hiding Challenges

**How to Play:** Make stacks of paper hearts, pipe cleaner keys, shamrocks, or whatever ties in to a current event, and hide them. Once you’ve hidden them, let the students come into the room, tell them how many of the items are hidden, and let them try to work together to find them all.

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## Human Tic-Tac-Toe

**Supplies:** Tape

**Set-Up:** Mark out a giant tic-tac-toe board is made out of tape on the floor.

**How to Play:** Divide teams into X’s and O’s—you may want to give them paper with X or O written on it. Each side takes a turn trying to create a tic-tac-toe for their team.

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## Laser Tag

**Supplies:** Yarn, Tape

**How to Play:** Using a hallway, the leader will create an obstacle course using the yarn and tape. Leaders will tape yarn from one side of the hallway to the other, creating zigzag designs that the students will have to crawl under from one end of the hallway to the other, without touching or knocking down the yarn.

## Stacking Game

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**How to Play:** Collect household items in different shapes and sizes: small plastic bottles, empty tissue boxes, yogurt containers, applesauce containers, et cetera. Separate children into two groups and have them sit facing each other—such as boys against girls, if equal numbers. Choose one from each team to sit in the middle and place the stacking items on the floor. The first person that picks up an item places it down in front of himself or herself; the opponent chooses another item and places it on top of that. Once an object is touched, that is the item the person has to stack. The team that doesn't make the stack fall gets a point.

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