

# TEAM BUILDING GAMES

## **MM Wars**

A creative and tasty variation of capture the flag. **Materials** Two buckets, string, facepaint, and a few bags of MMs. **How To Play** Like in capture the flag, teams are divided into two groups on two sides of a playing area. Some sort of identifiable boundary is down the middle, separating the two sides. (It is often helpful to have facepaint for the teams). In the back of each team's side there is a bucket with a string placed in a circle around it. The string should have a diameter of about 10 feet. Each player is given an MM at the start of the game. The goal for the player is to place their MM in the opposing team's bucket. The string around the bucket marks the safe zone which if a player gets to, they are safe. The player must get to the opposing team's bucket without being tagged. Players may only be tagged if they are on the opposing team's territory. If the player gets tagged by a member of the opposing team, they must give their MM to the person who tagged them and that person must eat it. The player who was tagged and lost their MM must return to the boundary line in the middle where there is a facilitator with the bag of MMs. The facilitator gives that player a new MM and the player continues playing. At the end of the game, whichever team managed to get more MMs into the opposing team's bucket wins.

## **Movie in a Minute**

Group breaks into teams and each team prepares and presents a skit. **Materials** None (props optional) **How To Play** Group breaks into teams of ideally 4-6 people per team. Each team has around 8 minutes to come up with a minute long skit they want to present. The skit should represent a movie which the audience will try to guess. The skit should last no longer than one minute. When the time is up, the large group reconvenes and each team presents their movie in a minute skit. For added fun, give teams bizarre props and require that they use them in some way.

## **Skits in a Bag**

Teams must come up with a skit based on a topic and certain props. **Materials** A bag containing an assortment of items that could be used as props. **How To Play** Players divide into teams of 4-7 people. The facilitator gives each person 3 props and tells the team they need to develop a skit. It can be helpful if the facilitator gives some options for the storyline. Things like (worst day ever, treasure hunt, or school dance). The facilitator should tell the teams they have 20 minutes to be ready to give the skit. After 20 minutes, everyone gathers around and the teams present their skits in front of the other teams.

### **Talk or Get Squirted**

Student talks about given topic. If um, uh, or pause is said, gets squirted. Facilitator selects one confident student. Student comes up on stage. Audience shouts out topic and facilitator gives one of shouted out topics to student. Student must talk about topic for 30 seconds without pausing or saying um or er. If student pauses or says um or er, student is squirted in face with squirt gun.

### **The Backpack Name Game**

Learn names by associating names with objects. An empty backpack. Players sit in a circle facing the center. The backpack is placed in the center of the circle. The first player states their name and puts an imaginary object starting with the same letter as their name in the backpack (i.e. Ben puts in butter bread ; Sam puts in "smoothies"). The next player tells everyone what all the preceding players have put in their bag, and then what they put in the bag (so that the final person who goes must list everyone's name and object).

### **Build a bridge**

The idea of this game is simple - split your group into teams of 3 or 4, and give each team a "Building Kit" (explained below) and a bowl of water. Each group has 30 minutes to build a bridge to span across a bowl of water. At the end of 30 minutes, each group has to demonstrate their bridge. You then test it for strength by adding pebbles one at a time, until the bridge collapses. The team with the strongest bridge wins! Building Kit The Building Kit is a shoebox with a variety of building materials. For example: •Ice cream sticks •Putty / Bluetack / Elmer's Tack •Paper clips •String •Glue •etc Make sure each group has the same amount of materials, just to keep things fair.

### **Caterpillar Race**

Form teams of equal size, with five to seven players on each team (3 also works). Have kids think up one-syllable names for their teams. Then line teams up next to each other behind a starting line. Instruct team members to place hands on the shoulders of the team members in front of them and race to a finish line according to the following rules of movement: The first person in line may hop one step forward. Continue down the line until the last person in line hops one step forward. After the last person hops, he or she must shout the team name. Then the whole team may hop one step forward at the same time. Repeat this process to move the caterpillar along. Players must keep their hands on the shoulders of the team members in front of them at all times during the race. Players may move forward only by hopping one step forward with both feet at once. If a team member breaks any of the above rules, it must return to the starting line and begin again

### **Down Down Down**

Purpose: To have fun and have a laugh Equipment: A tennis ball Details (not many): A group of people, as few as 3 and as much as the area can hold will stand in a circle. One person will throw an underhand pass to someone else. If the person catches it, he/she will throw it at another person. If you drop it, you go down on one knee. If the same person drops it again, he/she will go down on two knees. If Butterfingers drops it again, then he/she will go down on one elbow, and so on. After going down on two elbows, the next move will be on his/her chin. If Butterfingers drops it yet again, then he/she is out. The winner is the person who is on the least body parts. No hard throws allowed.

### **Mine Field**

This game teaches kids the value of communication and trust. It works best if you have a large area, indoor or outdoor. Setup a series of obstacles (chairs, tables, balls, etc). Ask the group to pair off - one person is blindfolded and must make their way through the 'mine field' by listening to their partner. Their partner verbally talks them through but cannot enter the mine field. If the person hits a 'mine' they must return to the start. After everyone has gone through, swap roles. At the end of the game, talk about what they learnt about communication and trust. •what was helpful communication and what wasn't •was it easy to trust your guide •what were some of their feelings - fear, safety, etc •was it easier going first or second

### **Peanut Butter River**

For this game you need two ropes to represent the banks of a river. The goal is to have the group cross the river. Give the team six carpet squares (or something similar) to use as "rafts". Each raft can only support one hand and two feet at any one time. Any more than that and it will sink (meaning a leader takes it away and it's no longer available to the group). If a raft is left untouched for more than a few seconds, it floats away (again, have a leader monitor for this and remove any rafts). If anyone in the group touches the water, the team must start again. The game sounds simple, but it's great for team building, as it requires everyone to participate and contribute towards the goal.

### **Water Balloon Toss**

Supplies Needed: Water Balloons Pair everyone up in two's. Have the group form two shoulder to shoulder lines with everyone facing their partner in the other line. Start the two lines only a couple feet apart at first. Give one water balloon to each person in one of the lines so that each pair of partners has a balloon. When the leader says "Toss", the partner with the balloon tosses it to their partner. If they drop their balloon or it busts when they catch it, they are out. If they successfully catch it without it breaking, they are still in. The leader then asks one line step back to increase the tossing distance and says "Toss". The partner who caught the balloon now tosses it back. Repeat the rounds until there is only one team left as the winners! Kids love this game! :)

**AFFIRMATIVE FOLD-UPS:**

Have group comfortably sit in a circle. Give each participant a sheet of paper and ask them to write their name on the top of the paper. Place all of the papers in the center of the circle. Have each participant draw a sheet from the center (not their own) and ask them to write one (or a sentence) positive word about that person at the bottom of the sheet. They then fold the paper up to cover up the word. Have them place the sheet back in the center and repeat on another sheet. Participants will continue to select other's sheets from the circle to write affirming words on, until the name is the only thing showing on the paper. The leader can then distribute the papers to their owners. This is a great game to do at the end of a retreat, the end of a year for an organization, at a staff meeting, etc.

**BACK TO BACK:**

Every group member must find a partner of approximately equal height and weight, if possible. The partners will lock arms with their backs to one another. With arms remaining locked at all times, the partners will sit down on the ground, kick their legs out straight, and try to stand back up. Then groups of four will try the same thing. Then groups of eight, sixteen, and eventually, the entire group together. This is the perfect activity to begin a trust sequence.

**CHALKBOARD SENTENCES:**

This exercise asks the participants, working in teams, to race against one another to formulate a sentence to which each team member has added a word. The facilitator begins by explaining that the participants will be competing to see which team is the first to complete a group sentence. Next, the participants are asked to divide into two teams. If the group contains an uneven number, one participant may compete twice. The group leader sets up blackboards or newsprint for each team. The teams then are to line up 10 feet from their board. After giving the first person in each team's line a piece of chalk or marker, the leader explains the rules of the game. The rules are as follows: Each team member is responsible for adding one word to the sentence. The players take turns; after they go to the board and write one word, they run back to give the next player the marker, and then go to the end of the line. (The sentence must contain the same number of words as there are members on the team.) A player may not add a word between words that have already been written. The group leader may wish to process the activity with a discussion on the most serious aspects of the exercise (i.e. the value of anticipatory thinking, the individual cooperating in a group task, etc.).

**KEEP IT UP:**

The players form two or more teams with 10-12 players on a team. Each team gets into a circle. Each team is given a volleyball (or similar type ball of any size). The players attempt to keep their ball in the air the longest. When a team wins, they get a point. The team with the most points, wins. Do not allow players to catch the ball during play. NOTE: To vary, change the way of scoring...say the ball must be hit in the order of the participants in the circle.

### **CLIPBOARDS:**

This activity can be done in two ways. The first is to do the activity at the beginning of a groups' "existence." Participants are given a clipboard and asked to decorate it (using magazine cutouts, stickers, markers, whatever!) in a way that best represents who they are. Facilitator can give each person lamination paper to cover their clipboard and help it to last for a long time. Participants will have their clipboard to use forever and they will always remember the experience whenever they do! Participants are then asked to share their clipboards with the group. The other way to do this activity is to do it after the group knows each other well. Have participants pick a name out of a hat (but, shh....it is a secret!). The participant then decorates a clipboard for the participant they chose, to represent him/her (based on what they know). Group is given some time to do this. Group then comes back together and clipboards are "unveiled."

### **HUMAN KNOT:**

The group starts out in one or two tight circles. Everyone in the group reaches across the circle with their right hand to grab another group member's right hand. The group then reaches in with their left hand to grab a different group member's left hand. The object is to untangle the group without letting go of hands until a circle is formed. If the group is having extreme difficulty, you can administer "knot first-aid" and break one set of tangled hands (with group consensus), otherwise group members may not let go at any time. You may have to decide as a group that the knot is not solvable, after prolonged attempt. NOTE: Can have group do without talking if they are advanced enough.

### **LAP SIT:**

The group will start in a circle. Every group member will turn placing their left leg towards the inside of the circle. Everyone will take one giant step into the middle of the circle. With hands on the person's shoulders in front of you, the group will sit on each other. The group will need to work together to communicate. Once this has been completed, the group may wish to try to walk in this formation. This is a dynamic activity - and one that will make the group feel a great sense of accomplishment when successfully completed!

### **LEVITATION:**

One person will lie on the ground on his/her back, with eyes closed (if they feel comfortable). The rest of the group will place their hands underneath the person lying down. One person will be designated to be the captain, and therefore should place him/herself at the person's head. Once everyone is ready, the captain will softly count to three. At this time, the group will pick the person up to their waist. The captain will again softly count to three, and the group will bring the person to shoulder height. The captain will softly count to three, and the group will bring the person overhead. Finally, the captain will count to three, and the group will gently rock the person (forward and backward) down to the ground. It is the volunteer's responsibility to stay stiff as a board. It is the rest of the groups' responsibility to take this activity very seriously, not to talk, and to keep the head higher than the feet at all times.

**LIFELINES:**

Each member draws a line on paper to represent the highs, lows, significant events, turning points, etc. of his/her life to date (can also project into future). Members share their lifelines with other members. Members ask questions about each other's lifelines. This exercise also can be done with pipe cleaners and verbal explanations.

Highs: Birth Teenager College First Job

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Lows: Childhood HS Grad School Future

**MACHINE GAME:**

The object of this game is to create a machine out of a group of people (i.e. ceiling fan, hot air balloon, watch, etc.). You might want to split your group into two or three smaller groups. Each person is required to be accountable for one noise and one motion of the machine. The group members should then put their motions and sounds together to create the machine. Give each group about 5 minutes to work together and prepare, and then have the groups present to everyone. Ask the other groups to guess what machine the group is.

**MASKS:**

Participants are given a piece of paper (preferably poster board). They are asked to cut out a face shape (that is fairly large - like the size of a regular face). They can cut out eyes and a mouth if they would like. Participants are then asked to decorate the face. One side represents what they feel people see/know/believe about them (on the outside). The other side represents what he/she feels about themselves (things going on the inside, what people do not necessarily know or see, etc.). The participants then share with the group if they feel comfortable.

**PENNY FOR YOUR THOUGHTS:**

All participants are given a bag with pennies (each participant should have one penny for each member in the group - if there are 20 people, players each should have 20 pennies). Participants go around the room to each other and trade "a penny for a thought." Participants trade pennies - and positive thoughts about what they think of one another. What an incredible activity and a wonderful way to end an experience! Activity continues until all participants have shared with every member of the group and have a new bag of "pennies for thoughts."

### **TEAM VS. THE WALL:**

Divide the group into two teams. Two members of the team hold the rope at about four to five feet above the ground. The object of the game is to get everyone over the rope. No one can go under the rope. Before you start transferring people over the wall, you meet as a team and decide how to get everyone over. HINT: If group is small, just have them attempt as one big group.

### **PEOPLE PASS:**

Have the group split into two smaller groups, if necessary. Have the groups lie down on their backs, in a straight line, ear to ear, alternating guy-gal-guy-gal, etc. Have the first person in line stand at the end of the line and lay down (on their back) on the hands of the first person. Have the group pass the individual from one end to the other. NOTE: Each group MUST have a spotter and the group should be VERY aware and serious.

### **PIECE OF THE PUZZLE:**

Facilitator should cut a puzzle out of poster paper ahead of time. (There should be one piece for each member of the group.) Have participants decorate their piece to represent who they are and what they feel they can contribute to the group. Once participants are done, have them share what they have on their piece. Participants should then assemble the puzzle. Facilitator should initiate a discussion on the power of everyone coming together, how much more of an impact a put together puzzle can have, than separate pieces, and how a final product could not be reached without a contribution from every piece of the puzzle.

### **POSITIVE BOMBARDMENT:**

One member is selected to be the recipient of positive feedback from the rest of the group. Once everyone has had a chance to give that member the “gift” of feedback, another person is chosen and the process is repeated. This can be done in writing with members writing a positive comment to each member and putting them all in an envelope with the person’s name on it, or verbally. This also can be adapted so the members first give some constructive criticism and then some positive feedback.

### **SING DOWN:**

Teams are created of anywhere from three to ten in a group. The leader will give the groups a word (i.e. love, boy, dance, etc.), and give the teams one minute to think of as many songs as they can with that word in it. Once the minute has passed, one team begins by singing a part of a song with that word in it. All team members must sing it. The other team then responds. NO SONGS MAY BE REPEATED. The group who has the most songs, wins. The process then can be repeated with another word.

**PROGRESSIVE STORY:**

For this exercise, a group of people must know one another and feel comfortable discussing personal issues. Everyone must be able to hear the other members in the group, but people do not have to see one another. The facilitator begins the story by setting the initial scene and mood. (The mood will alter as a result of the addition of more content to the story.) The story can start with the following examples (or others): “On my way to class the other day...” or “A good friend called last night and...” or “I had the most amazing weekend! I...” In no special order, members of the group then take over the story. They add another element to the plot. The main point is to make sure everyone adds something. The progression of the story indicates where the group members are emotionally and is representative of what is high on their lists of priorities, concerns, and thoughts. This exercise spurs on creativity and can reveal a lot about a staff’s collective state of mind. The facilitator plays a big role in interpreting what is said by each person.

**PRUI:**

The purpose of this game is to integrate group members and build trust and communication. Have each player take a blindfold and spread out on the floor. Ask those who feel comfortable to put their blindfolds on. Explain that you will tap someone on the shoulder; that person will be the “Pru” and will take off his/her blindfold. (None of the other players will know who the Prui is. Everyone will mingle around slowly (with bumpers up). Each time a player bumps into someone, they should shake his/her hand and ask, “Pru?” If the person says “Pru,” they are NOT the Prui. If the person does not answer you back, they ARE the Prui. Once a player finds the Prui, he/she should join hands with him/her and take off his/her blindfold. That person is now part of the Prui, so if someone bumps into him/her, they should NOT respond, so that person knows to join the Prui as well. Everyone will continue mingling around until they find the Prui chain. When everyone is part of the chain, the game is over. NOTE: This is a high trust activity, and should be done at an appropriate time.

**TAFFY PULL:**

Begin by asking group members to remove any sharp jewelry or belt buckles. Then, divide group into two teams - the “Taffy Team” and the “Taffy-Pulling Machine Team.” Have all of the members of the Taffy Team sit down and link arms, legs, and hands in one huge, tangled, mass. The job of the Taffy-Pulling Machine is to pull the taffy mass apart into “human-size” bits. Ask the team members to firmly, but GENTLY, tug at a piece that seems the most “stretchable,” until it comes loose. Each piece of taffy gets to decide how much he/she wants to stay a part of the taffy mass. These two rules help ensure no one gets hurt. Each piece of taffy that gets separated from the mass joins the machine, until the last two pieces are pulled apart. Then, if time permits, the two teams can switch roles.

### **THREE PERSON TRUST FALL:**

This trust activity should not be done without doing a “two person trust fall” first. The responsibilities and commands are the same as the two person trust fall. This time there will be two catchers, one in front of the faller, and one in back of the faller. Both catchers will go through the commands, and the faller may fall either way (forwards or backwards). The faller’s feet are STATIONARY, and the catchers gently push the faller back and forth like a windshield wiper. NOTE: The faller should not be on fast speed!

### **TINKER TOY COMPETITION:**

The group leader should bring a box of tinker toys and divide the pieces in two (or however many groups there are). Each group of people is given the tinker toys and the following instructions:

1. You have five minutes to create the tallest structure you can with the pieces you have been given.
2. You then have an additional five minutes to build the longest structure.
3. The “winners” get a prize.

### **TOUCHSTONES:**

This activity is best done at the end of a group experience. All participants are asked to choose a touchstone (marble or rock if location permits) from a jar, bag, etc. The facilitator then reads the following and gives all participants a copy to take with them to remember their experience:

We all came here as individuals, bringing our own personal styles and characteristics. We have each given a part of ourselves to the group. This is what being an individual is all about. We have learned about others and also about ourselves. We all are unique pieces of the puzzle, with our own thoughts, ideas, beliefs, and dreams. We are valuable because of this and what we have to offer to others.

No one else is exactly like us. We need to look in at ourselves, see who we are and recognize our potential. We have the ability to accomplish whatever we start out to do. Know that we have no limits and only we can make things happen.

I want you to take all you have experienced here and keep it with you. These Touchstones represent the experience we have shared together. Take one, look at it, and remember who you are. Each stone is different - as each of us is our own person. But, they are similar too - each with hopes, desires, and ambitions. Dig deep inside and always have the courage to be yourself. You are a wonderful individual just as you are.

Keep this Touchstone and know the power and energy you feel here will always be within you. Do not forfeit your potential to fulfill all you set out to do. Listen to the voice inside you, think about all there is for you to accomplish, and challenge yourself to do it. Go on....the power lies within.

### **TRUST WALK:**

This is an incredible trust activity! Every group member is either blind-folded, not blind-folded, but promises not to peek, or wishing not to participate. The leaders of the group will organize the group in a straight line or in pairs, singles, etc. The leader will make sure the group begins by holding one another's hands in a circle to help make them feel comfortable. The leader will lead the blinded group members around, periodically leaving them by themselves (but always holding on to something like a tree, fence, sign, etc. - and NEVER for any great length of time), or with new people to hold on to. THE KEY TO THIS ACTIVITY IS NO TALKING. If there is an object that needs to be stepped over, the leader should raise the hand of the group member, the next person will do the same to warn the next person, and so on. If there is an object that is low, the leader will lower the arm of the blinded group member, indicating they should duck down, and the chain will continue in the same manner as for a raised object. (The leader can pretend as well.) The leader can organize this activity according to their group. HINT: This activity is best done in the dark, but the leader should make sure everyone feels comfortable participating. If someone is nervous, they could become the leader's partner or just watch. Squeezing the hand of a participant is very encouraging and helpful in making them feel safe.

### **TWO PERSON TRUST FALL:**

Every group member needs to find a partner of approximately equal height and weight. One partner will designate themselves as the faller, and one will be the catcher. Both partners will get the chance to act in both roles. The faller's responsibilities are to stay as straight as possible, not bend at the waist, keep their arms across their chest, and communicate with the catcher. The catcher's responsibilities are to get in a sturdy stance (usually one leg in front of the other in a lunge position), be aware, keep their hands right below the faller's shoulder blades, use the arms as shock absorbers, not underestimate the force being generated by the faller, and constantly communicate with and reassure the faller. The faller will have his/her back to the catcher. The commands are performed, and the faller falls straight back. After three tries, the partners should switch roles. NOTE: Give the group members the opportunity to say "no" to this exercise. This and all other trust activities are very serious activities.

### **WHAT YOU DON'T KNOW:**

Tape a blank piece of paper (poster board - kind of like a billboard over the person's head) on everyone's back. The members are to write a compliment or positive comment on everyone's back. At the end of the session, explain that a lot of times we tend to give compliments behind someone's back and it is not very often that we actually say these things to people's faces. We sometimes take for granted the positive aspects of others. If you wish, you may also explain that criticisms often are given behind other's backs as well, and that it may be more effective if they go to the person, instead of others. Have the group members pair up with someone they would like to get to know better and remove the paper from each other's backs. They should then explain to that person why they would like to get to know him/her better.

### **WILLOW IN THE WIND:**

Should follow after a “two or three person trust fall” has been completed. This activity can be performed in one large group or in smaller groups with a minimum of seven people. Have the group stand in circle with their shoulders touching. One person stands in the middle, with his/her eyes closed, body stiff, and feet planted. The rest of the group should be in a tight circle, in a sturdy stance. The outside circle group members have both of their hands up and ready at chest level. The commands are performed, and the faller may fall any way he/she likes. The rest of the group will gently change the faller’s direction by easing their “fall” and sending them in another direction. The middle person will change after a few minutes. NOTE: Address the fact that the more hands on someone, the safer they will feel. The leader also should ask group members to remain quiet during the activity - or even to make the sound of a gentle breeze.

### **VALUES DISCUSSION:**

Have participants find two people who are wearing the same color as them. Have them find a spot where they can talk together. Instruct them they will be talking about some issues and you will give them new topics every few minutes. Here are some samples:

Talk about the most important thing you learned this year.

What are the easiest and hardest emotions for you to express and why?

What is something that few people know about you?

What do you value in a friend?

What do you want to be doing in five years?

What is one goal you have for next year?

What is a motto you try to live by?

What is the greatest challenge you are facing?

What do you like most about yourself?

What do you value in a loving relationship?

What do you value most in life?

### **WEB WE WEAVE:**

The group stands in one large circle. The facilitator begins the game by asking a question such as, “What is your favorite place to be when you are happy?” The facilitator answers the question and then tosses a yarnball across to another person, while holding onto the end of the yarn. The person answers the question, holds a piece of the yarn, and then tosses it to someone else. Game continues in same fashion, until everyone has shared. By tossing the yarn (or twine) around the group, participants weave a web that connects all of the members of the team in some manner. The facilitator can ask as many questions as appropriate. The facilitator then asks two or three of the team members to “drop” their string. The web begins to sag and appears to be very weak and vulnerable. The facilitator then can discuss how important each participant is to the team and the effect that low levels of involvement and commitment has on the entire team. At the end, the group can kneel down and place the web on the ground. Works well to have a discussion on teamwork. Group members can cut a

piece of the string from the web to keep as a reminder of the exercise and the thoughts the group shared. Works well for groups of any size!