

YOUTH MINISTRY GAMES

— By David Baker

PLUNGER BALL

If you'd like to level the playing field for the kids in your group, here's a version of baseball where athletic ability doesn't give anyone an edge.

Form two teams. Have the first team go to bat with a brand-new plunger and try to hit an inexpensive inflatable ball. The trick is to hit the ball far enough so that players can move around the bases, but not to swing so hard that the end of the plunger flies off—that's an automatic out. The rest of the rules are just like regular baseball.



JEDI DODGE BALL

This version of Dodge Ball has a “Jedi” twist. Have each team appoint one person as its Jedi. Each team's Jedi stands in the center of a Hula Hoop that's been placed in the middle of the team's side of the court. During the game, whenever the ball hits a player, he or she falls down and stays in that spot. The teams' Jedis can bring fallen players back to “life” again by leaving the safety of the ring and touching these players with a sword. (We use swimming pool noodles for the swords.) If the opposing team hits a Jedi outside of the safety ring, or if one team's players are all down at the same time, the game is over.

HUNGRY HIPPO

Kids have wacky fun with this life-size version of a popular children's board game! You'll need four of the following: plastic laundry baskets, pairs of gloves, 20-foot lengths of rope, pillows, skateboards, and four different colors of balloons (at least 10 balloons of each color). You'll also need a lot of duct tape and a whistle.

Have kids form four teams, and give each team one set of the above supplies. Blow up the balloons and scatter them in the playing area. Have each team duct-tape a pillow to the top of its skateboard and one glove to each side of its laundry basket. (Kids will slip their hands into the gloves and hold the baskets with the open end toward the floor, so they can scoop up balloons.) Each team begins in a different corner of the room and chooses a different color of balloon to go after.

Each team will have someone lie belly-down on the skateboard with hands inside the laundry basket's gloves. Each team will tie a rope around its “skateboarder's” ankles. When you blow the whistle, teams will shove their skateboarder teammates out into the playing area and pull them back and forth with the rope. The skateboarders have two minutes to capture as many of their balloons as possible, with their laundry baskets. Then

have other teammates exchange places with the skateboarders. The team with the most balloons wins.

SKIT BAGS

Put together garbage bags with 10 random objects. Divide students into teams and give them a topic to create a skit about. The rule is: everyone on the team must participate in the skit, and all objects in the bag must be used. Have students return and act out skits for one another.

A IS FOR AWESOME!

Set out a variety of colored pens, markers, crayons, and pencils. Give kids each a 2-foot square of newsprint and allow them to creatively write their name at the top.

Then have kids each print the alphabet in large letters down the left side of the paper. Tape the papers to the walls.

When all the papers are taped, have kids roam around, filling in affirming adjectives that describe the person named at the top of the paper. Allow only one adjective per letter of the alphabet. Encourage creativity and variety, particularly on letters such as Q and X!

Keep the papers on the walls for a few weeks, then allow kids to take them home as permanent reminders of their good qualities—from A to Z!

M&M's ICEBREAKER

Fill a big bowl full of M&M's candy, then have everyone grab a handful. I ask kids to each secretly choose their favorite M&M's color. Then they mingle and trade M&M's color-for-color until kids have only their favorite color in their hand. For example, "I'll give you three greens if you give me five browns." This takes a few minutes, produces lot of laughs, and, yes, some people cheat by eating their "unpreferred" colors.

Then we ask kids to form small groups based on either the number of M&M's they have left or by colors. (If you have a savvy bunch who figures you're going to group by colors, they might collect the same colors as their friends—grouping by numbers throws them off.) Then have kids in each small group answer questions about themselves. Questions include: favorite pizza, best day ever, worst day ever, scariest moment, greatest accomplishment, and so on. Later we have kids each share their answers in the large group.

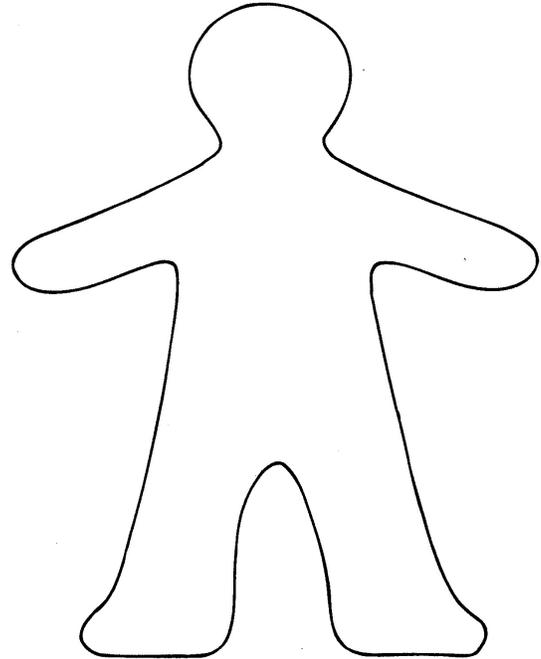
PAPER-THIN SKIN

Supplies: Bible, tape, and one copy of the paper cutout person for every six people

Form circles of no more than six people, with each circle having a paper cutout of a person. Pass the paper cutout around the circle. When the cutout comes to you, recall to the group a common negative comment or put-down of some sort, and then tear off a piece of the paper person, and pass the cutout to the next person. After the cutout has been around your group at least once, stop and read **Ephesians 4:29**.

Now again pass around the paper cutout, but this time share a complimentary or affirming word, and use the tape to repair the paper person. After the pieces to your cutout have been reattached, answer the following question:

How was this experience like what we do to people in real life?



TAPEHEAD

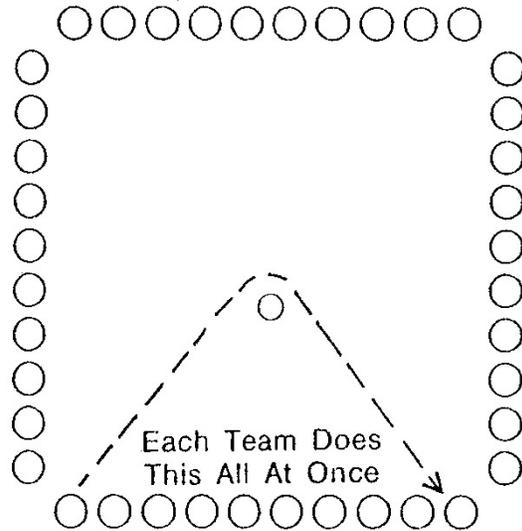
Whether you play this game as a relay or a watch-and-cheer game, it's hilarious! Students wrap up their partner's head completely with masking tape, sticky side out. Then, in competition, the partial mummies run or crawl to an area where a variety of small, light objects are spread. They must lower their heads onto objects, "stick 'em," then bring them back to where their partners remove the items and send their mummies back for another trip. The pair or team whose tape head fetches the most items in a given amount of time wins.

Here are some common articles easily picked up by tape heads: egg cartons, Styrofoam cups, plastic ware, milk cartons, construction paper, shoe boxes, string, pie tins, paper

clips, rubber bands, cotton balls, marshmallows, small stuffed animals, pencils, Q-Tips, inflated balloons, paper plates. To avoid tangling hair in the masking tape, have "tape heads" put a nylon stocking over their heads first. Then apply the tape.

BANANA RACE

This is a good indoor game that requires very little space. Divide a group into four equal teams and arrange chairs in a square (each team being one side of the square). There is a chair in the center, but no one sits in it. The first player at the left end of each team is given a banana. At the signal, the first player runs around the center chair without touching it and back to the right end of his own line. In the meantime, all of his team members have moved up one seat toward the head of the line leaving a vacant chair at the right end. After taking the vacant chair, the first player passes the banana along the line. When the end player receives it, he runs around the center chair and back to the vacant chair. This continues with each player doing this. Each team attempts to be the first to have all players back in their original position. The original first player must eat the banana when his team is finished, and his team wins.



PROGRESSIVE RELAY

Set two chairs at one end of the meeting room. On each chair, place a stack of 3x5 cards on which you've written relay instructions kids will carry out (see sample sheet below). You'll need ½ as many instructions as you have kids, and a set of them for each team.

Form two teams. Have teams line up in a single-file line on the side of the room opposite the chairs. One "go," the first person on each team will run to the chair, take one 3x5 card, follow the instructions, tag the chair, run back to his or her team and lock arms with the next person in line. Both of them will run back to the chair, take one 3x5 card, follows the

instructions together, tag the chair, lock arms again, run back to their team and lock arms with the third person, and so on. This continues until all team members have been included, finished the instructions and run back to their starting line. Award prizes to the team that finishes first.

ENCORE

Form teams with about 8 kids on each team. Have teams sit about 20 feet apart while you stand in the middle and say, "We're going to play a game that requires you to be incredibly creative and to work together as a team. I'm going to give one team a word or

Sample Relay Instructions

- Sing "Jingle Bells"
- Do give jumping jacks
- Run backward to your team
- Hop to your team
- Do a dying cockroach
- Turn a flip
- Crow like a rooster
- Act like a bunch of idiots
- Ride the donkey
- Riverdance back to team
- Do three push ups

a category. That team has to think of a song that either uses that word or applies to the category.

As soon as the first team thinks of a song, its members will stand up and sing a few lines from it, including the line that applies to the word of category. When the first team finishes, the other team has 20 seconds to come up with another song that meets the same requirement. We'll continue from team to team until a team can't think of a new song within 20 seconds. At that time, the last team to have come up with a song gets 100 points.



Begin the activity by giving one team the first word. Consider using the following words of categories:

Love

Toddler songs

Heart

80's songs

Baby

Fast-food jingles

Beautiful

Joy

Country songs

Jesus

FORMING TEAMS

1. Have everyone line up according to birthday, but without talking. Once lines are formed, have students sound off. From the line, create teams (ex, the first six are pulled forward to be one team, then the next six, and so on).
2. Give students tickets as they enter (any rectangle of paper). Or place the tickets under the chair before they arrive. When group time comes, assign students to groups by color of ticket.
3. Pass out pencils. Divide into groups by color of the pencil.
4. Different color nametags.
5. Barnyard. Give each student a slip of paper with an animal written on it. Turn off light and have students make their animal's sound. The goal is to find animals like you and sit down as a group when you have done so. Instruct students to cross their arms on their chest as they mix and mingle.
6. School Daze: On separate slips of paper, write the following class components, one component per slip.

Team 1: MATH: Add, Subtract, Multiply, Divide, Algebra

Team 2: ENGLISH: Noun, Verb, Adjective, Adverb, Comma

Team 3: HISTORY: Civil War, World War II, Columbus, Lincoln, Washington

Team 4: SCIENCE: Solids, Liquids, Gases, Test Tubes, Earthworms

Team 5: GYM: Jumping Jack, Push-Up, Sit-Up, Track, Softball

Regulate team sizes by the number of components you assign to each team. Shuffle all the slips and distribute one to each person. Players with class names are team leaders. Kids move around the room, yelling out their words. Teams assemble in "classes," and when everyone is finished, "school" is in session!

7. Nuts and Bolts: Here's a fun way to divide large groups into smaller discussion groups. Collect enough nuts and bolts so that you have one nut and bolt for every two people. Choose several different-sized sets of nuts and bolts, and make sure you have four or five sets of each size. Mix all the nuts and bolts, and when teenagers arrive, give each person either a nut or a bolt.

Have young people introduce themselves to each other as they try to find the match to their nuts or bolts. When they find a match, they'll continue to look for others who have the same size nuts or bolts as they do. Everyone continues to mingle until all the small groups have found all their members.

Then ask the groups to discuss the following: How does finding similarities with each other make our group stronger? What are the nuts and bolts of our youth ministry?

After a few minutes of discussion, ask: What are the nuts and bolts of your faith?

How are the essentials that make up our youth ministry related to the essentials that make up our faith? What can we do together to strengthen our faith that we can't do alone?

Let teenagers keep their nuts and bolts as reminders of the importance of our connection to each other.