

Team Building Using Games

Name Game

Objective

Encouraging interaction among teammates where they can get to know names of one another. This is good especially at the beginning of a new season.

Ages No age requirement

Equipment Minimum of one ball, maximum of three

Directions

Put all of the players in a circle, allowing at least two arms' distance between players around the circumference.

Give the ball to a player in the circle and explain that this player will start the sequence name game. The player will say their name and then say the name of another player in circle. Pass the ball to that player, then follow the pass, taking the place of the player passed to as they repeat the process. Continue through so all players get the ball. The last person to receive the ball must pass to the first person and the sequence begins all over again. The players must always receive and pass to the same individuals in that order.

Key Points

Be sure all players are communicating. There should be at least two players talking with every pass or exchange – a person calling for the ball and a person making the pass. Look for eye contact and execution of the exchange.

Variations

Younger ages: have players hold or dribble ball to player they are exchanging with and handing ball over to next player.

Once the players seem to remember names, think of different categories (favorite fruit or candy, color, or team name) and this will replace their names or be in addition to names.

Older ages: Increase the number of balls running at once.
Beat the clock situation.
Reverse the order.
One touch passing.
Weak foot only.
Players can high five at every exchange.
Exchange on outside must be a wall pass or one-two.

Team Building Using Games

Chain Game

Objective

Working together when you are a link in the chain to increase communication and paint a clear picture that much more can be accomplished when teamwork occurs. Free links do not want to be tagged and included in the chain. Objective for chain is to tag free links so they must join the chain.

Ages No specific ages but may be best for players between 9 and 18

Set-Up

Create a space that will accommodate all of your players with plenty of room to run around (i.e. 15 X 20 yard box for 7-8 players). Size of area used will vary with age and speed of players. Mark off the corners and borders with cones to clearly define boundaries.

Equipment Stopwatch

Directions

Put everyone in the marked area. Ask for two volunteers. Begin timing when the two run into the box. These two will be the first two links in the chain and they must always be attached by holding hands or hooking arms. The chain will try to get more links to join their chain by tagging any free links. All participants must stay in marked area or will be considered out and will then join with the chain. Free links want to avoid getting tagged. The game is over when every free link is attached to the chain.

Key Points

If the chain keeps breaking, freeze the game and ask why the chain is breaking. Most likely it is because there is a lack of communication and different links want to move in different directions.

Point out the correlation that when communication increases, time decreases.

Importance of working together – strategy that works best is when the chain can try to spread itself from sideline to sideline and can trap links.

Look at different personalities and roles players take during this game. You will most likely see a leader type and also role players.

Variations

Advanced: Free players must dribble the ball in the marked area and avoid being tagged.

Limit verbal communication and see if times increase.

Team Building Using Games

Partner Tag

Objective

Increase communication and promote teamwork in a fun variation of tag.

Ages No age requirement

Equipment Large marked open area – outdoors or indoors
Minimum of 10 players
Soccer balls for each player (optional)

Directions

Put all players in pairs standing next to each other with hooked arms. Spread the pairs out in the marked area. Ask for one pair to volunteer – this pair will split into singles and begin the game. These singles can attach to any pair in the game. Once attached, the third person on the other side must detach arms and run to another pair to attach to. Allow a few moments for the players to understand the process. Ask for another pair or, if numbers are odd, a person to tag the single unattached players. Any player that is not attached is free to get tagged or if the third player does not detach quickly enough, they can also be tagged. Once a player is tagged, that player becomes the player tagging others. The player that just tagged the other player must then quickly transition to attach to another pair or they can be tagged. This game can be played during a warm up for 10-15 minutes.

Key Points

Players that are in pairs should communicate to one another, especially when another player attaches. Helping the third player quickly transition and look for a new pair to attach to.

Quick transitions and being aware – reading teammates and the situations as they develop.

Variations

Players must walk

Pairs sit or lay down next to each other

Allow tag backs

Players all have a ball (dribbling), except the players that are tagging.

Do not allow players to attach to a pair that is next to one that they immediately left from.

Team Building Using Games

Trust Obstacle Course

Objective

Since trust is such an important aspect of team, this game promotes communication and relying on one another to accomplish a goal.

Ages No age requirement

Equipment Cones or flags numbered one through whatever number of players on each team
Blindfolds or eye covers
Colored bibs (optional)

Directions Put players on a team in even numbers. The numbers used for cones/flags must be the same as the number of players on each team. Set up by putting 2 players from each team at the starting point, with one player on each additional cone. One player at start will put blindfold on while the other player becomes their eyes and directs them to the first cone. The player directing them can hold their hand or arm in addition to communicating verbally. When the pair gets to the first cone, the blindfolded player gives the blindfold to the player waiting at the cone, and becomes the direction provider. The player giving the direction waits at this cone and will be the final blindfolded leg of the obstacle course. Continue switching throughout the obstacle course in number sequence order and the finish line will be when every player has been blindfolded and the direction provider.

Key Points

Emphasize trusting your teammates when blindfolded and wanting to be trusted when you are giving directions. How can you be more trusting in this game? How did it feel to be trusted?

Variations

Add dribbling a ball to each target for blindfolded person.

Person guiding cannot touch the blindfolded person but can walk next to them giving verbal direction only.

Person guiding must stay at cones and give directions from a distance.

Add fitness at each target for entire team (e.g., at each cone met, every teammate will do 10 sit-ups or push-ups).

Team Building Using Games

Thinking Outside the Box

Objective

Getting players to think creatively and work together. This game is designed to encourage players to listen and create a plan to accomplish a task.

Ages Players from 10 and up

Equipment Minimum of one ball per group

Directions

Split up into groups of two to four players each. All balls are at one location near the coach. Coach kicks or passes a ball into open space and yells out a riddle for the group to follow with the objective to bring the ball back to the coach. Game should be continuous and once a team returns, hit another ball with another riddle, etc. There is no winner of the game but should encourage players to think, communicate, and work together with an objective in mind.

Examples of Riddles

All players in the group must touch the ball the entire time and the ball cannot hit the ground. (Solution – players pick ball up and each hold a part and run back to coach)

Only one foot for each person can touch the ground and each person must touch the ball (Solution – everyone hop on one foot from the ball, pick up ball and throw to each member back to coach).

No hands, ball cannot stop entire way back, and get back as quickly as possible. (Solution – One player can get ball and speed dribble back, with teammates running with).

Ball must touch every player entire way back and cannot hit the ground with hands being used only once. If the ball drops go back to starting point. (Solution – pick ball up and make a small circle with ball between players while they get back to the coach)

Hands and feet must be on the ground for each member, hands cannot touch the ball and every player must touch the ball at least three times not consecutively. (Solutions – crab walk or bear crawl back passing ball to each member).

Key Points

High energy, encourages creative thinking, and makes positive comments on new ideas and working together. Look out for different personalities and roles each player takes in groups. Get the groups started quickly so they don't have to wait for a long time.

Team Building Using Games

Cookie Monster

Objective

To introduce players to work together and communicate.

Age

U-6 and U-8

Equipment

Cones for grid.

Directions

Players partner up by facing each other and holding hands forming a “cookie”. Coach is the “cookie monster” who tries to gobble up the cookies by tagging them with his arms. Players move around grid trying to get away from cookie monster. Players can be “safe” by dropping to ground together when cookie monster tries to eat them.

Players are out when tagged or go out of grid. Coach should start slow to allow for success then build up speed.

Key Points

Point out to players they should talk to each other and move together to get away from the coach.

Variations

For U-8, another coach can be added to have two cookie monsters.

Team Building Using Games

Cat and Mouse in Pairs

Objective

To have players work together on defensive principle of delay.

Ages

Best for U-8 and older

Equipment:

Cones to set up grid.

Directions

Players partner up in pairs by facing the same direction and hooking arms. One pair is the “cat” and is positioned in the middle of the grid. The other pairs line up on one side of grid and are the “mice”. On the command all the pairs on the side of the grid try to cross to the opposite side of the grid without being tagged by the pair in the middle of the grid or stepping outside the grid. First pair tagged or that steps out becomes the cat for the next round. The pair that was the previous cat lines up with the other pairs on the side of the grid for the next round. The first pair to make it through three times wins. Then switch partners and play again.

Key Points

If the “cat” pair picks one particular “mouse” pair to tag, the “cat” pair can coordinate their moves better because they have the same objective and strategy. That is they both will try to get in front of the “mouse” pair to tag them. Coaching point, if you have the same objective and understanding of what to do, it leads to better cooperation and therefore greater success.

Variations

Make it more difficult by adding another cat or making the space narrower.

Team Building Using Games

Pulling Tails

Objective

To increase player understanding of the importance of communication and cooperation.

Ages

Best for U-10 and older

Equipment

Cones to mark grid. Flags (strips of cloth or practice vests) for tails.

Directions

Players form teams with equal numbers on each team. Players of each team line up front to back. First player of each team has his/her hands free. Players in back of first player must have their hands on the waist of the player in front of them at all times. Last player in line places a flag in the back of his/her shorts that sticks out like a tail. On the command, the first player of each team tries to pull the flags from other team. Last player of each team tries to avoid having flag pulled out. Have a time limit. Team with the most flags at the end of time limit wins. Or play game two or three times and add up flags accumulated over each game for a grand total to determine the winning team. Then change players on each team and play again.

Key Points

Communication between front and back players is essential. Coordinated movement is important. Very good game for teaching the importance of teamwork since both the front player and back player have differing responsibilities. Front player is the offense and the back player is the defense.