

USA Hockey Team Building

This material was put together as a guide for coaches to engage your athletes in a fun, creative manner away from the ice rink. In any short term event, where the athletes are thrown together, the quicker you as a coach can break down barriers and have the group working together as a team, the more success the team will have.

This guide is a small collection of exercises and challenges that have been done at many of our National Player Development Camps. If you have your own initiatives, we encourage you to use what you believe will work best for you and your athletes. However, we hope this guide will provide you with several new ideas and spur your creativity, as well as your players.

Getting Started

As the leader, you can use these initiatives to teach a variety of essential skills and attributes to your athletes like teamwork, communication, adaptability, ingenuity, creativity, courage, focus and trust. Each of these are desirable qualities within a team. To bring out the best in your players and maximize your activity the underlying element must always be FUN. And, as the leader of group, it is your job to maximize the experience for your athletes.

With this type of "Adventure Learning," the leader facilitates the activity. However, it is important that not all the answers are provided to the team, they should learn from each other. The athlete's successes and failures provide unique teaching opportunities for them to grow.

Yogi Berra once said, "You can observe a lot by watching." These activities will provide a different insight into the individuals that make up your team and their dynamics. Pay close attention and much can be revealed.

As the facilitator or leader, your challenge is to know when and when not to intercede. The very nature of these activities includes a certain amount of unpredictability. It is your responsibility to be adaptable as well. In this type of learning environment, more often than not, it is important for the facilitator to get out of the way and let the athletes sort out the problem by themselves.

When to intercede? Always be aware of safety issues for your group. If you anticipate that the physical safety of the participants may be in jeopardy, step in and make an adaptation to prevent injury. If the group is having too much difficulty and a high level of frustration is setting in, it may be time for the leader to step in, give advice or move on. This is where your judgment is key. While a team can learn from its failures, much more can be learned through overcoming great obstacles. With this type of problem solving, it is your job to be a facilitator, not a teacher. Remember, it's not your job to save them, they need to learn to save themselves!

Imagination

It can be amazing how the level of intensity will increase when the game or initiative has some small background story to it. When a gym floor is just a gym floor, the activity may be fine. However, when the gym floor is represented as the deadly, shark-infested waters off your island of safety, it can be amazing how much more involved your participants can become. Kids are kids, and if you sell the scenario right, an extra level of fun and excitement can had for all.

Debriefing

Without a debriefing at the conclusion of an exercise, your athletes will have participated in a fun, group activity, but they will not have gained the full benefit. By reviewing the exercise, you allow the athletes to process and digest their results. They will gain a better understanding on what went well and what didn't. Hopefully, they will learn some lessons that will help them grow into being better teammates and ultimately a better team.

Ice Breakers

Ice breakers are activities with an emphasis on breaking down the initial barriers between individual group members. It is impossible for a group of individuals to work together like a finely turned machine without first becoming familiar with each other and trusting one another.

List of Ice Breakers:

Around the Circle

Bios

Note Card Facts

Fact Sheet

Call Your Bluff

Name Game - Six Variations

Must Learn Ten

Truth or Lie

Winner's Circle

Football Pass

Around the Circle

Indoor Activity

Equipment Required: None

Description: Gather group in a large circle. The first person starts with their name and which way they shoot (L or R); the next player, to the left, repeats the previous player's name and shot and then adds their own. This continues until a mistake is made and then starts over with the last player and moves in the opposite direction.

Bios

Indoor Activity

Equipment Required: Index cards

Description: Each athlete and staff member write his/her name, hometown and short bio on an index card. For example, favorite food, music, movie, sports team, as well as one dislike and favorite non-hockey activity.

The leader shuffles the cards and gives everyone a card at random. Have each participant read their card to the group. When all are read, the leader collects the cards and then goes through calling out names. The group must state what they remember about each person.

Note Card Facts

Indoor Activity

Equipment Required: Note cards, pens or pencils

Description: Players write down information about themselves on a note card. Pass the note cards around the group and have the group guess which player the card is about.

Fact Sheet

Indoor Activity

Equipment Required: Note cards, pens, pencils and paper

Description: Have each player turn in a note card to the leader with two or three facts about his/her on it. The leader then puts all the facts onto a single sheet of paper.

In a group setting, players guess which facts are about which players.

Name Game

Indoor Activity

Equipment Required: Ball

Description: Players stand in two lines across from each other. Player states his name, nickname and hometown while passing a tennis ball across to another player. The new player catches the ball and says “thank you (name) from (hometown).” Then that player states his own name and hometown and passes the ball to another player. Continue on down the line until all players have participated.

Name Game, Variation 2, Family Name Game

Indoor Activity

Equipment Required: None

Description: In the locker room, player state his/her name and the name of his/her mother, father and any siblings. The player to the left says, “This is (name) son or daughter of (parents’ names) and has brothers (names) and sisters (names).” This player continues, “My name is...” This sequence continues around the room.

Name Game, Variation 3, Nickname Game

Indoor Activity

Equipment Required: None

Description: Partners take 30 seconds with each other. Using the first letter of a players name his/her partner comes up with a creative, descriptive word. Be sure to use language and terms that are appropriate. An example is “Fast Fred.” Use these new nicknames for the players. Share the nick names with the team.

Name Game, Variation 4, Competition Name Games

Indoor Activity

Equipment Required: None

Description: Divide the group into two teams. Tell the teams to line up by last name in alphabetical order. First to do so wins. Next, have them line up by first name in alphabetical order.

Name Game Variation 5

Indoor Activity

Equipment Required: None

Description: Players sit in a large circle. They must think of a word that begins with the first letter of their first name. It must be a positive word! Example: Jumping John.

The first player starts by introducing himself as “Jumping John.” The player to the right says, “this is Jumping John and I’m Terrific Tom.” The next player to the right says, “That’s Jumping John, Terrific Tom and I’m Fabulous Fred.” This continues until the entire group is introduced. If a player can’t remember someone’s name, start over from the beginning.

Name Game, Variation 6

Indoor Activity

Equipment Required: Name tag stickers, pen and stopwatch

Description: Coach writes a variety of celebrity names on the name tags. The team stands at the front of the room facing a wall while the coach sticks a tag on each player’s back. Each team is given one name from each category. For example: hockey, basketball, football, base ball, movie stars, pop/rock stars, etc.

On coach’s start, players look to see the names on the backs of their teammates. At this point, each player tries to identify the name on his/her back by asking questions. Teammates responses can only be “yes” or “no.” Once a player guesses who he/she is, he/she begins answering questions for his/her teammates. The team that guesses all their names first, wins.

Example:

The name is Joe Sakic

Possible Questions:

Am I a man?	yes
Am I a movie star?	no
Am I an athlete?	yes
Am I a hockey player?	yes
Am I a forward?	yes
Do I play for Toronto?	no
Do I play for Colorado?	yes
Am I Joe Sakic?	yes

Must Learn Ten

Indoor Activity

Equipment Required: None

Description: Pair off team members with someone from another part of the country. Give the players five to seven minutes to learn ten different facts about each other. After the allotted time, each player relays the ten facts that they learned about their partner to the entire group

Truth or Lie

Indoor Activity

Equipment Required: None

Description: Divide the group into two teams. Each player states two interesting facts about themselves and a third fact that is not true. The opposite team gets to take one guess to determine which fact is false.

Truth or Lie, Variation 2, Call Your Bluff

Indoor Activity

Equipment Required: None

Description: Players select a partner from another part of the country and take five to ten minutes to interview each other. Each player should try to learn as many interesting facts as they can.

Next, each player introduces his/her partner to the rest of the group. At the conclusion of the introduction, the player making the introduction offers an anecdote or unusual fact about the partner. The player may embellish the statement or create something completely false.

Players should avoid simple background statements such as “John has four sisters and a pet snake.” Some insightful replies might be “my great-grandfather shook hands with the Queen of England” or “my Uncle Bob played professional rugby in Australia.”

The group then decides if the statement is true or false. The coach has players move into respective groups, true believers on one side and false believers on the other.

Winner's Circle

Indoor Activity

Equipment Required: None

Description: Players sit or stand in a circle. Each player says something positive about the teammate on the right in terms of what you appreciate about them.

Debriefing Tips: Players experience an increase in confidence, a boost in self esteem and feelings of being valued by the team.

Football Pass

Indoor / Outdoor Activity

Equipment Required: Football

Description: Divide the group into two teams. Teams must pass the football around a circle by holding either the point or middle of the ball. Alternate point and middle each passer. The first team to complete the circle wins. Once the activity has been accomplished, have the passer say his/her own name and the name of the player they are passing to.

Initiatives

Initiatives are problem solving activities that create learning opportunities for your athletes. These 'Adventure Learning' activities force your athletes to utilize many of the skills and attributes necessary for a team's long term success. They can also point to potential internal difficulties that a team may possess.

List of Initiatives:

Age Line-Up
Blanket Race
Team Pedestal - Milk Crate
Spider Legs
Electric Fence
Curb Appeal
Team Push-Up
Mine Field - Land Mines - Piranha Waters
Limited Senses
Number Circle - Key Punch - Beat the Clock
Water Hold
Marker
Balloon Train - Balloon Trolley
Butt Test
Bean Bag Shuffle - Hot Potato - Warp Speed
Buddy Ropes
Alien Nation
Spider Web

Many of these initiatives were presented to us by different names. Each had its own interesting scenario, so all the names are listed.

* Alien Nation was derived from the book *Quicksilver* by Karl Rohnke and Steve Butler. This round the clock initiative proved exceptionally fun and proper credit needs to be given to its creators.

Age Line-Up

Indoor / Outdoor Activity

Equipment Required: 2x4s or a low wall

Description: Begin by having the group stand on low wall or a series of 2x4s lined up next to one another end to end. Have the players reorder themselves left to right, youngest to oldest. Players must stay on the wall and are NOT allowed to talk.

Blanket Race

Indoor / Outdoor Activity

Equipment Required: Two full sized blankets

Description: Divide your group into two teams, lay one blanket out flat on the ground for each team. Have all of the team members stand on their respective blankets. On your signal the teams compete to see who can turn their blanket over the quickest, without any of the team members stepping off the blanket in the process.

Team Pedestal - Milk Crate

Indoor / Outdoor Activity

Equipment Required: Sturdy milk crates, duct tape and a stop watch

Description: Divide the team into two or three groups. If each group has more than seven players, you will need to duct tape two milk crates together, side by side, for each group. The group members must stand on the milk crate with their feet off the ground. Group members may use any method to balance, including holding onto each others arms, shoulders and clothes. The team that stays on its crate the longest wins the challenge.

Spider Legs

Indoor / Outdoor Activity

Equipment Required: None

Description: Divide the participants into groups of five. Each group must try and see how few arms and legs they can have in contact with the ground for a five second time duration. This is to eliminate the group jump! Torso and butt may not make contact with the ground.

Electric Fence

Indoor / Outdoor Activity: This description takes place in the teams' locker room, but variations of this activity can be done anywhere.

Equipment Required: Length of rope.

Description: Tie a length of rope 4 feet high across the locker room. All the players and bags start on one side of the rope. The players must get all their bags and team members over the rope to the other side. Nothing may break the plane under the rope and any contact with the rope is prohibited.

An alternate version is to suspend the rope at approximately crouch height and have the group attempt to maneuver over the rope while in constant body contact with each other. Again, the participants cannot break the plane under the rope or touch the rope. Any violation of breaking body contact, the plain or touching the rope forces the group to start over. The constant body contact rule eliminates the potentially dangerous body launch tactic that the participants may try.

Curb Appeal

Outdoor Activity

Equipment Required: Street curb

Description: Divide your group into two teams. The players from each group step up onto the curb and balance on the balls of their feet. The participants stand shoulder to shoulder. The objective is to shift each player's position along the curb ultimately ending up in reverse order. Players 'A' through 'E' shift positions so that they are lined up 'E' through 'A'. They then must reverse the order again and end up as they started 'A' through 'E'. Players may not step off the curb or speak to one another. The team that can maneuver with the fewest number of steps off the curb, wins.

Team Push-Up

Indoor / Outdoor Activity

Equipment Required: None

Description: The team must perform a single push-up in unison. Only one team member may have both his/her feet and hands in contact with the ground. This is done by the players elevating their feet onto one of their teammates. Once every one is set, the group executes a 'team push-up.

Debriefing Tips: Communication, leadership and teamwork are the common points to hit upon.

Mine Field - Land Mines - Piranha Waters

Indoor / Outdoor Activity

Equipment Required: A bucket of pucks or any large number of random obstacles that can be dispersed in your confined area. Hockey equipment could also work! Two blind folds (hockey socks work well).

Description: Mark off a confined area approximately 30 feet X 20 feet. The area could be larger, but it would then require more obstacles. Divide the group into two or more teams. One participant from each team is blind folded. The blind folded players spin around 5 times to disorientate themselves. They must cross the "mine field" without making contact with any of the land mines. The team whose player makes it through first wins. Team members must stay outside the mine field and at their starting end, but can give directions verbally.

Debriefing Tips: Communication is the focus of this initiative. The lesson that should come out is that communication is important and that sometimes it is best if only one person does the talking, while everyone else listens.

Limited Senses

Indoor / Outdoor Activity

Equipment Required: Blind folds for all participants, hockey socks work well

Description: Create a large clear space with adequate safety precautions. For safety reasons, make sure a number of support people are around. Next, give each player a number and tell them to keep his/her number to him/herself. Each participant puts on a blindfold. The goal is for the players to arrange themselves in numeric order. Example 1, 2, 5, 8, 13, 15, 19, 27, 89. The participants are allowed to speak.

Frustration will occur when players use various methods to communicate such as, foot stomping, clapping, tapping, etc. After a length of time, some players may give up. If you tell the group that numbers are missing, they may come together quickly. A variation is to have them order themselves by birth date.

Butt Test

Indoor / Outdoor Activity

Equipment Required: None

Description: Divide the group into two teams. Each team must figure out how to have everyone sit on the floor without their butt actually touching the ground. The team that finds a solution and executes it the quickest wins. One solution is to sit in a circle on each others feet.

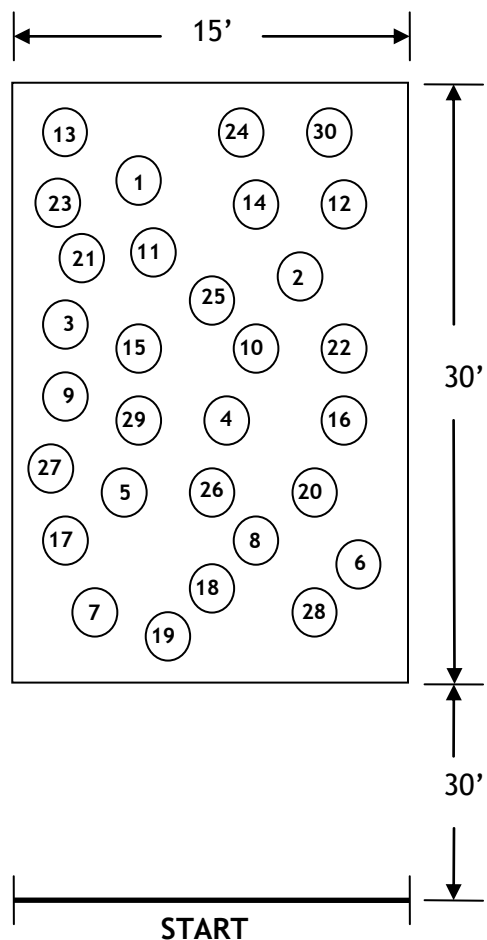
Number Circle - Key Punch - Beat the Clock

Indoor / Outdoor Activity

Equipment Required: Paper plates or sheets of paper and a marker

Description: Using the marker, number the paper plates 1 through 30. Next, define a 30 X 15 foot area. Inside the space, lay out the numbered plates with the even numbers on one side and the odd numbers on the other. You may also want to place them in a zig-zag pattern, but it is important to lay them out in such a way that the zig-zag and odd-even patterns are not obvious. See diagram.

The entire group must touch the numbered spots sequentially. All players must start behind the starting line and only one player can be inside the defined area at a time. The group is timed to see how fast the task can be completed.



Bean Bag Shuffle - Hot Potato - Warp Speed

Indoor / Outdoor Activity

Equipment Required: Stop watch, 1 small bean bag or item (puck) per team

Description: Create teams of six to eight people. Provide each team with an item to pass. Have the team stand in a circle. The circle can be any size they choose. The goal is to see how fast you can pass the item from teammate to teammate. Each member of the team must completely handle the item before passing it along. Simply touching the item doesn't count. The clock is stopped once every team member has handled the item.

Water Hold

Outdoor Activity

Equipment Required: 30 gallon rubber garbage can, water, and stopwatch

Description: Divide the group into two or three teams. Players lie on their backs in a circle with their legs and butts pressed tightly together with feet up in the air to form a pedestal. Group leaders fill a 30 gallon garbage can with ice water and place it on the team's "pedestal", balancing the can for a few seconds until the team is ready. Players must balance the can using only their feet. Teams are timed until the can completely spills.

If after five minutes the can has not spilled, players must take their shoes and socks off while holding up the can. While taking off his/her shoes and socks no player may touch the can with his/her hands. Once each player has removed his/her shoes and sock, the team is finished. If two or more teams reach the five minute limit, the team that gets their shoe and socks off the fastest - wins.

Marker

Indoor Activity

Equipment Required: Sharpie marker, five or six skate laces, and a blank piece of paper

Description: Players must make as many Xs on the blank piece of paper as they can using the sharpie and skate laces. Players may only touch the sharpie at the beginning to tie it to the skate laces.

Give each team two minutes to discuss its strategy prior to starting. Only one team should be in the room while doing the exercise so each team uses its own ideas.

Once the laces are tied to the sharpie, the players must position their hands on the laces at least 2 feet from the sharpie. By working together, the players must maneuver the sharpie using the laces to form Xs on the paper. Each team is given five minutes from the start to tie the laces and make as many Xs as possible.

Balloon Train - Balloon Trolley

Indoor / Outdoor Activity

Equipment Required: Package of balloons

Description: You will need enough balloons to fit between each member of the team. If “P” is a player and “B” is a balloon the team will line up PBPBPBP... It is a good idea to have a few extra balloons filled up in case of breakage.

The task is for the group to navigate an area in, around and over some obstacles without allowing any of the balloons to touch the ground. If a balloon does touch the ground, the group must reinsert the balloon between the players who lost it. Only the end players may use their hands to touch the dropped balloon.

Other rules that may be used to make the initiative more or less challenging:

1. Have the group start over when a balloon is dropped.
2. The two players that dropped the balloon go to the front and end of the line and replace the balloon.
3. Have the group figure out a method of picking up and replacing the balloon without losing any other balloons.

Buddy Ropes

Indoor / Outdoor Activity

Equipment Required: Segments of 5’ rope with overhand knots in each end, skate laces can also work.

Description: Divide into groups of 12 to 15 players. For a real challenge, an entire team of 20 may be a group. Have a length of rope for each player. Begin with the players standing close together face to face. Have each player grab the end of a rope from someone across from them. Players may not grab two ropes coming from the same person. Once all of the rope ends have been grasped, the task is to untangle the entire group without anyone letting go and breaking the chain.

If the players are not too squeamish, a group of 8 to 10 can do this initiative by simply holding hands. This provides an even greater challenge. However, the group size has limitations due to space.

Debriefing Tips: This is a fun cooperative challenge that requires communication and teamwork.

Alien Nation

Indoor / Outdoor Activity

Equipment Required: Eight metal washers about the size of a quarter for a group of 20. Add more washers if there are more than 20 participant.

Objective: Set a time limit on the game (24 hours). At the end of the designated time frame, players want to end up on the team that has either the most humans or aliens. Who ever has the most players takes over the earth.

Description: One player is designated the “Ultimate Alien” (UA) at the start of the game through a double blind selection process. This is done by having all of the players stand together in a tight circle with eyes closed and thumb extended on one hand. The group leader reaches into the pile and squeezes one player’s thumb. The selected player, with eyes still closed, squeezes another players thumb twice. He/she becomes the UA.

The UA discretely collects eight washers from the group leader and begin the game. The UA attempts to alienate members of the group. This is done by passing a washer to one of the group members without being seen. Proper transfer should be done so that the washer is found through physical contact by the alienated player.

If a player discovers someone in the act of trying to alienate them, to protect themselves all they need to do is say quietly “You’re human” and the alien returns to human form for the remainder of the game or until re-alienated by someone else.

If a player catches the UA passing them a washer, the UA will pretend to return to human form yet is still an alien and continues to play the game.

Debriefing Tips: This initiative is all about FUN! Alien Nation is really an anti-trust game and should be presented as such; however, the fun factor is so high that the player will remember this as a great experience.

Spider Web

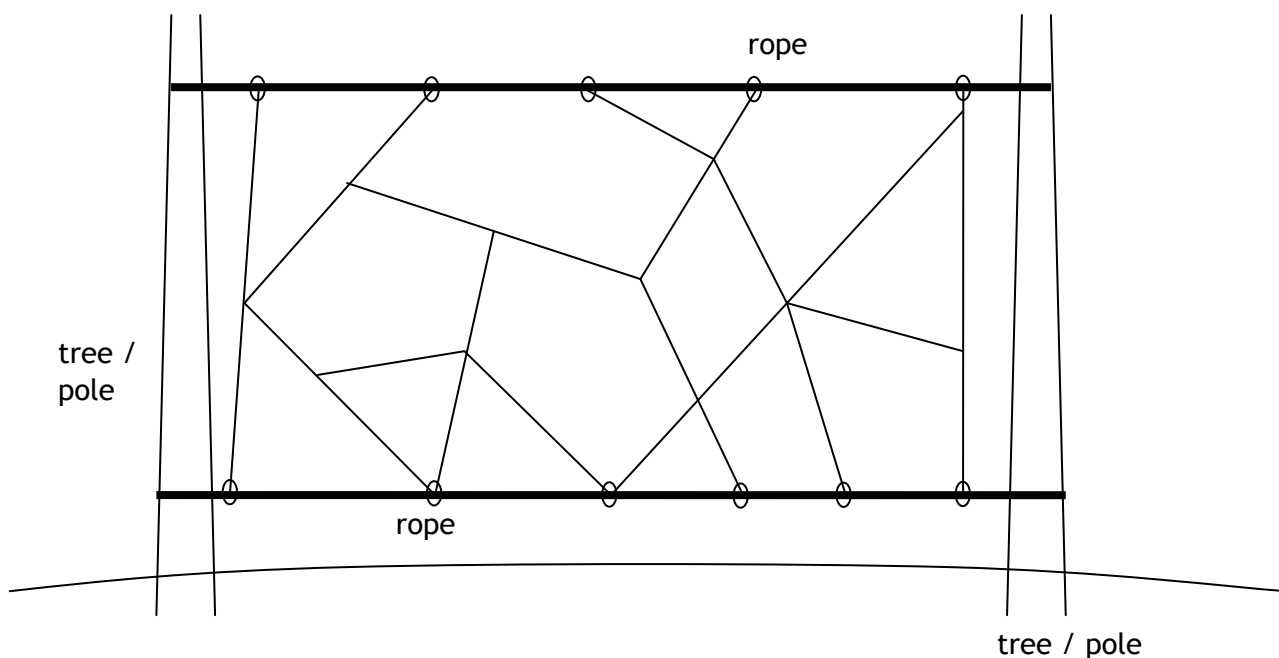
Outdoor Activity

Equipment Required: This initiative requires some serious prep work on props. Rope and 10 to 12 bungee cords are required. The rope must be strung between two poles or trees. The bungee cords are used to create a web in between the poles or trees. O rings can be secured along the ropes to provide easy attachment of the bungee cords. See diagram.

Description: The team must get each group member to the other side of the web without touching it. Although this sounds simple, the task can be quite difficult. Safety must always be maintained. Players may not jump through to the other side and the leader must guard against reckless behavior.

The challenge is increased by not allowing players to go through the same openings in the web. Each player must use a opening. Once all the openings have been used, players can then repeat an opening. Also, the leader needs to predetermine how many times the web can be touched before the entire group must start over.

Debriefing Tips: This can be a physically challenging task for some groups. When the web is touched some players may try to ignore the rules and play on. Honesty and playing within the rules are important qualities wanted in a team. The web can reveal a lot about a group through adversity.



Games

Sometimes just giving your athletes time to interact and have fun with each other away from the ice can be more valuable than actually having another practice or game.

List of Games:

Spaghetti & Marshmallows

Water Balloon Race

Trivia Quiz

Match Game

Egg Toss

Gestures

Scavenger Hunt

Bowling

Frisbee Golf

Whiffle Ball

Dodge Ball

Spaghetti & Marshmallows

Indoor Activity

Equipment Required: Several boxes of dry spaghetti and bags of marshmallows

Description: Divide your group into teams of four or five. Give each team a supply of spaghetti and marshmallows. Using the material, each team attempts to build a freestanding structure in a given amount of time. At the end of the time period, the team with the tallest structure wins.

Debriefing Tips: Usually the highest structure has a solid and wide foundation. Discussion can be direct toward what elements of a team's foundation is important and why.

Water Balloon Race

Outdoor Activity

Equipment Required: Bag of balloons and water

Description: Divide into two to four teams. Players line up with the first person in line holding a water balloon. On the signal to start, the first player passes the balloon over his/her head to the teammate behind, and then runs to the back of the line. Keep moving the balloon until the team covers a set distance (25 yards) without breaking the balloon. The first team to cover the distance wins. Have extra balloons ready in case of breakage.

Trivia Quiz

Indoor Activity

Equipment Required: Note cards, pen or pencil

Description: Create a list of questions and answers to be used as the trivia. Assign a point value based upon the level of difficulty of the question. Some examples:

1 point questions:

Who won the Stanley Cup in 2007?

Where do the Red Sox play baseball?

2 point questions:

Who won the Con Smythe trophy in 2007?

Who won the Cy Young Award for the American League in 2006?

3 point questions:

How many teams entered the NHL in the 1967 expansion?

What cities entered the NHL in 1970 and 1972?

5 point questions:

What player has won a high school championship, NCAA championship, an Olympic Gold Medal and the Stanley Cup during his career?

Who was the winning pitcher in the 4th game of the 2006 World Series?

Match Game

Indoor Activity

Equipment Required: Two decks of playing cards

Description: Lay out the cards in a matrix, for example 9, 12, 15 or more cards face up on a table.

Teams can look at the cards for 30 seconds, but may not speak with each other or write down information. The leader collects the cards. Each team has one minute to recreate the order. Teams compete for accuracy and time.

Debriefing Tips: Benefits include team work, problem solving and communication skills.

Egg Toss

Outdoor Activity

Equipment Required: One carton of eggs per six pairs of participants

Description: Have everyone pair up and stand in a line facing their partner. Each pair of players has one egg. On the leader's signal, players toss an egg to their partner. If the partner successfully catches the egg without it breaking, he/she takes one step back and waits for the leader's signal to toss the egg back to his/her partner. This process continues until the last pair break their egg. The pair that completes the longest toss, wins. Repeat activity with second egg.

Gestures

Indoor Activity

Equipment Required: *Gestures* is a board game purchased from a store

Description: The game is similar to charades. Follow the directions provided.

Scavenger Hunt

Indoor / Outdoor Activity

Equipment Required: Variable by location

Description: Form a list of various objects or information that the participants must collect. Assign point values to each item with higher points being awarded based upon the difficulty to find the item. Set a time limit the collection process. Divide the group into teams and send them on their way armed with for list. The team that acquires the most points at the end of the allotted time wins.

Bowling

Indoor Activity

Equipment Required: Bowling alley

Description: Divide the group into teams. Award points for total pins knocked down. The highest point total wins.

Debriefing Tips: Good activity for players to relax with teammates and have fun

Frisbee Golf

Outdoor Activity

Equipment Required: A frisbee for each team

Description: Lay out a multiple-hole course. Each hole has a designated tee box and a hole to finish. The hole consists of an object that the players must hit with the frisbee. Include objects that the frisbee must travel around, over, under or through before hitting the hole. Each player on a team takes turns throwing the frisbee. The goal is to complete the hole with the fewest number of throws. Low score wins.

Whiffle Ball

Outdoor Activity

Equipment Required: Whiffle ball and bat

Description: Divide into two teams and play the game with the same rules as slow pitch softball.

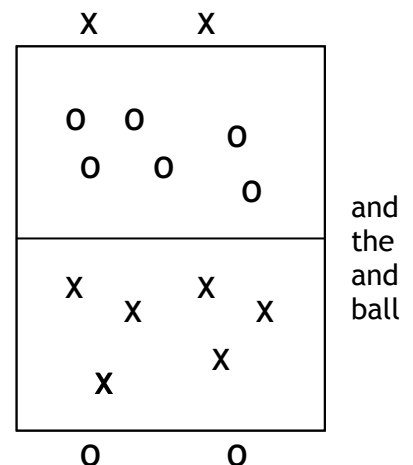
Dodge Ball

Outdoor Activity

Equipment Required: Several medium sized rubber balls

Description: Mark out the playing area. Divide the group into two teams. Begin with two players from each team behind their end line the rest inside their respective playing areas. The object is to throw ball and hit an opponent. This eliminates the player from the game moves him/her to behind the end line. If a player can catch a thrown while it is in the air, he/she is not eliminated. The goal is to eliminate all opponents.

Additional rules can be adapted as the leader sees fit.



Stunts

Stunts are demonstration activities designed to illustrate key points to your group. These activities should generate good discussion points around key attributes like communication, visualization and cooperation.

List of Stunts:

Hocus Focus

Paper Tare

Peanut Butter Sandwich

The Yurt Circle

Hocus Focus

Indoor Activity

Required Equipment: Thread and some small, heavy metal washers or nuts

Description: Tie a 16 inch piece of thread to a washer or nut. Have the participant rest their elbow on a table and hold the end of the thread between thumb and forefinger with the washer hanging down near the table. The washer should be close to the table, but not touching. It needs to be able to swing freely.

The leader instructs the participant to focus all of their attention on the hanging washer. In their mind, they must picture the washer moving back and forth from side to side. After a few moments, the washer should start to swing. Once it is moving in the desired direction, the leader instructs the participant to focus on the washer moving side to side perpendicular to its current swing. Shortly, the washer will move according to the participant's wishes.

Debriefing Tips: This is a great exercise to reinforce visualization to your athletes. What ever the mind sees, the body will try to make a reality. In this activity, the brain subconsciously sends signals to the hand to swing the weight in the desired direction. When athletes use visualization to rehearse playing actions, the body believes it is actually happening. With perfect execution in the minds eye, a new reality can be achieved.

Paper Tare

Indoor Activity

Equipment Required: A sheet of paper for each participant

Description: Each participant begins with an identical sized sheet of paper. To begin the leader directs the participants to close their eyes. The leader instructs the participants to follow the following directions:

1. Fold the paper in half and tear off the top right corner
2. Fold the paper in half again and tear off the lower left corner
3. Fold the paper one final time and tear off the upper left corner

At this point, the leader directs everyone to open their eyes and compare their sheets of paper. A wide variety of patterns should appear.

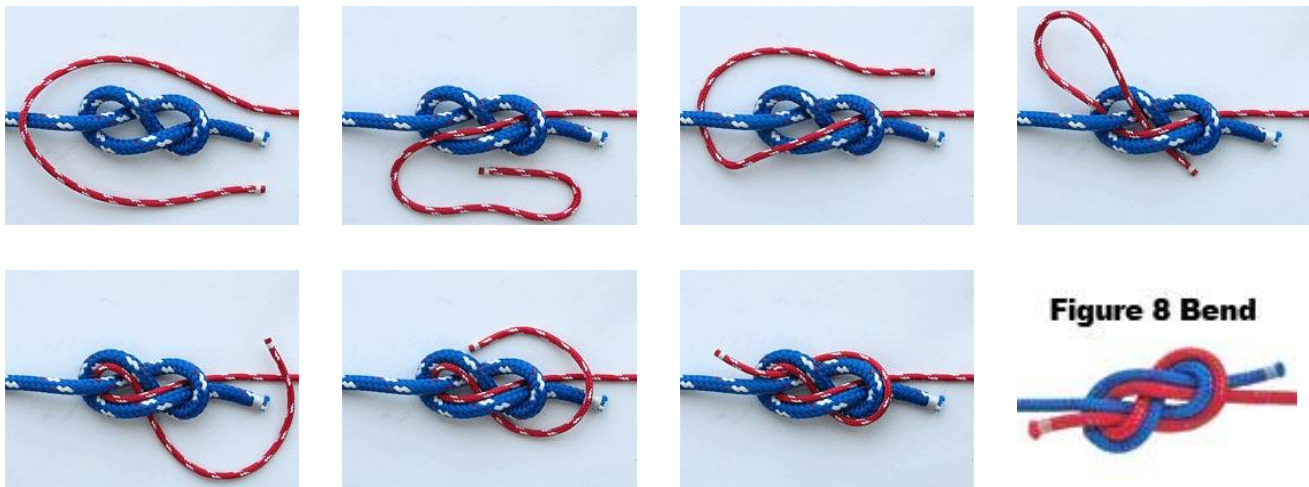
Debriefing Tips: This exercise shows how vague directions and communication can be interpreted very differently by each individual. Discussion can be formed around a team's communication skills and how the group interacts. This demonstrates that what you say is not always what your teammates hear. This is one reason that actions will always speak more clearly than what is said.

The Yurt Circle

Indoor / Outdoor Activity: This exercise can be done indoors, but will it take up a considerable amount of space.

Equipment Required: A long length of rope, 50 to 75 feet depending on the size of the group. Just over 50 feet should be long enough for the average team of 20 players. The rope should be at least 5/8 inch thick and very strong. Tie the two ends together with a suitable knot. Do not use a knot that you are unsure will hold considerable weight. A Figure 8 Bend would work well, but a double fisherman should be adequate.

Knot Description: Figure 8 Bend



Description: Lay the rope out in a large circle and instruct the participants to stand outside the rope circle equally spaced. The participants should hold the rope with their hands shoulder width apart. They should then spread their legs to shoulder width as well, and then lean back creating tension on the rope. They should slowly bend their knees until everyone makes contact with their rear ends on the ground at about the same time. Next ask them to stand together. If they coordinate well, they should be able to maintain equilibrium and stand at the same time.

Next have them sit, stand, take one step to the left and then repeat. They can also try to stand and sit with alternating people.

Debriefing Tips: This exercise demonstrates how cooperation makes things happen in a much more efficient manner.

Peanut Butter Sandwich

Indoor Activity

Equipment Required: bread, peanut butter, knife, note cards, pens, and pencils

Description: Hand out a pen or pencil to each member of the group. Ask each player to write down the directions to make a peanut butter sandwich on his/her note card. Collect all the note cards and mix them up. Draw a random card from the pile. Read the directions, and follow them exactly as written. Select another card and repeat. Unless someone does a great job with their directions, the leader will not be able to create a perfectly constructed peanut butter sandwich. Each card will also end with a slightly different result.

Debriefing Tips: This exercise demonstrates that even when you believe your communication is clear and precise, others can interpret it differently.