

# Team Building Games

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Team Building has become an important part of learning to work together as a performance group. Over the past few years, directors have noted the positive effects of using team building activities to increase the chemistry, bonding, and overall functioning of the group. Many of the games presented in this section have proven to be real “favorites” of students at camp over the past few years along with new activities that should be well-received by members of your team. Look over the games in this section and be careful not to underestimate their power/value because of their simplicity. Before you implement these activities, be aware of some guidelines you should follow to ensure a successful outcome.

1. **Make it Safe...** The idea of participating in a game sounds like great fun to some while sounding terrorizing to others. Many students have some painful experiences of having been picked last to participate on a team or have been made look foolish during a game. Be sure to create an atmosphere that is supportive and ensures that no is hurt either physically or emotionally.
2. **Make it Clear and Relevant...** Study the game/games you are planning to play ahead of time and rehearse out loud the instructions you are going to give the participants. The last thing you want is to be unclear so that the people playing will look like “deer caught in the headlights” after your instructions. It is hard to drive a meaning from the activity if you do not understand the instructions.
3. **Value all Feedback...** Most team building games are designed for the participants to provide feedback about their experience. To encourage open communication and complete participation by team members, value all the feedback given and thank each person for his/her contribution (even if the contribution is something with which you disagree).
4. **Get Everyone’s Feedback...** One way to help facilitate a good discussion is to take a ball and toss it to someone in the group and say, “If you’ve got the ball, share an idea and then toss the ball to someone else. We’ll give our undivided attention to whoever has the ball.” This technique works well for getting people to participate who might otherwise have remained silent. A nerf ball may serve your purpose well as it is colorful and physically safe.

**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 together. The other team then responds with their song. **NO SONGS MAY BE REPEATED.** The team, who can name the most songs containing a particular word and can sing a few bars of each song together, wins. The process then can be repeated with another word.

**MOTION NAME GAME:** Have everyone stand in a circle or form several circles depending upon the size of the group. Anyone can begin the game by saying his/her name and demonstrating a [physical] motion to go with it like smacking their lips, clapping their hands, or making a fist, etc. When that person is done, the entire group repeats his/her name and the physical motion. Then, the second person (on either side of the first) introduces him/herself and does a different motion. The entire group repeats that name/motion and then repeats the first name/motion. This will continue until each person has given his/her name and done their motion, and the entire group has repeated everyone’s name and motions.

**CROWS AND CRANES:** Players are divided into two teams. Mark two safety/ goal lines not more than 40 feet from center. Midway between the safety/ goal lines, form players in two teams facing the leader. The lines of players are about 5 feet apart. One line is “crows,” the other is “cranes.” When the leader calls “Crows,” the crows run for their goal/safety line, attempting to reach it before the cranes can tag them. If the leader calls “crawfish,” no one runs. The leader should use deception and precede his call with a “crr” sound, so players will not know what is going on. The cranes team receives a point for every member of the crows team tagged before that team reaches the goal/safety line. Each team loses a point for



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every one of its people running in the wrong direction or running on the call “crawfish.” The crows receive a point for each of its members who reach the safety/ goal line before begging tagged by a member of the cranes. You can play several rounds of this and then begin again with the crows becoming cranes and vice versa.

**INDIAN CHIEF:** The group/groups (10-20 members) sit in a circle formation and chooses a leader. One group member is asked to leave the circle and to close his/her eyes and block his/her ears. At this time, the leader will select a “Chief.” The Chief will establish a rhythm of clapping, stomping, etc. The rest of the group will follow, carefully not giving away the Chief. The Chief is the only one allowed to initiate changes in the rhythm. The person asked to leave will return to the middle of the circle where they will try to guess the Chief. The person is granted three chances to guess. If the original Chief is successful in hiding his/her identity, they will be asked to leave the circle. If the Chief is successfully chosen, a new guesser and Chief are chosen.

**5-5-5 GAME:** (Great camp game or, with slight modifications great game for same team) Tell students they have 5 minutes to meet 5 new friends from 5 different schools. Tell them they must find out the new friend’s name, school, and at least one interesting thing about him/.her. (For the same team, think of something that could easily replace the “from 5 different schools” part. This might be find 5 new friends and name their #1 goal for the team and one other interesting thing about him/her.) Everyone should be prepared to introduce their new friends to the entire camp/team. Give the participants a “two minute warning” before stopping the activity at five minutes. After the activity, encourage students to talk to their new friends each day, cheer for each other, maybe eat lunch together, and introduce them to other members on the team, etc.

**SHIP AND SAILORS:** Everyone begins spread out over the entire floor. A leader is selected who is in charge of calling out different commands such as bunk beds (everyone finds a partner, one lies on the floor face up, the other partner faces the opposite direction and is balanced above that person—they grab each others ankles so they look like bunk beds, another command is mermaids (each person forms a mermaid by lifting and folding one leg back and grabbing that leg’s ankle. This makes the shape of a mermaid), another command is “man overboard” (each person finds a partner. One person lies on his/her stomach while the other partner places a foot on his/her back and pretends to look for someone who has been lost at sea), another command is 3 man rowing (get in groups of three and sit on the floor in a file while using your arms to pretend like you are rowing a boat), another command is 4 man eating (sit in groups of 4 on the floor and pretend to eat). There are a million different commands you can invent. Mix them up with commands each person performs individually and others that are performed in various group sizes. The object is to eliminate the slowest groups responding to the commands. It is much like a drill down. The value is learning to taking directions and working together in small groups. You will find groups making alliances with one another so that no one has to get eliminated when you command 4 men eating followed by 3 men rowing, for example. Who is going to be the odd man out? This is a very popular game with students.

**BIRDIE ON A PERCH:** Form two concentric circles (an outer and inner circle) and make sure each person in a circle is partnered with the person directly across from him/her in the other circle. Everyone is standing in their circles rather than sitting. One circle should be labeled the birdie while the other circle is labeled the perch. Play music and have the circles begin to move in opposite directions, i.e., one circle begins to rotate clockwise while the other circle moves counterclockwise. When the music stops, each person has 3 seconds to find his/her partner. Then, the person who is the perch needs to kneel down on one knee while the person labeled the birdie needs to sit on the perch’s opposite knee. This is much like musical chairs and the slowest couples are eliminated. Several rounds of this should produce a winning pair.



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## Who Will Cross The Line First?

- Objective:** To experience the successes of working together toward the same objectives and the downfalls of guidance through egos
- Preparation:** Divide the room in two using tape or string
- Directions:** Place half the team on one side of the tape and the second half stand opposite another person. Everyone has 1 minute to try and convince the person opposite of him or her, without force, to cross the line
- Discussion:** How many of you got the other person to cross the line? How did you do it? How many of you offered, "If you cross, I cross"? Who wins? How many tried manipulation tactics? Who offered bribes? Who wouldn't cross at all? Who thought outside the box to create a solution? How can we work together to ensure greater collaboration? How will this help our team? Is this exercise about crossing the line or creativity?

## A "Kiss" Of Appreciation

- Objective:** To strengthen teams by having members show their appreciation for each other's contributions
- Preparation:** Fill large bowl with Hershey Kisses®
- Directions:** Have each student take 3 kisses. One will be for the individual to enjoy, and the other two are for them to give to people who have made a difference. Someone who they enjoy working with, would like to thank.
- Discussion:** How did it feel to give a Kiss? How did it feel to receive a kiss? Who got more? Who got less? What can we do as a team to ensure equal amounts? What can you do personally to recognize and show appreciation for each other?

## The Human Spider Web

- Objective:** To warm up a team and break down their inhibitions while providing an opportunity for members to work as a team and explore the dimensions of teamwork.
- Materials:** None
- Description:** Divide your group into 6-8 individuals and form a circle. Extend left hands across the circle and grasp the right hands of the other members who are approximately opposite of you. Then extend right hands across the circle and grasp the left hands of other individuals. The task is to unravel the spider web of interlocking arms without letting go of anyone's hands. See who finishes first.
- Discussion:** What was your first thought when you heard the nature of the task?  
What member behaviors distracted from the group's success?  
How difficult was it to control chaos if there was any?



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## Hello, My Name Is Tennis Ball

- Objective:** To learn about your surrounding members but with a twist
- Preparation:** Have students stand in a circle (large groups can be cut in half), and one by one say their name, hometown and one weird fact (favorite ice cream or color).
- Directions:** Students must toss the ball to someone not immediately next to them and say the person's name, town, and weird fact. If the ball is dropped the circle must start over. No one can have the ball twice. Give the circle 1 minute to try and plan a strategy.  
Try doing the same thing but adding a second tennis ball that must stay two people behind the first and go in the same order.
- Discussion:** Is it better to have everyone shout ideas or to have a leader collect ideas? What was your process to elect a leader? Were you able to create an order to the game? If so, what was it?

## What Should We Do About The Neighbors?

- Objective:** To help teams reduce conflicts, increase appreciation for others' views, listen while disagreeing, promote "group-thinking", and create "win-win" solutions
- Preparation:** Read the scenario that is placed after "Discussion" to the group. All the people who chose Option A will sit in one area, Option B choosers will sit together in another area, and so on.
- Directions:** Each group chooses a spokesperson. Each group has 4 minutes to prepare a presentation to which the spokesperson will have one minute to convince the others to reconsider their choices and move to their group. Following each presentation open the floor for discussion.
- Discussion:** How long did you take trying to convince others that you were right rather than understanding their views? How did you show empathy with the feelings of the other groups? Did you show appreciation to their choices even if your group didn't agree? How successful were you at convincing others to change their minds? How does this relate to our team efforts? How can we work together to better listen to others' opinions without upsetting the group?

### *Scenario for What Should We Do About The Neighbors?*

Shannon and Clayton Goldstein and their 3 children moved into their dream house two years ago. The Goldsteins became fast friends with their neighbors Erick and Emily Baker, and the couples' children play together everyday. There's nothing the Bakers wouldn't do for the Goldsteins and nobody could hope for better neighbors. In fact, Erick has helped Clayton on many occasions with his home improvements and never expected or accepted anything in return.

The only problem is that several branches from a tree on the Baker's property hang over the Goldstein's driveway. On three separate occasions, branches have broken and crashed onto Shannon's new station wagon. The first two times the damage was minor—just a small ding on the Hood. Even though the Bakers knew of the damage, they didn't seem to care. During the last storm, a large branch fell onto Shannon's wagon and caused nearly \$1,000 in damage. When Shannon showed the damage to Emily, Emily simply said, "Wow. That's unfortunate."

What would you do?

- Option A: The Goldsteins should ask the Bakers to pay for the damage and trim the tree.
- Option B: The Goldsteins should ask the Bakers to split the cost for repairing the damage and the trimming of the tree.
- Option C: The Goldsteins should drop a branch onto the Baker's SUV. Revenge is the best solution.



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Option D: Say nothing and don't trim the tree. Park the car in a different location.  
Any other solution will have a negative impact on the friendship.

**TEAM TALK ACTIVITY:** While in team talk circles, use these questions as ice breakers, conversation starters and discussion topics:

- \*What are you most looking forward to this week at camp?
- \*What are you unsure about or afraid of coming in to camp?
- \*What do you personally want to achieve while at camp?
- \*What has been the most fun part of camp for you personally?
- \*What has been the most challenging?
- \*What has been the most positive thing to happen to you at camp?
  
- \*Think of two words to describe your team (before you came to camp and after you've been at camp).
- \*What is the most important lesson you've learned so far at camp?
- \*What are you looking forward to when school starts this fall?
- \*Say something positive about the person on your right, the about the person on your team who has most influenced you this week at camp.
- \*What did you personally do to make camp a success for your team?
- \*What did you learn from your director during camp?
- \*What did you learn from your Big Sister/Brother during camp?
- \*The things to change and improve are.....
- \*What will you commit to doing to make sure that what you learned and achieved here is not lost?

**PERSONAL QUESTIONS:**

- \*What is your favorite (movie, food, store, animal, book, song, etc?)
- \*If you could have any theme park ride in your back yard, what would it be?
- \*What was your childhood nickname?
- \*What is your earliest memory?
- \*What is the worst chore you've ever done?
- \*What is your middle name-or what do you think it should have been?



# Challenge Day Application

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Normally, the “Challenge Day” program is implemented for an entire school. However, on a smaller scale, its message and method can still have a tremendous impact for every type of team. Within every group, regardless of size, individual members gravitate to others of similar backgrounds, interests, personalities, etc. This behavior is normal. However, when cliques form, bullying, criticizing, gossiping, making fun of others, and excluding individuals creates serious problems for the team. The cohesiveness of the team, often referred to as unity and bonding, is damaged. This negatively impacts productivity and morale. In addition, those being intimidated, ridiculed and ostracized, feel alone and emotionally despondent which could result in habitual school absences, physical health issues, and even emotional withdrawal at school and home.

Unfortunately, one of the most common problems students identify who are members of dance teams, flag corps and majorette lines is the gossiping and clique forming within their groups. The Challenge Day program presents several activities to break down barriers among students and promote understanding and unity. The following might be a great activity to implement with your teams. Select the officers or a few recognized leaders within the team and school them about Challenge Day and its objectives. It is important that these students buy into the program to make it work with the team.

## **BARRIER BREAKING ACTIVITY**

After watching the Challenge Day DVD on “Surviving High School” hosted by Leeza Gibbons, you know what a powerful impact the barrier breaking activity can actually have. Here is an adaptation from Challenge Day that might be an effective beginning to eliminate teasing and bullying on your team. Show the DVD to the officers and other leaders you pre-select to help you implement this activity. After you have discussed the goal, problems one might encounter, and gotten feedback from these leaders, try to conduct the following activity:

*First:* Sit everyone in a large circle around the room. Next have the officers and other leaders you have pre-selected and shared the DVD with, select members of the team that they normally have little or no interaction with on a regular basis. Assign the other team members a partner (Try to partner people who supposedly do not like one another, tease one another, or do not really know each other). Begin by playing partner and group games for fun: these might include 3 legged races and other team building games. Explain that you want everyone to have the chance to “be who they are”.

*Second:* After everyone has begun to “loosen up” and is feeling comfortable in this situation, form smaller groups (depending upon the size of your team) and get into more serious discussions. A good question to be answered by each member of the circle would be: “If you really knew me, you would know that.....”

*Third:* Draw a line with chalk or masking tape that runs horizontally from one end of the room to the other. Gather all students together on the other side of the room about 20 feet or so from the line you have drawn. Then, ask a series of questions and ask students to “cross the line” as they hear questions read aloud that they would answer “yes” to. (The goal is to have every student cross over the line by the time the last question is read. This will be both verbal and physical proof that all of them have either been the perpetrators or victims of teasing or bullying. It is an eye-opening experience and usually results in a sincere desire to change their behavior toward other members of the team or school.



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Here are samples of some of the questions you might use:

1. Have you ever been made fun of by others for an outfit that you wore to school or class?
2. Have you ever been excluded from a party/social event held by other team members?
3. Have you ever been humiliated because you were overweight, wore glasses, or a hearing aid?
4. Have you ever been humiliated by having to perform certain things "hazing" as a first year member?
5. Have you ever been singled out during rehearsal or a performance for making a mistake and felt humiliated?
6. Have you ever been treated badly because of your race, color, or financial status?
7. Have you ever experienced a feeling of self-worthlessness because of your lack of friends on the team?
8. Have you ever been a victim of bullying by another team member?
9. Have you ever been made feel embarrassed or ashamed because of your family's financial situation or social status?
10. Have you ever asked another team member for help and been refused in a sarcastic or rude manner?
11. Have you ever been physically abused by another student?
12. Have you ever intentionally made hateful and abusive comments to a team member in order to cause pain and hurt feelings?
13. Have you ever been jealous of another person on the team?
14. Have you ever tried to deliberately get another team member in trouble?
15. Have you ever betrayed the trust of another person on the team?
16. Have you ever started or continued to spread gossip about a team member?
17. Have you ever made up hurtful nicknames for others on the team and used them to humiliate that person?
18. Have you ever been teased or caused embarrassment because of someone you are dating?
19. Have you ever tried to "break up a team member and his/her boyfriend/girlfriend?
20. Have you ever been teased or embarrassed because of the way you look in your uniform/costume?
21. Have you ever been humiliated for not making the cut for a performance or contest routine?
22. Have you ever abused your authority as an officer on the team?
23. Have you ever been responsible for the entire team having to spend extra time at a rehearsal because of your mistakes or lack of preparation?
24. Are you guilty of carrying grudges and seeking personal vendettas against other team members?
25. Have you ever been guilty of verbally or physically abusing your director/teacher?

