



# Outdoor activities for all ages

**F**ling open the doors and get outside. These games and activities offer preschoolers and school-age children opportunities to exercise their bodies while building creativity, stamina, and social skills.

## Games for grass and playgrounds

Play running, chasing, and jumping games on grass or other cushioned surfaces. You'll bandage fewer scraped knees.

### Cat and mouse

The object of this game is for the cat to catch the mouse.

#### Here's what you need:

- grassy playground
- 8 to 12 players

1. At the beginning of the game, one child is designated "cat" and another "mouse."
2. All other players form a circle, holding hands. The mouse moves to the inside of the circle; the cat stays outside.

3. The mouse starts the game by dashing outside the circle and around the players. The cat tries to tag the mouse but must stay outside the circle. The mouse can move in and out of the circle to avoid being tagged.
4. When tagged, the mouse becomes the new cat, and another child becomes the new mouse.

### Jump across the river

The object of this game is to cross the "river" without "wetting your feet."

#### Here's what you need:

- two 10-foot-long ropes
- grassy area
- 6 to 12 players

1. Place the two ropes in parallel lines about 6 inches apart. This is the "river."
2. Encourage the children to jump over the river. Players who "fall in" are eliminated from the round.

3. After each round, separate the ropes slightly to 12 inches, then 18 inches, and so on.
4. The children continue to try to jump across the river without "falling in."

### Name ball

The object of this game is for the player whose name is called to catch the ball.

#### Here's what you need:

- grassy playground
- rubber playground ball
- 2 to 8 players

1. Players make a circle around one person who holds the ball—the center.
2. The center tosses the ball straight up into the air and calls the name of one of the players in the circle.
3. The named player tries to catch the ball before it bounces.
4. If the named player catches the ball, that player becomes the center. If not, the original center begins again.



## Frisbee® golf

The object of this game is to complete the course with the fewest “strokes.”

### Here’s what you need:

- grassy playground
- 2 to 4 players
- Frisbees
- 6 large stones or bricks
- 6 designated pins (a cardboard box, a particular tree, an “X” marked on the sidewalk, for example)
- score cards and pencils

1. Set up each “hole” with a stone starting mark about 30 to 50 feet from the pin.
2. Give each player a score card and pencil.
3. Taking turns, the children toss the Frisbee toward the pin, keeping track of the number of tosses it takes to reach the pin.
4. The player with the lowest total score wins.

### Outdoor play safety

Keep outdoor play safe by following a few simple rules.

- Encourage children to wear a hat and sunscreen.
- Make water available to quench thirst.
- Alternate active and quiet games.
- Properly store materials and equipment after the activity is over.

## Contrary Simon

The object of this game is to do the opposite of what Simon says.

### Here’s what you need:

- grassy playground
- 4 to 10 players

1. One child is designated “Simon.” The other children form a line facing him.
2. Simon calls a command, and the children respond by doing the opposite. Examples: a) “Take two hops toward me.” The children take two hops away from Simon. b) “Take three skips to the left.” The children take three skips to the right. c) “Sit with your hands in front of your body.” The children sit with their hands behind.
3. Simon continues giving commands, disqualifying players who fail to perform the contrary motion.
4. The last player who is left becomes the next Simon.

## Relays and races

The object is to help your team reach the finish line while completing the designated task.

### Here’s what you need:

- large grassy playground
- 6 to 18 players
- equipment indicated in each variation

### Classic relay

1. Divide the players into teams of four children each.
2. Designate the start and finish line of a 100-yard race track. Mark the start point for each racer, the first at the start line and the others about 25 yards apart so that each player has to run about 25 yards.

3. Give the first runner on each team a baton (a soft ball, a water balloon, or a large stone, for example).
4. At the start signal, the first runners race to the second runners and pass the baton, who race to the third, and so forth. Different kinds of batons add interest and difficulty to the race.

### Baseball relay

1. Set up the course with the start and finish lines about 25 yards apart.
2. Divide the players into equal teams lined up behind the start line.
3. Place a baseball (or other small ball) and a plastic spoon for each team at the start line.
4. At the start signal, the first player on each team scoops up a ball with a spoon, races to the finish line and back to the start—all using only one hand.
5. The first player then passes the ball and spoon to the second player. The relay continues until all team members have carried the ball.

### Crab crawl relay

1. Set up the course with the start and finish lines about 25 yards apart.
2. Divide the players into equal teams, and have players line up behind the start line.
3. At the start signal the first players on each team bend forward, grasp their ankles, and walk sideways to the finish line. At the finish line they stand and run back to the start, tagging the second player.
4. The relay continues until all players have had a chance to race.

## One-foot relay

1. Set up the course with the start and finish lines about 25 yards apart.
2. Divide the players into equal teams, and have players line up behind the start line.
3. At the start signal, the first players on each team hop on one foot to the finish line. They then turn and hop back to the start line on the other foot.
4. Racers tag the second players, and the relay continues until all children have a turn.

**Variations:** The children can hop on both feet (kangaroo hop) or with their legs crossed (right leg in front of left to the finish and left leg in front of right back to the start).

## Water carry relay

1. Set up the course with the start and finish lines about 25 yards apart.
2. Divide the players into equal teams, and have players line up behind the start line.
3. Place a bucket of water and a cup for each team at the start line. Place an empty bucket of similar size at the finish line.
4. At the start signal the first player on each team fills the cup with water and runs to the finish, trying not to spill any. The player pours the water into the second bucket and runs back to the start, passing the cup to the second player.
5. The relay continues until the second bucket is filled and the first is empty.

## Suitcase relay

1. Set up the course with the start and finish lines about 25 yards apart.
2. Gather similar clothing—socks, T shirts, shorts, hats, and gloves—for each team and place the clothing in suitcases or paper bags. Place a suitcase for each team on the start line and on the finish line.
3. Divide each team so that half stand behind the start line and the other half stand behind the finish.
4. At the start signal, the first players unpack the suitcase, put on the clothes, close the suitcase, and run to the finish line. There the player takes off the clothes and repacks them.
5. The second player unpacks, dresses, and runs back to the start line.
6. This continues until all the players have unpacked, dressed, run, and repacked the suitcase.

## Whisper relay

1. Set up the course as in the classic relay.
2. Instruct the players that instead of passing a baton, they will pass a whispered phrase like “Snack today is rice cakes and orange juice” or “Kona, the grass snake, has green scales.”
3. At the start signal, the first player on each team runs and whispers the phrase to the second player. This continues with the third and fourth players.
4. Celebrate with the team that reaches the finish line and calls out the correct phrase.

## Games for sidewalks and pavement

Consider painting these game grids on a sidewalk. You’ll always be ready for play.

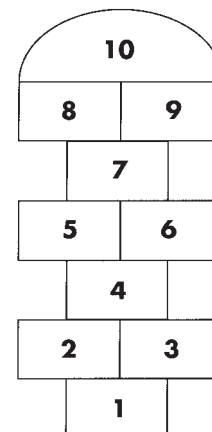
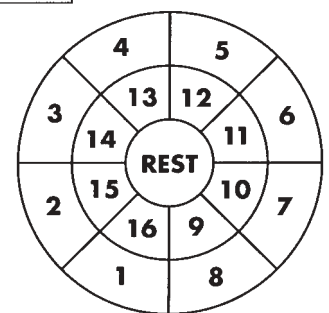
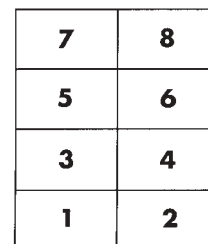
### Hopscotch

The object of this game is to journey through the hopscotch grid.

#### Here’s what you need:

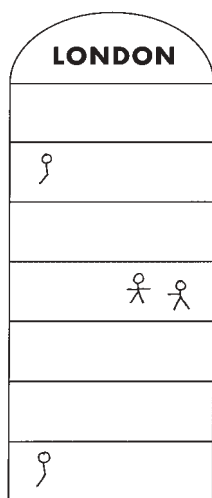
- sidewalk chalk
- large, flat surface
- marker for each player
- 2 to 6 players

1. Draw a hopscotch grid with chalk. See possible versions below. Number each space in the grid.





2. Draw a line about 2 feet from the bottom of the grid. This is the toss line players stand behind to start their turn.
3. Each player, in turn, tosses a marker into the grid's numbered boxes, starting with box 1 and continuing to box 10 in each turn.
4. The players then jump over the area with the marker and continue hopping through the grid.
5. Players usually agree to the following rules:
  - If the marker does not land in the appropriate square, the player loses a turn.
  - Players hop on one foot except on side-by-side squares.
  - Players must not step on the chalk lines.
  - When players reach the last box, they turn in one hop and continue back through the grid to the beginning.
  - When players reach the box holding their marker, they bend over to retrieve the marker—balancing on one foot—hop into that box, and continue to the end.
  - Players continue tossing their markers and hopping until they lose a turn by violating one of these rules.



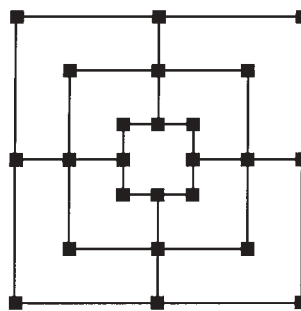
## London

The object of this game is to draw three complete stick figures in a box of the board.

### Here's what you need:

- sidewalk chalk
- large, flat surface
- smooth marker for each player
- 2 to 4 players

1. Draw a London diagram. The board should be about 3-feet wide and 6-feet deep and divided into seven steps and a London box. See example below.
2. Players take turns sliding a marker onto the board. When a marker stops in one of the seven boxes, the player uses chalk to begin drawing (or add to) a stick figure. Players must draw the head first and add body, legs, and arms in subsequent turns.
3. Players usually agree on the following rules:
  - More than one player may have a figure in the box.
  - Players can add only to their own figures.
  - If a marker lands in a box without a figure, the player must start one. If the marker lands in the area marked London, the player may draw a head or add to a figure already begun—in any space the player chooses.
4. After players complete one figure, they begin a second and then a third until all three figures are complete.



## Nine Men's Morris

The object of this game is to form a row of three markers.

### Here's what you need:

- sidewalk chalk
- large, flat surface
- 9 markers for each player
- 2 players

1. Draw a board consisting of three concentric squares. Adjust the size to the space available. Mark three dots on each side of each square for a total of 24 dots as shown.
2. Players take turns placing one marker at a time (like checkers, chips, or counters) on a dot. Make sure each player's markers can be distinguished from the opponent's.
3. The game continues as players take turns moving their markers to empty dots attempting to form a row of three markers—along any of the 16 lines—without being blocked by another player's marker.
4. When a player forms a row of three, that player can remove one of the opponent's unconnected markers from the board. Once formed, rows of three cannot be moved.
5. The game is over when all possible moves have been made.

## Marbles

Marble games have been popular for thousands of years and enjoyed in all parts of the world. Marble games have been played with round stones, berries, nuts, baked clay, and blown glass. Today most marbles are manufactured from glass.

**Caution:** Marbles are a choking hazard. Don't allow children younger than 4 to play with marbles. Encourage children to count their marbles before play and to make sure they put away the same number.

## Ringer

Ringer is the official, tournament-level marble game. The object is to hit marbles out of the ring.

### Here's what you need:

- 13 marbles for the circle
- shooter marbles for each player
- containers for marbles
- large, flat surface
- chalk, cord, or marking stick
- 2 to 4 players

1. Make a circle 10 feet in diameter on the ground. You can draw the circle with chalk, lay cord on the ground, or draw the circle in dirt.
2. Put one marble in the center of the circle. Place three marbles above, below, and on each side of the center marble (in the shape of a cross), keeping the marbles 3 inches apart.
3. The first player shoots, knuckles down, from anywhere outside the circle trying to hit a mib out of the ring while keeping the shooter inside.
4. If a player misses a mib, the turn ends.

5. If the shooter hits a mib out of the ring and the shooter also rolls out of the ring, the player's turn is over. The player collects the marbles that rolled out of the ring and picks up the shooter.
6. If the shooter hits a mib out of the ring and the shooter stays inside the ring, the player shoots again from the position of the shooter. The player also collects the marbles that were shot outside the ring.
7. If the player misses a shot and the shooter stays in the ring, an opponent can regard it as another target marble.
8. The game ends when the last marble is shot out.

## Bounce eye

The object of this game is to knock mibs out of the circle by dropping shooters.

### Here's what you need:

- 10 marbles for each player
- containers for marbles
- flat surface
- marking stick
- 2 to 4 players

1. Draw a 1- to 2-foot-diameter circle on the ground.
2. Each player places one to three marbles in the ring—piled up or scattered.
3. Players stand outside the circle and take turns dropping marbles from eye level (no bending or stooping) trying to knock mibs out of the circle.
4. The first player collects mibs that leave the circle, and the next player shoots.
5. If in a turn no mibs leave the circle, that player collects the dropped shooter, pays one marble into the center, and allows the next player to shoot.
6. The game ends when all mibs have been knocked out of the circle.

## Puggy

This is a great starting game for new mibsters. The object is to get five marbles into the puggy.

### Here's what you need:

- 10 marbles and one shooter for each player
- containers for marbles
- flat, dirt surface
- marking stick
- 2 to 4 players

1. Find an area with soft dirt as a playing surface. Draw a 5-foot-diameter taw line, and dig a small, 6-inch diameter hole—the puggy—in the center.
2. Each player scatters five marbles in the ring.
3. Players take turns shooting from outside the ring, trying to knock the mibs into the puggy.
4. When players succeed in sinking a mib in the puggy, they collect the mib and shoot again from outside the circle.
5. When players don't hit a mib into the hole, they pick up their shooter and on the next turn shoot again from outside the circle.
6. The game ends when no mibs are left in the ring.

### The language of marbles

**Aggies** — oversized marbles  
**Boss, shooter, or taw** — shooting marble

**Cat's eyes** — common marbles with a colored plastic swirl on the inside

**Histing** — lifting your knuckles off the ground while shooting

**Kimmies or mibs** — target marbles

**Mibster** — marble player

**Taw line or circle** — line behind which players shoot

## Treasure hunts

Treasure and scavenger hunts appeal to children of all ages, and require only a bit of planning. The following activities are designed for outdoor play. With modifications they work indoors for a fun, rainy day activity.

### Jungle hunt

The object of this game is to find the hidden animals.

#### Here's what you need:

- plastic jungle animals
  - pictures of jungle animals
  - collection bags or baskets for each player
1. Collect toys and pictures for the hunt. Have about three to five objects for each child you expect to participate.
  2. Hide the toys and pictures around the playground—on the ground, dangling from trees, or attached to wheel toys, for example. For younger children, try to leave a part of the animal or picture visible.
  3. Tell children the ground rules for the hunt: "There are plastic animals and pictures hidden. You can reach all of the jungle animals from the ground—you don't have to climb. Today we'll search in teams of three. You have 15 minutes to hunt."
  4. Start the hunt. If all the objects haven't been found in the designated time, consider giving clues and hints, sharing information with all the hunters fairly.

### Penny hunt

The object of this game is to find the hidden pennies.

#### Here's what you need:

- 20 pennies
  - collection bags or baskets for each player
1. Divide children into two teams.
  2. Give Team A the pennies and let them do the hiding. Make clear that the pennies must be hidden in areas that are safe to explore.
  3. After the pennies are hidden, let Team B find them.
  4. At the end of the designated time, gather the pennies and count to make sure all are found.
  5. Play again letting Team B do the hiding and Team A the hunting.
  6. Be careful to collect all the pennies at the end of the game.

### Jigsaw hunt

The object of this game is to find the hidden puzzle pieces and to put the puzzle together.

#### Here's what you need:

- picture postcards—one for each player
  - scissors
  - collection bags or baskets for each player
1. Stack the postcards and cut them into six to nine pieces.
  2. Separate the pieces and hide them.
  3. Tell the children that they will each have to find the pieces necessary to complete a puzzle. When children find puzzle pieces that don't fit their own puzzle, they can trade pieces.

**Variation:** Hide the pieces of a familiar, 15-piece jigsaw puzzle. Children can complete the puzzle as they find the pieces. The game ends when all the pieces are found.

## Resources

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