

COOPERATIVE ACTIVITIES FOR CHILDREN'S PARTIES



Successfully organizing a birthday party means planning a number of games to entertain the kids. It's generally easier to plan activities for a group than for just a few children, since groups often organize themselves based on the different personalities involved. The organizer starts the activities, encourages and cheerleads.

Thoughtful planning of games and the day's schedule is key to a successful party. Each activity chosen can have shorter or longer durations, depending on the age of the children. Plan several activities and change to something new when you feel that the kids are losing interest. Alternating calm and dynamic activities is essential to keeping kids interested and the atmosphere fun.

THE IMPORTANCE OF COOPERATIVE PLAY

The principle of cooperative play is that all players work together towards a common goal. They must find, through group discussion, a solution to the problem posed by the game. This way, players win together and lose together, which helps them better understand and respect the rules of the game. It also highlights the importance of participation rather than winning. The absence of competition between players avoids the disappointment of failure. Players will also want to play again, even if they lost, just for the pleasure of playing together.

Cooperative games can take the form of cooperative board games and are an excellent introduction to the joy of playing. Cooperative games can also be creative games where the only goal is to play. There is no winning or losing in these games, only the pleasure of play—play for play's sake!

Calm activities

Face painting activity (15–30 minutes)

- Face painting can be an excellent way for children to express themselves and get to know each other. This can be done at the beginning of the party in teams. Parents can suggest images related to the party's theme to help inspire their children (e.g., an animal's head).

- ITEMS NEEDED:
- Face paints
 - Mirror
 - Water and facecloths

Putting on a play (30–45 minutes)

- What better way to entertain people than putting on a play? Children can dress up and, using an envelope containing a few words of inspiration, work together to create a logical story using all the words found in the envelope. Take the fun to the next level by creating 2 or 3 teams and giving them each 5–8 minutes to prepare their stories or simply improvise.

Build things (15–30 minutes)

As a group, the kids use crafting material (paper, cardboard, glue, scissors, crayons, markers, ruler) to cooperatively build a bridge or tower. It can also be built from uncooked spaghetti with marshmallows to attach the noodles together. The built piece must be tall, stable and as creative as possible within a given time. You can also have a specific height as a goal.

Colouring, drawing or paper folding (making airplanes, etc.) (15–30 minutes)

- Many children like to draw or colour freely. It can be fun to colour or draw in teams.

- ITEMS NEEDED:
- Markers and coloured pencils
 - Colouring books
 - Blank paper

Arts and crafts (15–30 minutes)

- For budding artists or crafters, arts and crafts time is a great idea. Children will also appreciate having something to take home as a souvenir of the party.

CRAFTING IDEAS:

- Frame for unforgettable memories: Cut rigid cardboard into strips ahead of time, taking into account the size of the photos to be placed in the frames. Have the kids decorate their frames with drawings, colored stamps, stickers, dried pasta (e.g., macaroni), etc. as a team.

- ITEMS NEEDED:
- Cardboard strips
 - Stapler
 - Glue
 - Coloring pencils
 - Stamps or stickers
 - Dried pasta

Calm activities (continued)

Balloon animals

Bring balloons to life by giving them different forms (flowers, animals, etc.). To blow up the balloons, use a small pump. Stretch the balloons before inflating them to make it easier. To shape the balloons, stretch, twist, turn and curve them to give them a new shape, and ask a friend for help.

ITEMS NEEDED:

- Balloons
- Balloons pump

Dress-up and photo day (30–45 minutes)

To create lasting memories, let the children dress up and make funny poses together, photograph them, make a montage and offer it as a gift.

Drawing two by two (15–30 minutes)

Sit 2 by 2, back-to-back. The leader prepares a simple, abstract drawing and gives it to 1 of the 2 players. This player must then describe the drawing to the other, who must draw it according to what they hear. The player who is drawing can ask questions, but the player who is describing may only answer with “yes” or “no”. When both players think they’re done, they switch roles.

This game can also be played in a group. Split the group into 2 teams. One team will be blindfolded, while the other looks at the drawing made by the game leader. The blindfolded team must try to reproduce the drawing based on the descriptions of the other team. To make the game more challenging, impose a time limit.

Broken telephone (15–30 minutes)

The players sit in a circle. The leader thinks of a sentence and whispers it in the ear of the person to their right. This person then whispers it to the next, and so on, until it has gone around the circle. The last person says the sentence out loud and compares it to what was said at the start.

Dynamic activities

GOAL-BASED GAMES

Which animal am I? (15–30 minutes)

Players stick a paper with the name of an animal onto their backs. They then walk around the room and, addressing each other by first name, ask questions that will help them guess which animal's name is on their back (e.g., "Louis, do I live in water?"). The other player may only answer with "yes" or "no," and each player may only ask 1 question in each exchange. Exchanges continue until all players have correctly guessed the animal's name. Once players have guessed their animal, they continue to participate by helping others.

Treasure hunt (30–45 minutes)

A treasure hunt can be done inside or out. The goal is to use clues to find a hidden treasure. By working cooperatively to find the treasure, everyone wins.

Wolf and sheep tag (15–30 minutes)

In this game, there is a wolf, a shepherd, and sheep. The sheep line up single file behind the shepherd, holding the waist of the person in front of them to form a chain. The wolf must try to catch the last sheep in line. The sheep must avoid the wolf without letting go of the person in front of them. The game continues until the shepherd has lost all the sheep to the wolf.

Pirates (15–30 minutes)

The players, as sailors, must navigate from one ship to the next (cones in each of the 4 corners of the room). They cannot stay more than 15 seconds on each ship. In the centre of the room, the pirate must try to convert the sailors into pirates by tagging them. If the pirate succeeds, the new pirate must join the other(s) in the centre of the room and also try to tag sailors. The game continues until all sailors have become pirates.

CONTACT GAMES

The untied knot (10–15 minutes)

Players form a very tight circle, close their eyes and hold each other's hands. The leader makes sure that each hand is being held. At the signal, players open their eyes and try to undo the resulting knots without letting go of each other's hands. The goal is to finish with a perfect circle.

The caterpillar (10–15 minutes)

The players are on all fours, in a line and holding the ankles of the person in front of them (except for the first person in the line). The person at the head of the line moves forward and the others must follow, keeping the same rhythm. For added challenge, make an obstacle course for the caterpillar to move through.

Foot race (15–30 minutes)

Players are split into 2 teams and sit on chairs facing each other (2 rows of chairs, teams facing each other). The players stretch their legs out in front of them, keeping their feet together. The goal is to move a tennis ball along the row using only feet and legs.

Dynamic activities (continued)

ACTIVE GAMES

Organize a hockey game (30–45 minutes)

Modify the traditional rules of hockey to put an emphasis on cooperation and teamwork rather than individual achievement. For example, a new rule could be that there must be 3 passes involved for the goal to be counted. The game can be played on the street, in a park or a neighbourhood skating rink.

GETTING TO KNOW YOU GAMES

Zip zap (15–30 minutes)

Players stand in a circle, with the leader in the center. The leader points at a player and says either “Zip” or “Zap.” If the leader says “Zip,” then the player must say the name of the person to their right; or, if the leader says “Zap,” then the name of the person to their left. If the player says the right name, the game continues. If the player says the wrong name, then the player comes to the center and becomes the new leader. If the leader says “Zip-zap,” then everyone must change places in the circle. The game continues until everyone knows every player’s name.

The circle of names (15–30 minutes)

Players stand in a circle. The first player to go must yell the name of another player and run to take that player’s place. At the same time, the person named must then yell the name of another player and run to take the next player’s place. Be sure to make a big enough circle for all the movement.

CIRCLE GAMES

The sun chasing the moon (15–30 minutes)

Players form a circle and face outwards. The leader gives a little balloon, representing the moon, to one player, who passes it along clockwise. The leader gives another, larger balloon, representing the sun, which is also passed along clockwise. The goal is for the sun to catch up to the moon. This game has no end point; it’s up to the leader to end it. This is an excellent transitional activity.

COMMUNICATION GAMES

In the right order (10–15 minutes)

Players must stand in a line, in the right order, according to a criterion defined at the start of the game (age, birthday, distance between home and school, etc.). However, players cannot speak to determine the correct order; they may only use mime and gestures. At the end, the leader checks to be sure that the order is correct.