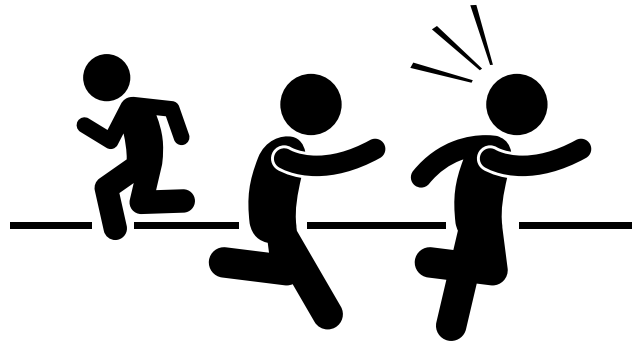


RECESS GAMES

Hands-on, active, engaging and fun.



NOTES:

*All items for games can be purchased via Amazon by using this link:

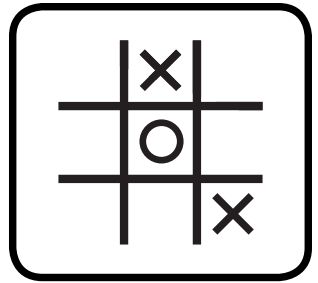
<https://a.co/g5sDlzb>

Cup Flip Tic Tac Toe

Materials:

Painter's or masking tape

2 different colored sets of plastic cups – 3 cups of each color



Instructions:

Set up begins by taping a tic tac toe board of 9 spaces on a flat surface. Be sure to leave room around your board. You'll need room to set the cup down on the edge to flip it over.

Create two teams, then have the teams form two lines (lining up behind each other).

When someone says GO!, the first person on each team gets a cup of their team color and places it open side up, on the edge of the table beside the taped Tic Tac Toe board. Use one finger on one hand to try to flip their cup over so the cup lands on its open end. When it lands properly (open end down) on the table, the player must then place it on the board quickly in a square to help advance their team in tic tac toe. Then it is the next player's turn.

If the cup rolls or falls and doesn't land open end down, the player must continue setting the cup on the edge and try to flip it again and again, until they are successful!!

The game keeps going until one team has Tic Tac Toe!

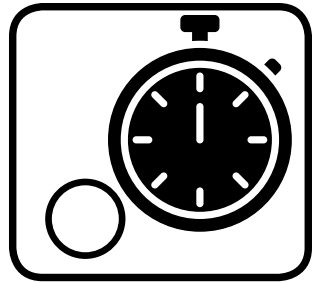
Pong-in-ator

Materials:

Ping pong balls – 2 dozen or more

Two egg cartons

Timer



Instructions:

Two players or two teams.

The goal of the game is to get 8 ping pong balls into the egg carton in 60 seconds or less.

Start the timer and the two players can begin bouncing the ping pong balls, trying to get them to land in the holes in the egg carton.

It is helpful to set this game up against a wall (and have helpers returning the lost ping pong balls to the players!).

First one to get 8 ping pong balls in the carton wins!

Scoop the Money Challenge

Materials:

Spatulas

Metal pan/bowl/plate

Fake money

Blindfold

Timer



Instructions:

Time limit: 30 seconds is a good amount of time for the players to get some money, but also a short enough duration that puts pressure on them to act quickly. Feel free to adjust the time to whatever works for you!

Tray/Plate: The plate must be held up at chest level. This not only forces the player to focus on balancing the plate but also doesn't allow for them to scoop up money using the plate.

Blindfold: Make sure they are blindfolded before they start scooping!

Scramble: After the player puts on the blindfold, scramble up the money in front of them so that it's completely random.

Add twists: Some twists that could make the game even more interesting would be adding custom stickers to some dollar bills that say things like:

- Bankrupt – where they lose all the money they picked up.
- +10 seconds – the user gets an additional 10 seconds to pick up more money that round.

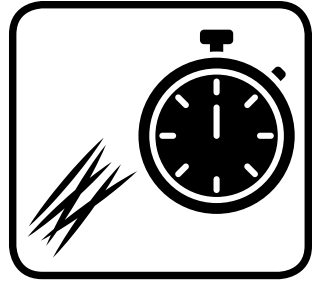
Keep score: Tally up how much money was scooped up and the person with the most wins!

Toothpick Words:

Materials:

Two boxes of 500 toothpicks each

Timer



Instructions:

Give each player a large pile of toothpicks and instruct them to spell out three-letter words without breaking or bending any of the toothpicks.

Set the timer for 3 minutes (or whatever amount of time you prefer).

Whoever has the most words when the timer goes off wins. You can also do this in teams!

Backwards Ball Toss

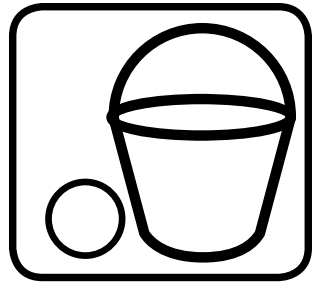
Materials:

24 small stress balls or other balls

Buckets or metal pans

4 chairs

Timer



Instructions:

Set up two chairs about 3 feet apart. Set up the other two chairs the same distance apart, but about 8-10 feet behind the first two chairs.

The people in the front should have the bucket/pan of balls (divide them equally).

Set the timer for 60 seconds and start tossing! The people in the back must catch the balls without getting out of their seat.

The first pair to have the person seated in the back collecting the most balls wins!

*It is helpful to have some “ball returners” for when the person throwing misses their partner!

Cups and Downs

Materials:

24 or so large plastic cups (like 20 oz. Solo cups)

Timer



Instructions:

Place cups in the middle of the room, put half of them upside down and the other half the right way up.

Divide the group into 2 teams and give each team a name (ex: “ups” or “downs”). The “up” team needs to turn as many cups up the right way as possible, and the “down” team needs to flip them upside down.

When the allocated time limit is over, count all the cups and whichever team has the most turned their way wins.

Musical Chairs

Materials:

Chairs (in an amount equal to the number of players you are starting with)

Music



*Here is a clean Spotify playlist for your middle school classroom:

<https://open.spotify.com/playlist/7Gkv0bT4kfayMM7XAqjuVX?si=5bbafc4c62c041f1>

Instructions:

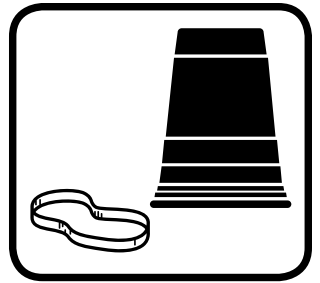
You know how to play the game!

Rubber Band Rapid Fire Challenge

Materials:

Six plastic cups

Elastic rubber bands (Lots of them!)



Instructions:

Create two teams. Place the cups in a 3-2-1 pyramid.

Start by saying, "GO!".

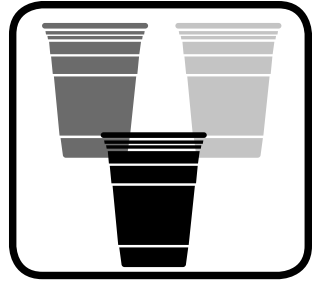
The first person to knock all the cups down by shooting them with rubber bands wins!

Cup Flip Connect Four

Materials:

Connect Four game (from Amazon)

2 different colored sets of plastic cups – 3 of each color



Instructions:

Create two teams and have them form a line (lining up behind each other).

When someone says GO!, the first person on each team gets a cup of their team color and places open side up, on the edge of the table in front of the Connect Four game. Use one finger on one hand to try to flip their cup over so the cup lands on its open end.

When it lands properly (open end down) on the table, the player must then place a token of their color quickly on the game board to help advance their team. Then it is the next player's turn.

If the cup rolls or falls and doesn't land open end down, the player must continue setting the cup on the edge to try to flip it again and again, until they are successful!!

The game keeps going until one team has a row of four!

Jumping Speed Challenge

Materials:

Printable blank footprints - approximately 10-12 (*see next page*)

Painter's/masking tape



Instructions:

Form two lines with a series of the blank footprint pages. Be sure to turn them in different directions to force the contestants to jump, twist, and turn!

When the leader says, “Start!”, the jumping begins. Watch carefully - if a contestant mis-jumps or falls, they will have to start over. This is fun to do as a relay in teams, too.

The first group to get their team to the end of the footprints wins.



Human Maze Tag

Materials:

Lots of people!



Instructions:

Assign a Runner, a Catcher, and a Changer/Captain.

The others will form a maze by standing together in parallel lines with their arms spread. The Catcher tries to catch the Runner as fast as possible. The maze can be changed by the Changer/Captain who can say “left” or “right”. When they do, everyone makes a quarter turn to the left or right.

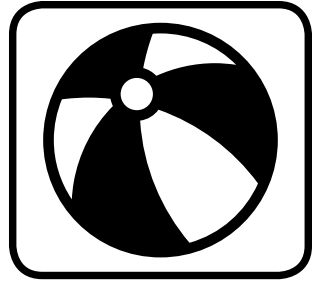
You can also add variations:

- You can add the rule that the Catcher also can call out right or left. This way they can estimate how they can reach the Runner the fastest.
- You can also add the rule that the Runner also can call out right or left. This way they can estimate how they can stay out of the arms of the Catcher in a most effective way.
- You can let several people stand in a different angle from the start. This way the maze becomes more complex.

Over-Under Ball Race

Materials:

Some sort of beach ball/basketball/etc.



Instructions:

The group is split into two equal teams and each team should form a straight line behind each other, with some space between each other.

Each team is given a ball.

The person at the front of the line starts by passing the ball over their head followed by the person behind the taking the ball and passing it through their own legs to the next person.

The ball continues going over then under until it reaches the person at the back of the line.

The person at the back takes the ball and runs to the front of the line where the process starts again. In order to complete the challenge, all team members must have a turn at the front.

The team that returns to their starting order the quickest wins the game.

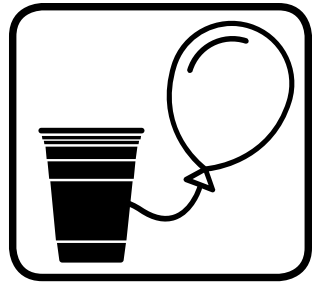
Balloon Pyramid

Materials:

One balloon for each person

6 cups per team

Table



Instructions:

The goal of the game is for each team to form a pyramid of cups using only a balloon (no hands!), their hands must stay behind their back.

The team must form a stacked pyramid of at least 6 cups.

This is achieved with the balloon in their mouth – whilst in their mouth they put the balloon in the cup and inflate the balloon to secure the cup. They then move the cup over to their target table and put it on the table by deflating the balloon.

The next person in the team inflates and then stacks/places the next cup, and so on.

The team winner is the fastest to get the cups in a pyramid stack using just this balloon technique.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR



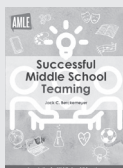
A nationally recognized presenter, author, and humorist, Jack Berckemeyer began his career as a middle school teacher in Denver, Colorado. After only two years, he was recognized as the outstanding educator at his school and in his district. Then in 2003, Jack received the Outstanding Alumni Award from the Falcon School District. Jack has also served as a judge for the Disney American Teacher Awards and has served on the selection committee for the USA TODAY All-Teacher Team. Jack has a master's degree in Middle Level Education as well as an administrator's degree.

For 13 years Jack served as the Assistant Executive Director for the National Middle School Association. He is the owner of Berckemeyer Consulting Group through which he has presented in hundreds of school district and conference settings both nationally and internationally. Jack is known not only for his keynotes and workshops but is also highly regarded as one of the best long-term professional developers in the country. Jack's presentations and instruction are best-practice focused and research-based. He is in high demand and enjoys working with educators and schools.

Jack's recent release (summer of 2025) of *Elements of Effective Teaming* is a comprehensive, on-line, subscription-based curriculum and is a companion piece to *Successful Middle School Teaming* (released in 2022). He is also the author of *Managing the Madness: A Practical Guide to Middle Grades Classrooms* and has written numerous educational articles for AMLE.org. In addition, he co-authored *Deliberate Optimism: STILL Reclaiming the Joy in Education*, with Dr. Debbie Silver (released in 2023).

Jack lives in Denver, Colorado and has no pets, plants, or people.

Contact Jack directly for special pricing!



Successful Middle School Teaming

by Jack Berckemeyer

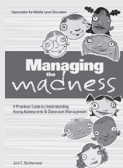
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Elements of Effective Teaming Curriculum

by Jack Berckemeyer

See JackBerckemeyer.com/curriculum for pricing and options



Managing the Madness: A Practical Guide to Middle Grades Classrooms

by Jack Berckemeyer

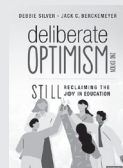
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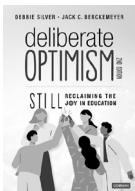
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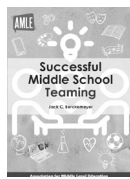
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Deliberate Optimism: STILL Reclaiming the Joy in Education

by Debbie Silver and Jack Berckemeyer

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Successful Middle School Teaming

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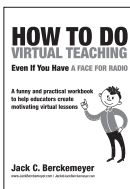
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