

Challenge Initiatives

Fun team-building activities and games
designed to develop team work skills



Spruce Lake
MINISTRIES

Each activity will bring out a particular need for trust, cooperation, communication, and strategic thinking. The activities are color-coded as shown on this page. Feel free to **mix and match** activities based on what is needed for your group.

Within each section, the activities are leveled (level 1 being simplest, level 3 being most complex). **It is best to start with a level 1 activity** to assess students' ability to work together before moving onto a more complex activity.

Trust

Cooperation

Communication

Strategic Thinking

Leader Instructions

Before class:

Choose the activities you would like your group to try.

During Class:

1. **Keep everyone safe** (emotionally & physically)
2. **Read aloud instructions** for the activities you choose
3. **Let your group struggle** (or even fail!)
4. **Ask questions** to guide your group (don't tell them or show them the answer!)
5. **Debrief EACH activity** (lessons are best learned in the moment)

Tug of Peace

Trust - Level 2

Supplies Needed: Rope, grassy area

Instructions (read aloud): The goal of this activity is for your group to successfully hold each other up using the rope. Divide into two groups, like you might for tug of war. Each group will stand in a single file line with the first person in each line directly facing each other. Each person should pick up the rope without pulling on it. Make sure you are grabbing onto the rope with both hands. Keep your feet about shoulder length apart. Please remember to keep your movements controlled. If at any moment this activity gets too chaotic or unsafe, I will stop the activity

I am going to say ready, set, go. When I say go, all of you are going to lean back slowly. If done correctly, everyone should be able to stay standing without moving their feet. Let's try it!

.....

To up the challenge after completing it successfully:

1. See how low you can go
2. Try only holding on with one hand to the rope
3. Try kneeling down while keeping tension on the rope
4. Try this without using a rope and instead holding hands in a circle (EXTRA HARD)

Leader Tips

Watch for student safety. Sometimes students may tug on the rope to purposely throw others off balance. Other students may find it fun/funny to fall over easily and not try very hard. If it is getting too out of hand, please stop the activity and restart or move onto another activity.

Debrief Questions

Questions specific to this activity:

- What made this activity difficult?
- Why was it hard to fully lean back?
- What can help us trust others? What can keep us from trusting others?
- Why is trust important to a team?

Tin Can Pass

Cooperation - Level 1

Supplies Needed: tin can, tennis ball

Instructions (read aloud): You will need to be sitting in a circle for this activity. The goal of this activity is to pass a tin can around the circle without dropping it or dropping the tennis ball that is inside the tin can. You may only touch the tin can with your legs/feet. No part of your upper body can touch the tin can or tennis ball.

If the ball falls out of the can, the can touches the ground or a part of your upper body, you must re-start.

To up the challenge after completing it successfully:
Challenge the group to get the tin can around the circle in less than a minute

Leader Tips

Students may ask if they can take their shoes off. It is up to you. Taking their shoes off will make it easier because they will have more control over the tin can. If you would like to challenge them more, say no. If they need a little assistance, say yes.

This is a good assessment activity. Watch for things like which students are leading out, how are they handling conflict, are they encouraging, etc.

Debrief Questions

Questions specific to this activity:

- What is one word you would use to describe how your team functioned in this activity? Why did you choose that word?
- If you had to do tin can pass again, what would you do differently?
- Based on how your team did with tin can pass, what is one goal you can set for your team? Do you need to work on respect, trust, listening, planning, etc.?

52 Card Sort

Communication - Level 1

Supplies Needed: **FULLY SHUFFLED** deck of cards, stopwatch

Instructions (read aloud): The goal of this activity is for your group to work together to sort this deck of cards as fast as possible. The cards should be sorted into four piles: spades, hearts, clubs, and diamonds. *Show examples of each suit.* ♠️ ♥️ ♣️ ♦️

Each of those four piles should also be sorted in number order. These four piles should be absolutely identical to each other except for the suit. Meaning, if one pile is put in number order from lowest to highest, ALL of the piles should be sorted lowest to highest.

This is a timed activity. I will start the time when the first person from your group touches the cards. I will stop the time when all of the cards are given back to me and are in my hand. We will do this activity twice so that you have a chance to beat your original time.

Leader Tips

Don't instruct students which card should be on the bottom or where the Ace card goes in order. Let them be strategic thinkers and create a plan together! It only matters that they communicate this to everyone so that all 4 piles are identical.

Watch for the exclusion of people. Help facilitate their inclusion (help them ask “what can I do?”, ask the group if they feel like their plan includes everyone, buddy them up with someone, etc.)

Don't intervene unless it is becoming unsafe or the emotions of frustration have taken over. They may have the worst plan you've ever seen, but let them try it and face the consequences. Failure is ok, especially if they learn something from it.

Debrief Questions

Questions specific to this activity:

- What did you observe about our group?
- What helped you get faster at sorting the cards?
- Is having a plan helpful? What makes a good plan?

Seven Up

Strategic Thinking - Level 2

Supplies Needed: 7 throwable items (bean bags, koosh balls, etc.)

Instructions (read aloud): The goal of this activity is for your whole group to work together to get all seven objects up in the air and then caught at the same time. I will start out with all 7 objects. I will give a countdown: “1,2,3, toss” When I say “toss”, I will throw the first item in the air towards your group. If someone catches the object, we will move onto the second object. This time, when I say toss, both me and the person who caught the first object will throw our objects into the air at the same time. There will at that moment be Two Up. Remember, our goal is to get Seven Up. If both objects are caught, we will continue until we get all seven objects up and caught. There are a few rules about how you must throw & catch:

1. The object must be thrown up at least 5ft off the ground
2. No-one can catch more than one object at a time
3. There cannot be any early or late throws. All throws must happen when the leader says “toss”

Each time any object is dropped or a rule is broken, we will start over at 1 object.

Leader Tips

Throw new objects at a semi-quick pace. Throwing the objects into the group slowly or waiting until they seem ready can make it too easy on them which will not give them a sense of accomplishment. However, if they are struggling, you can slow the speed at which you introduce new objects to help your group not reach the point of giving up.

Watch for blaming. Especially after an object is dropped. Remind students that this is a team activity and part of being a team is backing each other up. Ask questions like: Instead of blaming, how could we help fix the problem? What are ways that we can support each other?

Debrief Questions

Questions specific to this activity:

- How did you come up with a strategy that worked?
- Is it always important to have a plan/strategy? Why/why not?
- Did you use everyone on your team in some way? Do you think that decision was helpful to your team? Why/why not?