

# MOVEMENT GAMES

Humans know how to have fun. We are the most playful and creative animal on the planet. Yet we often fail to give ourselves permission to enjoy this inborn playfulness. Once adulthood rolls around, we seem to trade in our child-like goofiness for “responsibility” and “professionalism.”

But let me tell you something; your so-called responsibilities are not an excuse. Responsibilities and playfulness can exist simultaneously. In fact, adding more goofiness to your work will make you more productive, and it will help you solve problems more creatively and effectively.

So, in the following pages, I'll share with you a host of games that invite you to play like a kid again. These games are based around movement, so they let you be active without having to go to the gym. Also, movement games are usually social activities, so you will strengthen social bonds while you're having fun. Finally, playing games enhances learning, and adding movement to the mix will essentially hit the 'save' button on the new knowledge that you gain.

When playing these games, give yourself permission to be childish and goofy. You don't need to be immature, just let go of your fear of embarrassment. Have the courage to try new things, and don't worry about what people say or think. When you release your inner child, you allow yourself to feel the youthful joy that we admire in our children. And when other people see how much fun you're having, I bet they'll want to join in, too.

## Hang-game

Number of players: 1

Equipment needed: something to hang from (a tree branch, monkey bars, ceiling joist, etc.)

Time to harness your inner monkey. This game is simple, just see how many ways you can hang from something. Try 2 arms, 1 arm, 1 arm and 1 foot, etc. Can you hang by only 2 fingers? How about under your armpit? Be creative and explore how your body can move.

## Slider push

Number of players: 1

Equipment needed: something you can slide on the ground with your foot

Stand on one leg with a “slide-able” object near your non-standing leg. Without putting weight on your foot, try to slide the object as far away as you can, in any direction you can think of (foreword, backward, diagonal, sideways, behind your standing leg, etc.). When you think you have gone as far as you can, mark the location and try to beat it the next time.

To make this game more challenging, try it while standing on a 2x4.

## Sticky Note

Number of players: 1+

Equipment needed: sticky notes

Grab one sticky note and hold it in your hand with the sticky side facing outward. Find a spot on a wall, backboard, or archway where you can stick the sticky note. Then, try to jump as high as you can and slap the note against the wall, so it sticks. Grab a new sticky note and try again. Keep trying to get higher and higher up the wall. Maybe try running up the wall.

## Stick the Landing

Number of players: 1+

Equipment needed: none

As you walk through the forest, beach, or outdoor environment, pick a target on the ground and try to jump onto that thing. Whichever way you land, try to hold that position for 3 seconds. If you held the position, you stuck the landing!

Like the game above, you can also play HORSE with another person.

## Over-under-game

Number of players: 1+

Equipment needed: none

Find a table, rail, bench, tree branch, whatever. Try to think of all the ways you can move over, under, or around the obstacle. With each new movement you think of, try it! How many ways can you move around the object in a fun and creative way? 10? 20? 30 ways?

If you want to play this game with a partner, you can play HORSE. One person will try to move around the object in a unique way. Then, the other person will try. If the other person cannot complete the same movement, they get an H. The game continues until one person loses 5 times and spells out all the letters in HORSE. Use any word you like to make the game shorter or longer.

## Obstacle Course

Number of players: 1+

Equipment needed: whatever you can find

When setting up this game, use your creative juices. Find or create obstacles to run through, climb on, crawl under, jump over, swing through, etc. Trace out the course in your mind or with string. Then, do the obstacle course! The fastest time wins. You could also award prizes for the most creative route or coolest move.

Here are some ideas for obstacles: hurdles, potato sack race, army crawl under ropes, crawl through a tube, climb to the top of a rope, climb over a trellis, jump through tires, go up and down a slide, monkey bars, swing over a "crevasse," roll down a hill, or dribble a soccer ball through a zig-zag course.

## Bucket toss

Number of players: 1+

Equipment needed: as many buckets as you want and balls or frisbees to throw, hit, or kick

Mark a line on the ground and place multiple buckets at different distances away from the line. Assign a point value for each bucket (usually, the closer buckets or bigger buckets are worth fewer points). Then, try to throw the balls or frisbees into the buckets. Each bucket you make, you get the points for that bucket. After all the balls are thrown, add up your total points. The player with the most points wins.

You could also arrange the buckets into a tic-tac-toe board. Then, play tic-tac-toe by trying to throw a ball into each bucket. The person who makes three buckets in a line wins the game.

## King of the line/log

Number of players: 2

Equipment needed: a surface for balancing on (e.g., A log, a 2x4 piece of lumber, a curb, or a line on the ground)

Both players will face each other while standing on a line, log, or "balance beam." They will grasp hands like they are shaking hands. Then, each player will try to force the other person to lose balance and fall off the line. The first person to fall loses.

## Balance wars

Number of players: 2

Equipment needed: none

Each player will stand on one leg and stand facing each other. On the count of three, each player will try to push their opponent off-balance. The first person to touch their other leg to the ground or fall over loses.

## **Pull of the sock game**

Number of players: 2+      Equipment needed: one sock per player

Each player puts on a sock, so it is halfway on their foot. On the count of three, each player does whatever they can to take off the opponent's sock. Meanwhile, they are trying to prevent their own sock from being pulled. If your sock is pulled off, you're out. The last person remaining wins.

## **Basketball/Soccer Mini Golf**

Number of players: 2+  
Equipment needed: a basketball and hoop or a soccer ball and buckets

For basketball mini-golf, create nine holes or stations around the basketball hoop. At each station, make a rule or add an obstacle to make each shot more difficult than normal. At one station, you may have to shoot with one arm. At another station, you might have to shoot a granny shot. You get the idea.

If you make the shot on the first attempt, you get a hole in one. If you miss the shot, you must grab the rebound as quickly as possible because you have to take your next shot from wherever you get control of the ball again. If it takes you 3 shots to make it in the basket, you get a 3 for the hole. After nine holes, add up your points and see which player shot the lowest score. The lowest scorer is the winner.

For soccer mini-golf, apply the same rules, but use buckets as holes. Tip the buckets on their sides and try to kick a soccer ball into the bucket. The number of kicks it takes to get the ball in the bucket is your score for the hole. Again, the lowest score after 9 holes wins.

## **Hot lava tag**

Number of players: 2+  
Equipment needed: a playground or some elevated playing area. Be creative!

Remember this from the playground days? The ground is lava, so you can't step foot on the ground at all. One person is the lava monster, and they try to tag the other player(s) on the playground.

A modified version of this game is *Zombie mode*. Whenever someone gets tagged, they also become "it." Eventually, there may be 5-6 lava monsters, and only one person will remain to be tagged.

## **Balloon Transfer**

Number of players: 2+      Equipment needed: balloons

One person has an inflated balloon between their knees. To start the game, that player must run, hop, or shuffle the balloon over to their teammate about 10 yards away. The player cannot use their hands, and they cannot drop the balloon, or else they must start over. Once they get to their teammate, the player must transfer the balloon into the other player's legs. Again, you cannot use your hands to make this transfer. See how many times you can transfer and run the balloon across the course without dropping it.

If you want, you can make this game into a relay race. The team that transfers the balloon between every team member wins the race.

## **Outdoor Scavenger Hunt**

Number of players: 2+      Equipment needed: a list of objects

Make a list of objects that can be found in your surrounding area. Have each player or team grab a bag to carry their items. Then, put a time limit on the hunt. Each person or team must try to find as many items as they can in the allotted time. The team with the most items wins.

## Slip n' Slide Bowling/Kickball

Number of players: 2+

Equipment needed: tarps, a hose, and a ball (or bowling pins)

For bowling, lay down a length of tarp and put some fake bowling pins on one end. Get the sprinkler out to lube up the course. Then, you act like a human bowling ball by sliding down the tarp and trying to knock down all the pins.

For kickball, lay down some tarps so that it looks like a baseball diamond. Put some bases at each corner of the diamond. Then, play standard kickball, but with the bonus of super-sliding into the base.

## Ninja

Number of players: 3+

Equipment needed: none

Start by holding hands and standing in a circle. Ensure that everyone is equidistant from each other, then you can release your hands.

Now, imagine your hands are your swords. The object of the game is to "chop off" the hand of another player. Every time a hand gets "chopped," the player puts their injured hand behind their back to eliminate the hand from play. If a player gets both of their hands chopped, that player is eliminated from the game completely, and the remaining players continue to play. **The most important rule of the game is that you can only move once per turn, and your movements must be one fluid motion.** For example, if I make a swipe at another player but miss entirely, I have to freeze in the position where I stopped my motion. Unless I continue to swing my arm without stopping, I have to hold the position where I first ended my movement.

On the count of three, all players must quickly assume an athletic position. Again, this needs to be done all in one motion. If you want to move your arm *and* take a step backward, you must do it simultaneously; you cannot step back and then move your arm.

Once the game has started, everyone takes turns trying to chop off another player's hand (take turns in a clockwise fashion). If you attack another player's hand on your turn, you must make one fluid swing and then freeze wherever your hand stops. And you must hit the player's hand or wrist to eliminate that hand.

While a player is trying to chop your hand, you are allowed one movement to evade the attack. Whenever you stop your fluid movement, you must freeze in the position that you stopped. All players in the attacker's striking range can also evade the strike, even if the attacker does not explicitly attack you.

Keep playing until one player is victorious.

## 500

Number of players: 4+

Equipment needed: a ball of any kind

Designate one player as the thrower. The rest of the players are the catchers. They stand in a group, far away from the thrower. The thrower will throw the ball high up in the air and call out a number between 0 and 500. If the thrower calls "100," the player who catches the ball gets 100 points. After each throw, the players add up their total points for the round until someone reaches 500 points. The first person to reach 500 switches positions with the thrower.

The thrower can also yell out additions to the rules, such as "300, dead or alive!" Now, the catchers don't have to catch the ball to get the points. If the ball hits the ground, it doesn't matter; the first person to get the ball in their possession will win the points.

## Partner Tag/Blob Tag

Number of players: 4+

Equipment needed: none

Form teams of two players. Each team must join hands and stay joined for the entirety of the game. If they break hands, they incur a penalty, and they must remain frozen in place for 3 seconds. Every team is trying to tag each other. If a team gets tagged, they are out. Last team standing wins.

## **Hunger Games**

Number of players: 4+

Equipment needed: fake weapons - pool noodles, balls, foam swords, etc.

To start, all players will stand in a circle. At the center of the circle, all the weapons are placed in a pile called the cornucopia. Each player also has a flag or a bandana hanging from their waist.

On "Go," players can either try to get a "weapon" from the cornucopia or choose to run away. The players with weapons can try to shield or strike another player. If another player gets hit with a weapon, they can no longer use the body part that got hit. For example, if you get hit in the leg, you have to hop on one leg the rest of the game.

Players can also try to pull each other's bandanas. If a player gets their bandana pulled off their waist, they are eliminated from the game. Players cannot cover up or hold on to their bandana to prevent it from being pulled.

The last person remaining in the game is the hunger games champion.

## **Capture the Flag**

Number of players: 4+

Equipment needed: a "flag" or some sort

Split up into two teams and divide the playing area into two equal sections. Each team will then hide their flag (or bandana or any other identifiable object) in a visible but secret location. After both teams have hidden their flag, each team will try to capture the flag and bring it across the half-line back into their territory. However, if you step foot on the other team's side, the other team can tag you. When you are tagged, you get put in "jail," which is any space that the team designates as the jail cell. To get out of jail, one of your untagged teammates can come and break you out. You both have to make it back across the line while holding hands. If you get tagged during the breakout, you both go to jail.

The first team to capture the flag and bring it back across the line without getting tagged is declared the winner.

## **4 Corners**

Number of players: 4+

Equipment needed: none

Choose 4 corners in a room or open space and assign a color to each corner.

One person is the caller and stands in the middle of the space with their eyes closed. The caller will count to 10 and then yell out a color. If a player or players are standing in the corner that was called, they are eliminated from the game. The game continues until there is one person left standing. When there are only 2 players left, they cannot stop in the same corner together.

You can also use obstacles to make it more challenging to get to each corner. If a player doesn't make it to a corner in time, they are also eliminated.

## No Holds Bar

Number of players: 7+

Equipment needed: none

Form pairs of two with one person left over. Make an imaginary circle about 20ft in diameter. Each pair will sit around the edge of the circle, with one person sitting in front of the other person. The person without a pair will stand in the middle of the circle.

The middle person will spin around with their eyes closed and point their finger straight out in front of them. When this person stops spinning, their finger will be pointing at one of the pairs sitting on the edge of the circle.

When a pair is chosen, the person sitting in front becomes the runner, and the person sitting behind becomes the holder. The goal of the runner is to try to tag the person in the middle of the circle. Meanwhile, the holder tries to do whatever he/she can to prevent the runner from tagging the center-person. The holder can hang on to the runner, pin the runner down, block the runner, etc. (Note: the person in the center does not move at all; they stay in the middle of the circle and wait to get tagged).

If the holder prevents the runner for >30 seconds, the holder wins. If the runner tags the center person, the runner wins. Then, the loser of the round will trade positions with the person in the center of the circle. Keep playing for as long as you want.

## Captain's Coming/Simon Says

Number of players: 4+

Equipment needed: none

crew, and they are standing in front of the captain. The captain will call out different orders. Much like the game of Simon says, each order requires a specific action. If a crew member starts to do the incorrect action, they are out. During the team-based actions, one person may be left behind, and that person is out, too (or just stand off to the side for 20 seconds to make the game less competitive). The last person standing wins the prize of becoming the captain for the next round.

Here are the orders that the captain can call out and the associated actions:

**To the ship:** run to the captain's right

**To the island:** run to the captain's left

**Hit the deck:** lay down on your stomach as quickly as possible

**Attention on deck:** salute and yell, "Aye, aye captain!" - now, the players cannot move until the captain gives the order of, "At ease!" (e.g., even if the captain gives another order such as "to the ship" the crew must continue to remain at attention until told "at ease")

**Row the boat:** the crew must form groups of three and sing "Row, row, row your boat." Anybody who is not in a group of three is out.

**The love boat:** crew members grab a partner and dance. Anybody without a partner is out.

**Captain's Quarters:** everyone runs towards the captain.

**Man-over-board:** Players must find a partner as quickly as possible. One partner must lay on their stomach while the other places their foot on their partner's back and acts like they are scanning the horizon (Captain Morgan pose). People without a partner, or pairs that are too slow, are eliminated.

**I need a periscope:** Every player falls on their back and sticks one leg in the air. The last one to do so is eliminated.

**Crow's nest:** All players must find a partner. The lightest player rides on their partner's back. Those without partners or who assemble the crow's nest too slowly are eliminated.

**Sick turtle:** Everyone falls onto their backs and waves their hands and feet in the air.

Alternative rules: If playing in a pool, all the orders stay the same except for "hit the deck," which becomes "walk the plank." The crew members must now bob underwater.

If you want to try a more structured type of play, you could always try playing traditional sports. Joining your community recreation league is a great way to try a new sport. Or you can start your own pickup games by making a Facebook group or planning a day of the week with your friends. Social media has made it so easy to get a group of people together, so use it. And if you see a pickup game in action, don't be afraid to ask to join the fun. The worst that can happen is that someone says no.

### Traditional sports

Baseball  
Basketball  
Cricket  
Football/flag football  
Golf  
Gymnastics

Hockey  
Lacrosse  
Martial arts  
Rugby  
Running  
Soccer

Tennis  
Volleyball  
Water polo  
Wrestling

### Non-traditional sports

Air hockey  
Archery  
Axe throwing  
Badminton  
Bike polo  
Billiards  
Boxing  
Broomball  
Croquet  
Curling  
Darts  
Discus throwing  
Dodgeball  
Fencing  
Field hockey  
Fives  
Foosball  
Footgolf  
Footvolley

Fricket  
Frisbee golf  
Futsal  
Gaelic Camogie  
Gaelic Football/Hurling  
Handball  
Horseshoes  
Kickball  
Kickboxing  
Miniature golf  
Netball  
Paddle tennis  
Paddleball (1 or 4-wall)  
Pickleball  
Pushball  
Quidditch  
Racquetball  
Roque  
Shuffleboard

Skeleton  
Slam ball  
Snow golf  
Soccer tennis  
Squash  
Steeplechase  
Street hockey  
Table tennis/ping pong  
Tennis polo  
Tetherball  
Ulama  
Ultimate frisbee  
Wallball  
Wallyball  
Whirly ball  
Wiffleball  
Woodball

### Yard/Lawn games & Night games

Contrary to popular belief, you do not need to be drinking alcohol to play these games.

Bocce ball  
Candyman  
Chipper pong  
Cops and Robbers  
Cornhole  
Firefly  
Flashlight tag  
Fling a ring  
Ghost in the Graveyard  
Giant 4 in a row

Giant Jenga  
Golf skee-ball  
Grandma's footsteps  
KanJam  
Kick the can  
Kubb  
Ladder toss  
Lawn bowling  
Lawn darts  
Molky/scatter

Pipe ball  
Ring toss  
Sardines/Hide-n-Seek  
Spike ball  
Tiki toss  
Twister  
Washers  
Water balloon fight  
Yard dice  
Yard pong

## Miscellaneous movement activities/games

In my opinion, these are different than sports because they typically don't have rules associated with them unless you are competing at a high level.

4-square  
Abseiling  
Acro ski  
Acro yoga/Aerial yoga  
Air hockey  
All-terrain boarding  
Backpacking  
Balance board  
Bouldering  
Bull riding  
Canyoneering  
Cross-country skiing  
Cycling  
Dancing  
Fishing  
Geocaching  
Grass skiing  
Hunting

Ice climbing  
Ice skating  
Kayaking/canoeing  
Kite boarding  
Knee boarding  
Laser tag  
Logrolling  
Long-boarding  
Luge  
Miniature golf  
Mountain biking  
Paddle boarding  
Paintball  
Parkour  
Rock climbing  
Roller blading  
Rope climbing  
Rowing

Sandboarding  
Scootering  
Shooting  
Skateboarding  
Skiing/snowboarding  
Slackline  
Snow biking  
Stilts  
Surfing/bodyboarding  
Trampolining  
Trapeze  
Tree/pole climbing  
Unicycling  
Wakeboarding  
Water-skiing  
Whitewater rafting  
Wind/Kite surfing  
Zorbing

## Video games

Outdoor games are ideal, but certain video games will still get you moving, too. Xbox Kinect and the Wii are a couple examples, but make sure that the games you buy are movement-based.

