

Games for playtime

We generally think of recess as fun time for children. But it is not always so for those who find socialising difficult or for those who have trouble thinking of something to do.

Incorporating social and friendship skills into the daily class program has enormous benefits in preventing unhappy times in the playground.

Happy and peaceful playgrounds can be cultivated by:

- providing children with strategies for friendly play, including how to join in, participate, and allow others to join in;
- teaching children activities and games to play alone or with others;
- offering equipment to support those activities and games.

Peaceful playgrounds filled with happy active children contribute to a healthier, happier community more able to focus on learning during class time. Being active contributes to children's overall physical development, including gross and fine motor skills and eye-hand coordination, and fitness.

Opportunities for introducing activities and games can be seized in many areas of the curriculum, in addition to the obvious, physical education. They can be slotted into the social skills or friendship skills program, or used as transition activities during the day. Sometimes they can be worked in with [maths](#) or English lessons. If equipment is easily accessible in the classroom, it need take no longer than a few minutes to introduce an activity, a diversion which can aid concentration for the next learning session

The provision of permanent outdoor items such as pole tennis, basketball hoops, soccer nets, targets painted on walls and play patterns for hopscotch and other games on concreted areas contributes other opportunities for play. With a stick of jumbo chalk, children can draw their own hopscotch and play patterns.

This resource includes:

- ten activities and games for individual or group play, including *Instruction cards*
- a checklist of suggested equipment
- a system to encourage responsible borrowing, including *Sports equipment borrowing cards*

Activities and games for individual or group play

Skipping



Children can use individual ropes to practise on their own, or challenge others in a group to jump more times, or skip further or faster.

Children can use long ropes to take turns at turning the rope or jumping. A minimum of three is required, but numbers are unlimited.

Teach children how to use the ropes safely and ensure they have strategies for taking turns.

Elastics

Teach children how to play elastics. They can learn basic moves and sequences, or invent their own.

When I was a child we used a length of elastic from our mothers' sewing boxes. Now there are many kits available for purchase.

If you have forgotten, or are not sure, how to play elastics, a quick internet search will provide many suggestions.

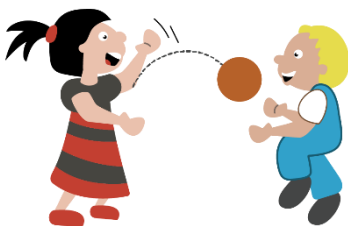
Ball games



Children can have fun playing with balls on their own or with others.

On their own, they can practise bouncing and catching, or pat bouncing, on the ground or against a wall. They can practise throwing at a target or through a hoop. They can practise kicking goals.

They can play the bounce and catch game *Sevens*.

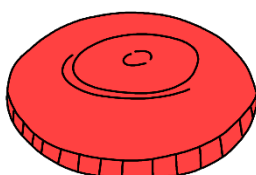


With a friend, or a group of friends, children can have a lot of fun making up their own games or playing their versions of basketball or football.

Games like *Queenio Queenio, who's got the ballio?* can be played by a group of children.

Versions of bocce can also be played using a large ball as the jack and smaller balls for bowling. (See *Close ball* in [Games for maths groups #1](#))

Flying discs



Discs are more fun with a partner or small group. Children throw the discs to each other. There is quite a skill in throwing the disc in the correct direction, and then in catching it.

Grip ball



As grip ball sets usually consist of two mitts, it is mostly a game for two players. However, if more mitts are available, a larger group can play, throwing the ball across or around the circle.

Children place the mitt on one hand for catching, and use the other hand to throw.

Bats and balls



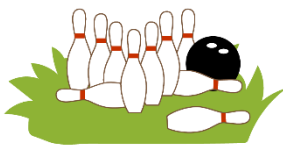
Children can use a bat and ball independently to practise hitting the ball against a wall or target.

Children can practise hitting a ball to a partner.

If pole tennis is set up in the playground, children can practise hitting alone or with a partner.

Children in a small group can use a tennis ball and a cricket bat or tennis racquet to play *French Cricket*.

Ten pins



Tens pins are fun for a small group of children to play. Add a small blackboard or whiteboard to the set so they can keep score.

Hoops



Hoops can be used by individual children for spinning around their waist, leg or arm. They can count how many times they can spin the hoop before it falls.

Children in a small group can compare their abilities and help each other improve.

Hoops can be used for rolling to each other, as targets for bouncing balls, or to step in or crawl through on an obstacle course.

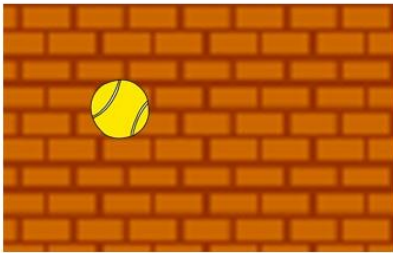
Bean bags



Children can have a lot of fun with some bean bags and a bucket. They can practise alone or with friends, and even make a game to see who can toss the most bean bags into the bucket.

Hoops also make a great target for bean bags.

Children can throw and catch with bean bags, or see who can walk the furthest with a bean bag balanced on their head, elbow, or foot. With a little imagination, children can create their own games.



How to play *Sevens*

You need: a ball and a wall (a small rubber ball approximately 10 – 15 cm diameter, or tennis ball is best)

Don't let the ball fall, or you must start that number again.

One: Throw the ball against the wall and catch it, one time.

Two: Throw the ball against the wall, let it bounce and catch it, two times.

Three: Throw the ball against the wall, clap your hands in front and behind your back, and catch it, three times.

Four: Throw the ball under your leg so it hits the wall, then catch it, four times.

Five: Pat bounce the ball five times .

Six: Throw the ball against the wall, turn around once, then catch it, six times.

Seven: Throw the ball against the wall, turn around once and clap three times, then catch it, seven times.

Play on your own or with friends. If the ball falls it is the next player's turn.

Start from the number you got up to when it's your turn again.



How to play *French cricket*

You need: a tennis ball and a small cricket bat or racquet

Play with a group.

Designate a spot for the batter to stand, "the batter's circle".

Choose one person to bat and one to bowl first. Other players are fielders and form a circle around the batter. Their job is to catch the ball when hit by the batter.

The batter holds the bat in front of his or her legs.

The bowler throws the ball to the batter using an underarm throw.

The batter hits the ball using a scooping action.

If the batter misses the ball and the ball hits the batter below the knee, the batter is out. The bowler becomes the new batter. The batter becomes the bowler.

If the batter hits the ball and it is caught on the full (before it bounces), the batter is out. The fielder who caught the ball becomes the batter, and the batter becomes the bowler.

If the ball is not caught before bouncing, the batter stays in. The fielder who catches the ball takes a turn to bowl.

The batter may turn to face the bowler, but may not move from the batter's circle.

A checklist of equipment

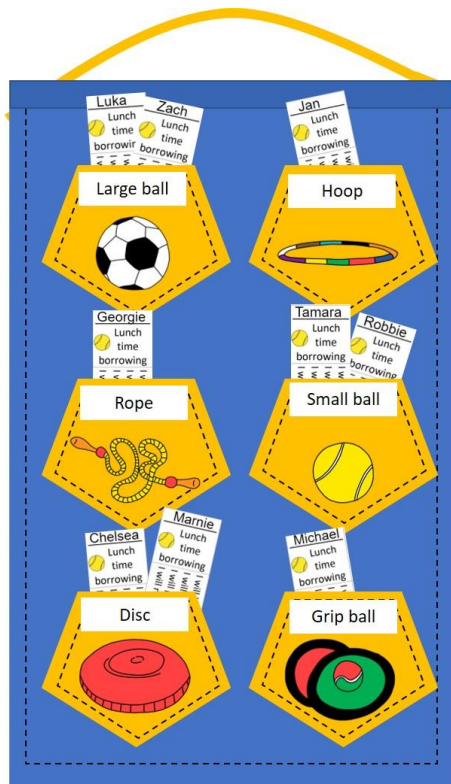
- individual skipping ropes
- long skipping ropes
- elastics
- balls – a variety of large and small,
including soccer, football, and tennis balls
- flying discs
- grip ball sets
- small bats and balls
- cricket sets
- ten pin bowling sets
- hoops
- bean bags

A system for borrowing

Concerns about children not taking responsibility for care of equipment, at a glance, may seem valid, as damage and losses can occur. However, by teaching children games and activities that can be played using the equipment, showing them how to use it safely, and cultivating a sense of responsibility for the equipment and others, the incidence of damage and loss decreases.

Borrowing systems, organised at the whole school or class level, can help to regulate borrowing, safe use, and return of items.

This resource describes a system for class borrowing:








1. Gather equipment for children to borrow. (I kept my equipment in a laundry basket by the door.)
2. Teach children how to use the equipment safely, alone and with others, to play games. (I would introduce one game a day for a couple of weeks.)
3. Prepare a borrowing card for each child. (See the *Sports equipment borrowing cards*.) Laminate for durability. The borrowing cards explain the rules, or agreement for borrowing. Distribute and discuss. (My children kept their borrowing cards in their desks.)
4. Set up some pockets into which children place their borrowing card to indicate what they have borrowed. (My pockets hung near the classroom door.)
5. Explain the system to the children:
 - a. They may borrow one item.
 - b. They must look after the item, play with it safely, and return it when lunch is finished.
 - c. When they go out to play, they choose an item, and place their borrowing card in the appropriate pocket.
 - d. When they return, they place the item back into the basket and remove their borrowing card from the pocket.

It is easy to check the items being borrowed and returned. A quick glance at the pockets tells which items have not been returned.

I found children to be honest using the system and responsible in using and caring for the equipment. While an occasional mishap occurred, for example; a ball on the roof, damage and losses were minimal. The children were happy to have something to play with and to know a game to play with their friends, or to help them make new friends.

The system helped create a happier more peaceful playground, and children were more able to focus and happier to work when they returned to the classroom.

Sports equipment borrowing cards

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| <p>_____</p> <p>Lunch time</p> <p>borrowing</p> <p>I will look after it. I will play safely. I will play nicely. I will return it.</p>  | <p>_____</p> <p>Lunch time</p> <p>borrowing</p> <p>I will look after it. I will play safely. I will play nicely. I will return it</p>  | <p>_____</p> <p>Lunch time</p> <p>borrowing</p> <p>I will look after it. I will play safely. I will play nicely. I will return it</p>  | <p>_____</p> <p>Lunch time</p> <p>borrowing</p> <p>I will look after it. I will play safely. I will play nicely. I will return it</p>  | <p>_____</p> <p>Lunch time</p> <p>borrowing</p> <p>I will look after it. I will play safely. I will play nicely. I will return it</p>  |
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