

# Games For Small Groups

**(PS Most of these games are also suitable for larger groups. Some games that are suitable for larger groups do not work for smaller groups – hence the reason for compiling this list of games for smaller groups).**

## **Alphabetical sentence:**

The first player starts a sentence by saying a word beginning with 'A'; the next person adds the second word in the sentence, beginning the word with 'B'. The sentence continues, each player adding a word, until a long sentence has been created using the whole alphabet as the first letters of the words. You could reverse the alphabet. Or you could take a random sentence from a book and the first letters of the words in the created sentence must correspond to the first letters of the words in the book.

## **First letter linkup:**

The first player presents a short sentence in which all the major words begin with the same letter. Each successive player adds a word or words beginning with the same letter, each time repeating the whole sentence up to that point. More sentences and words are added, so that a story is created in which all the main words begin with same letter. This will be quite a mouthful.

## **I packed my trunk for China:**

The first player says 'I packed my trunk for China and took an apple' (or 'alligator' or any object beginning with 'A'). The next player repeats the sentence, including the 'A' word, and adds a 'B' word. Each successive player recites the sentence with all the alphabetical items, adding one of his own. The players continue as long as they can, or until they have completed the alphabet. You could restrict the items to a certain category such as fruit, musical instruments, vehicles etc. You could make it more challenging by having two or three word items to be picked such as 'apple bread' and a 'blue car' for a two word item and a three word item could be a 'big chocolate dog'. This is good for when your group goes on a trip.

## **Rhyme chain:**

The first player says a word. The next player says a word that rhymes with the first person's word, and so does each successive player in turn.

## **Sock off:**

Make sure everybody has their shoes off. At a 'go' signal the players begin removing each other's socks. See who can get the most socks in one minute.

**Copier:**

The players arrange themselves in a line all facing one way. A diagram is shown to the last person in line. This person uses his finger to reconstruct the image onto the back of the person in front of him. Each player in turn passes the image on to the next person in line by tracing it on his back. The person at the head of the line draws the diagram on a piece of paper for the group to compare with the original drawing. The game can be repeated after the players rotate their positions. Words could be traced instead of pictures.

**Daffynitions:**

Read an unusual word out of the dictionary. Everyone writes down a definition of the word, guessing if needed.

**Clap-a-rhythm:**

The first player claps the rhythm of a song known to the other players, who then try to guess what it is. When the song is guessed the next player takes his turn.

**Don't look:**

One player is selected to make a physical change in the room. He takes a moment to decide what he will do; eg. turn a book upside down. When he has decided, he says, 'Don't look'. Everyone shuts their eyes while he makes the change. Once he has completed the action, he says, 'You may look now.' The other players try to guess what is different by studying the room and by asking yes or no questions. When they succeed, another person takes a turn at making a change.

**Quick change artist:**

The group is paired off. After the partners have had a chance to observe each other, each person turns his back to his partner and makes one or two changes in his appearance e.g. untying a shoe lace etc. the partners then turn around and try to detect the changes in each other. The game can be repeated a few times before trying it with a new partner.

**Paper cutting race:**

Thumbtack newspaper sheets by the upper left-hand corner to the wall. Then give scissors to each guest and instruct them that they are to cut the newspaper in zigzag fashion so that it will become a long strand, reaching across the room. The first one to make his strand reach across the room is the winner. Anyone who breaks his, automatically disqualifies. Or, you could let anyone who breaks his strand to go to a distant room for a piece of mending tape.

**Roll the peanut:**

Give each volunteer a peanut, which he must roll by the nose or chin, or the top of his head across the floor of the living room. Hard-boiled eggs, potatoes and similar objects can also be used. If a larger object is used, you might specify the object cannot be pushed ahead but must be kept in contact with the contestant's nose throughout the race.

**Scissors:**

Make sure most of the players are unfamiliar with the game. The players seat themselves in a circle. The leader passes the scissors to the player beside him. If the leader's legs or ankles are crossed, he says, 'I am passing the scissors closed.' If his legs are not crossed, he says, 'I am passing the scissors open'. If the person to whom the leader passes the scissors knows the game, he can assist the demonstration by saying, 'I am receiving the scissors open', if his legs are uncrossed and if he crosses his legs before passing the scissors himself, he continues with 'and passing them closed'. The scissors are passed around the circle. Each player announces how he believes he is receiving them, that is, 'open' or 'closed' and how he is passing them. The leader corrects them as necessary. The only requirement for passing or receiving the scissors 'open' is to have uncrossed legs, and for passing or receiving them 'closed' is to have crossed legs. At first the leader and any others who know the game may say or do extraneous things (such as holding the scissors in different ways) to mislead the other players. But after the game has progressed and most of the players have one by one quietly learned the pattern they may find it necessary to cross and uncross their legs more conspicuously in order to help those who have yet to guess.

**Air race:**

Stretch several strings across the living room, making sure that each of them is tight and will not come loose. Make several small, light aeroplanes, one for each string, and hang each by its nose or tail by means of a hole threaded through by the string. The hole should be the size of a paper punch hole, so that the aeroplane will move easily along the racecourse. Line up your contestants and at the signal 'go' each proceeds to blow his aeroplane across the string to see who can reach the goal line first. Anyone who in any way touches his aeroplane or the string is automatically disqualified. This can be played with co-pilots, each alternately blowing the plane. If co-pilots are used let the plane be blown across the string and back again to the initial starting point.

**Parlour archery:**

A needle, with a short piece of thread attached to it, makes an excellent throwing dart. Beforehand, test a half dozen needles getting the right size thread in each. Then put some kind of a cloth target on the wall and let your guests in turn try their skill.

**Feather race:**

Give each of your contestants a knife with a feather, leaf or some other light object on it. The idea is to see who can go across the room and back again, keeping the elusive object on his knife. If the object blows off it must be replaced before the contestant can continue.

**Parlour basketball:**

At each end of the room have someone standing on a chair. Each one holds out his arms in the shape of a basketball goal. Select two sides with no more than four on a side. Three would be better. Using an oval shaped toy balloon as a basketball and make sure you have a referee who knows the basic rules of the game.

**Soccer:**

Use the living room carpet as your playing field and a balloon as the soccer ball. Limit your teams to four a side. Arm each contestant with a fan. The ball is moved across the field in either direction by fanning. Its progress can be retarded by the opposing team only with the use of a fan. If anyone touches the ball in any way either with his person or with the fan his team is penalised halfway to the goal line. Each time one team is able to fan the ball across the opposing goal line that team chalks up a point.

**Corner kick:**

Have each member of your group kick one of his shoes toward a designated corner of the room. The one who gets the closest to the corner is the winner, if a shoe stands up in the corner it is to be considered closer than the shoe which is lying down in the corner. If there is a tie, let those who are deadlocked, kick off the tie. You could use a container instead.

**Lemon golf:**

Use a lemon for the golf ball and either a broom or a mop for the club. A contestant uses the stick end of the broom or mop, holding the large end up. The idea is to hit the lemons the way one would hit a golf ball, down the fairway, which is across the living room floor. The hole is either a chalk circle about 30 cm in diameter or a string place in the form of a circle. Or to make it even more difficult, turn a dinner plate upside down, instructing the contestants that the lemon must roll up onto the dinner plate and remain in the small ring there. The one who accomplishes the feat with the least number of strokes is the golf champ of the evening. Or you can lay out a six-hole course with a few obstacles, and stage a tournament. If you do this it would be wise to have another activity for those not competing.

**Soap bubble race:**

Divide into teams. One team member in each group is given a soap bubble blower with an ample supply of soapy water. The other two members of each team are given fans. At the signal 'go' each soap blower from each team blows a bubble. The other two-team members then proceed to try to fan that bubble across the room, the soap blower follows behind them. If any team's soap bubble breaks before it can be fanned across the goal line the soap bubble blower blows another bubble at the point where the last one broke. The first team to get a soap bubble across the goal line is the winner.

**Ice cube relays:**

Divide your group into teams. At the word 'go' each contestant must try and slide an ice cube onto his knife and take it to the one waiting on the other side of the room. If the ice cube drops it must be scooped back onto the knife without using the other hand.

**Peas on the knife:**

Place bowls of peas at one end of the room and empty bowls at the opposite end. Have an equal amount of peas in each bowl. Give the first one in line in each team a knife. They run to the bowl and scoop up as many peas on the knife as they can, bring them back and dump them into the empty bowl at the point from which they started. They then give the knives to the next contestants in line, who repeat the procedure. Peas which fall must be picked up on the knife and brought to the bowl. These peas can be left until the very last. All peas must be retrieved before a victor can be named.

**Spoon and bean relay:**

Have everyone divided into teams. Half of each team stands at one end of the room, the other half at the other. Each team member is given a spoon, which they hold in their mouths. The first contestant of each team places two beans in his spoon and at the signal 'go' hurries across the room to the waiting contestant at the other goal. Holding their hands behind their back the contestant with the beans must put the beans from their spoon into the spoon of the other. If a bean drops they must pick it up and put it back into the spoon, and attempt again to put it into the spoon of the other. As soon as the two beans have been put into the other spoon, the contestant that now has the beans hurries back across to the other side and does the same. If a bean drops out of the spoon while a player is going from one goal to the other they must stop and replace it.

**Granny step relay:**

This is a race in which each contestant must put one foot directly in front of the other as he goes from the starting line to the goal line. At no time must there be any space between his feet.

**Changed attire:**

Divide your group into two. One group leaves for another room. Before leaving its members are instructed to carefully study the clothing of the group which is to remain. While the first group is gone the remaining group has two of its members change some item of attire. Two of them may change shoes. The first group then returns and tries to discover who has done the changing.

**Find the clock:**

Find the clock which ticks at a normal volume. While all of your group turns their backs or hides their eyes, the alarm clock is hidden somewhere in the room. Then while music is played softly, so as to kill the sound of the clock, the group moves about the room trying to discover where the clock is hidden. As soon as each guest thinks they know where the clock is hidden they come and whisper in the leader's ear. If they have the location correct they may sit down.

**Bulls eye**

Place a chair in the middle of the room. Set an empty milk bottle directly behind the chair. Use six clothes pegs, more if you like. Each contestant has his turn. Resting on their knees on the chair, and leaning over the back of the chair, he must try to drop each of the clothes pegs through the lid of the empty milk bottle. A hard and fast rule is that no one may lower their hands further than the top of the chair.

**Bean race:**

Have your contestant stand or sit around a table, in the centre of which is a bowl full of dried navy beans. Each contestant has a beverage straw and at the signal 'go' each tries to see how many of the beans they can take out of the bowl and place in a cup before him. The object is to suck the beans up with the straw and hold the bean in place by putting the tip of the tongue on the end of the straw. Any bean dropped between the bowl and the cup is disqualified.

**Cotton throw:**

See who can throw a ball of soft fluffy cotton the furthest.

**Soap race:**

No more than four can play this game at one time. Get four bowls and ahead of time place some vegetable colouring paste around the top of each bowl. Only a little bit is necessary. Carefully fill each bowl with water up to within about 1.5 cm of the ring of vegetable colouring just above the water line. Stand each contestant in the centre of the room. At the signal 'go' each rushes and picks up a bowl. He must carry the bowl across the room, touch the opposite wall, return and place it on the table. So speed is not the object here but rather steadiness of hand, because if any contestant allows the water to lap up onto the colouring so that the water is no longer completely clear, they are disqualified.

**Powers of observation:**

Before sending your group into another room let them have a good look at the room you play your game in. Once they have left the room make some alterations then call them back into the room. Give each person a pen and paper to write down all the changes they notice.

**Paper silhouettes:**

Give each person a sheet of newspaper with instructions that each one is to tear out the profile of some person, or place, familiar to everyone in the group. You could turn out the lights while this is being done.

**Where's the coin?:**

Seat everyone around a round table if possible except for the one chosen to be 'It'. Seated with their hands under the table they pass a small coin between them at any time 'it' can call 'hands up'. At that signal each contestant brings up their hands onto the table with their fists closed and rests their elbows on the table. Then when 'It' calls 'hands down' everyone quickly puts his hands down onto the table in unison. 'It' must then try to discern which one of the contestants had the coin in their hand and slapped it down on the table as the hands went down. If 'it' fails to guess, the hands go underneath the table to continue passing the coin around. 'It' is only allowed one guess.

**Rhythm clap.**

This is a good way to learn the books of the Scripture. The aim of the game is to be Matthew. Have everyone seated in a semi-circle. Starting at the head of the line name the first person Matthew, the second person Mark etc continuing until you run out of people. They are to keep time in unison by hitting first their knees then lightly clapping their hands and snapping their fingers, first the left and then the right, before bringing them back in rhythm to hit their knees again. They will be keeping time to the count of four. Let the one at the foot of the line begin as they will try to work their way up to the head of the line. Each person must remember their title and the person's title will change as they move around either up toward the front or to the back of the line. Say there are 12 people playing, number 12 will be Colossians. They will call out Colossians on the first snap of the fingers and then the name of another book, e.g. Matthew, on the second snap of the fingers. Then the person called Matthew must call out their own title, i.e. Matthew, on the next first snap of the fingers and the name of another book on the second snap of the fingers. Keep in mind that no words should be given except on the snap of the fingers, which are the third and fourth motions in the rhythm. Suppose Matthew fails to say Matthew on the first snap or misses saying another book on the second snap they will automatically go to the bottom of the line. Matthew will then take on the name of Colossians and everybody else will move up one and take the name of the person next to them so Mark will now become Matthew. The person who gets demoted will start off the next round. This game can get quite competitive.

**Hit the dummy:**

Choose someone to be the dummy who will stand with their back to the group. Have someone throw a beanbag, pillow or similar soft object at 'It'. As soon as the dummy is hit they turn around and try to guess, by examining the expressions on the faces, who it was who threw the bag. If they guess correctly that person becomes the dummy.

**Hot potato:**

Have a person kneel in the middle of a circle of people who throw a hot potato from person to person in the circle. If anyone holds for the count of ten they are automatically 'It'. If anyone drops the potato and 'It' gets it, 'It' joins the circle and the one dropping the potato becomes 'It'. If 'It' intercepts when the potato is being thrown, the one who threw the potato must go into the centre and 'It' returns to the circle.

**Cotton ball race:**

Place a number of small balls of cotton, depending on the number of contestants you plan to use, in a large bowl in the centre of the table. Blindfold your contestants, and give each one a small bowl and a wooden spoon. Instruct your contestants that there are balls of cotton in the large bowl, and that each one is to see how many of those balls they can get into their own bowl using only the wooden spoon. They will not be able to tell if they actually have a ball of cotton on the spoon, because the balls are so light.

**Spoon pictures:**

Two people get their signals sorted out in advance. One goes out of the room, while the other holds a spoon in front of somebody in the group. The partner returns, examines the spoon, and then names the one whose picture was taken. The trick is very simple. All you do is to sit as nearly as possible in the same manner as the one whose picture was taken. That is, if he has his feet crossed, you cross yours. If he is sitting to ward one side, you do the same.

**Yarn circle:**

Everyone should stand in a circle. Someone begins by mentioning something they are thankful for. They then toss a ball of wool or string to another person in the circle, being careful to hang on to the end of the yarn. The recipient of the ball of yarn then mentions something they're thankful for, and toss it to another person, holding on to their bit of wool. This goes on until everyone has had a chance to contribute at least once. By this time, the wool should have created an intricate pattern, interweaving all of your members. Then, slowly, a few of the members should drop their sections of wool, making the pattern sag. In order to take up the slack, all remaining members of the circle must back up. Repeat this a couple of times. Then, everyone should have a chance to reflect on what just occurred. It should be brought out that the beautiful pattern was possible, only with everyone's involvement. When some members dropped out of the involvement, the yarn design became ugly and the group ultimately forced to grow farther apart.

**Bump bums:**

Everyone holds both ankles with both hands. On the word go everyone tries to knock the others over without letting go of their ankles and only using their bums.



**Frisbee golf:**

Each member of the group brings along their own frisbee. The object of the game is to throw the frisbee at a designated object and hit it with the least number of throws. Lay out a course ahead of time by marking the objects to be hit or by giving each player a score card including a map of the course. The game begins at a starting point where the first group of 4 players will tee off. They individually throw toward the first object. The second throw will be taken from where their first throw landed. Each time they will throw from where their frisbee lands until they hit the designated object. Each person keeps a count of the number of strokes or throws necessary to hit each object along the course. After the first group has passed the first hole or object, start the next four, and so on until everyone is on the course. The person with the lowest number of throws is the winner.

**Spell bumper:**

Volunteer is asked questions by the group. They have to reply by spelling the answers with bum and hip movements.

**Get your hand in:**

The group stands in a tight group facing into the centre. Everyone puts their right hand into the centre, one on top of the other. Then do the same with the left hand, so that we have a stack of hands. On the word "go" the bottom hand is pulled out onto the top of the pile followed by the next and so on.

**Untangle:**

Form the group into a circle, shoulder to shoulder. Get them to mingle their hands in the centre of the circle. Each hand should then grab another, which is not their neighbour's. On the command "go" untangle without letting go.

**Electric shock:**

Everyone gets into a circle holding hands. On the word "go" the group pulls the circle so that another group member touches an object in the centre of the circle e.g. large cushion, ball. Whoever touches the object has to leave the circle and the game continues.

**Using straws:**

Everyone gets a straw and holds one end in their mouth with their hands placed behind their back. On "go" everyone has to transfer their grip from one end of the straw to the other. Everyone gets a straw and holds one end in their mouth and places hands behind their back. On "go" everyone has to chew the straw so that it is all inside the mouth. Stand a bucket in the middle of a circle to see who is able to throw their straw into it.

## **Thumb Wrestling**

For two players. Each player grips the others right hand so fingers are hooked, leaving the thumbs free. Players count to three moving their thumbs alternately to each side, after 'three' each player has to try and capture their opponents thumb and hold it down.

## **Spinning Pairs**

Get into pairs and face each other. Place your palms on other's palms between you a little above shoulder height. Both partners close their eyes and pull their palms apart (approx. 12 inches) while keeping their palms at that height. Both then turn around on their respective spots 3 times at the same time. The goal is to reconnect palms after spinning while keeping your eyes closed.

## **Pyramids**

Don't do this on a hard floor and not for those with weak backs. Outside on grass or if you have crash mats use them. One or more teams try to create a pyramid building up layers by players resting on all fours (hands and knees) on the backs of the players below. Not as easy as it sounds and it is suggested that due to the weight on those at the bottom of the pyramid you make it a maximum of three layers high... ie 6 people.

## **Crocodile**

One or more teams try to form a crocodile of people, although 'centipede' would be a more apt! One person is the anchor and forms the tail by getting down first on hands on knees. Successive members of the team then add segments to the crocodile by placing their hands in front of the last person down with their legs resting on the back of the person behind them. This continues until the whole team is in place. Once the whole team has created their crocodile try moving!

Can also be used as a race.

[NB: Girls wearing loosing fitting tops (such as T-shirts) may find it useful to make sure that their tops are tucked into trousers or skirts. Otherwise the player behind can get an unexpected view!]

## **Pole Game**

Take a 5 foot closet pole. Drill a hole two inches up the pole all the way through the pole on both ends. The hole should be large enough to put a small rope through it. Enough rope to tie around your waist. In the middle of the pole drill another hole straight through. Drill a hole through the top of a tennis ball. With a string tie a knot large enough at the end so that you can shove it into the ball and it will stay. Tie the end of that string (2feet long) through the middle hole of the pole and let it hang.

The object of the game is to tie the pole to a player on each end. With their hands behind their back they must swing the ball around the pole until it is wound to the end. Then reverse the effort to unwind it. This is a timed game and can be with as many groups of two that you want. Hip movement and coordination of movement with your team mate a must.

## **"Inky Poo"**

This one is (was?) an old Glyn school tradition and was used during 6th Form biology field trips (17-18 year olds), and can either be used in the form described here or amended to suit as an ongoing stunt for holidays and holiday projects.

Decide on a stupid code word such as "Inky Poo" (which is the one that got used on these trips). Make it clear that this code word can only be used once or twice a day and only one person is allowed to call it out. To start off with you could make this person yourself so that everybody gets the idea, however the person who has the privilege has to wear something stupid... (eg a limpet shell with a bit of seaweed made into hat). However within these restrictions they can use the code word at anytime, at which point everybody taking part has to carry out a daft action. In this case it was to lie on your backs waving your arms and legs in the air shouting "Horses, horses!". The last person to comply is the next person who has to wear the silly hat for the day and gets the privilege of calling out next time. Sounds daft? Very!! But fun as there is no real limit to where you can call use the code word, such on buses, middle of supermarkets, middle of mud flats, transport cafes.... So long as the place chosen is not dangerous.

If you are thinking of doing something like this with younger youth, it would probably be better to keep the privilege of calling out the code word to leaders to make sure its done safely. And possibly to choose an action that's more appropriate for the group. Oh... and make sure the leaders do it as well!!