

10 Games that Every Camp Counselor Should Know!

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1. Ice Breaker Game – Tennis Ball Toss

Have the group form a circle in which the participants are standing shoulder-to-shoulder and facing the inside of the circle. Everyone introduces himself by stating his first name. After everyone has had a chance to state his name once, someone in the group throws a tennis ball to another participant. As the ball is being thrown, the thrower says the first name of the person he is throwing the tennis ball to. When the receiver gets the ball, he throws the ball to someone else in the circle. Each time the ball is caught, the receiver raises one hand in the air to indicate that he has received the ball and cannot catch it again. This way, everyone in the group will have an opportunity to catch the ball. After completing the first round, the group should repeat this activity in the same order, while the adult leader times the event and asks the children to increase the speed of completing the task. After the second round, the adult leader asks if it can be done faster. Eventually, the group should divide up to tighten the circle and increase the speed. The fastest way to complete the round is to organize the group in a circle in the order that the children receive the ball. The hand of each participant is placed in the center of the circle and the ball rolls on each participant's hand as the children state the name of the person to whom they normally throw the ball to. The ball quickly makes its way around the circle in the same order as in previous rounds.

2. Name Game – Name Train

One person starts out acting as a train, chugging along in the middle of a circle of people. That individual comes up to a person and asks him his name. He then asks if he would like to join the train. The second person gets behind the first person and puts his hands on the shoulders of the leader. For example, if the second person's name is Alex, then both people start chugging across the room chanting "Alex, Alex, Alex, Alex, Alex," until they come to another person. They then will repeat this procedure, chanting the name of the third person. Eventually, a long line of people will be weaving through the room chanting each new passenger's name. Have several trains going at the same time, and have each train form a new group for the next activity.

3. Rainy Day Game - Blanket Drop

Divide the group into two teams. Two leaders stand on chairs holding up a blanket to separate the two teams so that they cannot see each other. Each team chooses a participant to stand next to the blanket. The leaders drop the blanket and the object is

for the participant to say his opponent's name. The participant who says the name last joins the other team. Play the game until one team takes all of the players.

4. Team Building Game – Common Threads

A group of participants are divided into teams of six members. Each team is given a package of pipe cleaners and 20 minutes to come up with a common thread project that represents what the team members have in common. They could weave in a story about themselves to explain their common thread to the larger group and how it relates to their pipe cleaner project. An example of a team's common thread is that they all like amusement parks, so they can each make an amusement park ride. Perhaps the group likes nature and each member makes a different wildflower. Or the team can use their pipe cleaners to make something large like the Statue of Liberty to represent that all team members have traveled to New York City.

5. Large Group Game – Zoom/Errk

Have the children sit in chairs in a circle. The first person selected by a camp counselor starts the game, by turning his head to the person next to him and saying the word "Zoom." Each person repeats this process by turning his head and repeating the word "Zoom" to the person sitting next to him. When this is done the direction of travel will be the same throughout the circle. However, if anyone along the way says the word "Errk," then the direction of travel flips, and children turns their heads the opposite direction when saying "Zoom" until someone else says "Errk." If a participant repeats "Zoom" but doesn't turn his head in the right direction, or says the word "Zerrk," he is out of the game.

6. Relay Game - Salt Shaker Relay

Two teams of ten people per team sit on opposite sides of each other on a long picnic table. At one end of the table are two people that look at a leader who flips a coin. Everyone else looks at a salt shaker that is sitting on the other end of the table between the last two players of each team. Participants on each team hold hands with fellow teammates during the game. The first person on each team has the responsibility of squeezing the person's hand next to him when he sees the coin land on "heads." If the leader flips the coin and it lands on "tails" nothing happens. When the coin lands on "heads," the hand squeezes continue from one person to another person until it reaches the end and the last person in line who attempts to grab the salt shaker before his opponent from the other team does. The person that grabs the salt shaker first now rotates in his team to the front of the line and everyone else slides down on the table one position. The team to be first in rotating all of their members to the front of the line wins the game.

7. Faith-Based Game – “What’s in the Sock”

Camp counselors place items in a large tube sock such a tape dispenser, a spoon, a plastic toy animal, a bar of soap, a toothbrush, an eraser, a marker lid, a key chain, a glove, a can opener, board game pieces, a tennis ball, or a calculator. Then children try to guess what the items are by only feeling the outside of the sock. Each child attempts to identify at least three items before the sock get passed to another child in the circle. A camp counselor records the children’s guesses on a large pad of paper. As the contents are revealed, the leader reads aloud what the children thought the items were.

Faith-based application – children should be careful not to judge a fellow camper based upon outward appearances or first impressions until they have an opportunity to get to know more about them. Like this sock --- it is what is on the inside that counts.

8. Nature Game – Web of Appreciation

Have participants sit in a circle on the floor with one of them holding onto a multicolored yarn ball. This person holds onto the end of the string and throws the ball to someone else in the circle while giving appreciation to the wonders of nature. For example, “I am grateful for sunsets over the ocean,” or “I love to smell wildflowers in a meadow,” or “I get excited when I see the first snowfall in a pine forest.” The receiver then throws the yarn ball to another participant while still holding on to his section; thus continuing the expression of appreciation towards nature and forming a web with the yarn and binding each person as a team in their love of nature and like a spider’s web it is strong with everyone holding on to it. Camp counselors can use this analogy as a way to commit everyone in the group to preserve nature through “no trace” activities when each person is in the outdoors. The different colors of the yarn represent the different aspects of nature that the group values. At the end of the game team members are challenged to repeat each person’s name and what each person loves about nature.

9. Theme Day Game – Space Voyage –

Children draw the sun, moon, some stars, satellites, asteroids, space shuttle, the international space station, and all of the planets on the sidewalk in chalk and then as a group children spend time visiting each drawing. Camp counselors can cover playground equipment with a couple of blankets and pretend it is a spaceship. Have participants land the spaceship on a new chalk planet. After landing the spaceship, the children can pretend they are astronauts and walk around the planet collecting rock and plant specimens to take back to earth. An adult leader dressed as an alien should greet the astronauts and present them with a special flying saucer treat. This treat is green gelatin served in a small foil pie tin with whip

cream. On top of the whip cream, is a small plastic bubble container with an alien toy inside (usually found in a gumball machine.) The outside of the foil pie tin is decorated with candy and frosting to make it appear as the lights of the spaceship.

10. Night Game – No Ghosts are out Tonight

One participant is the “ghost” and hides while all of the other participants sing, “No ghosts are out tonight,” over and over. When the singing participants come close to where the ghost is hiding, the ghost lunges towards them and tries to tag them before they reach the home base, where the ghost cannot reach them. Any participant the ghost catches also becomes a ghost until only one person is remaining. The last person is the winner, and the first person caught becomes the ghost for the next game.