



GAINING WITH GAMES



By Vickie Kangas



What do you gain by using games?

1. Kids learn through games.
2. Games make church fun.
3. You can use games to review what you've taught.
4. You can use games to connect with kids before class starts.
5. Games help kids apply what they've learned.
6. Games teach kids how to collaborate with others.
7. Games help keep kids' attention.
8. Games help kids build relationships with others.
9. Games help kids memorize Scripture.
10. Kids love to play games.



Guidelines for games



Be sensitive:

To newcomers who do not know the materials.

To shy children who may know the material but are too shy to try.

Rewards, such as candy, are not necessary. Play for points or just for fun.

Do not allow children to criticize or make fun of a child that does not know the answer,

Make sure that each game builds the self-confidence and knowledge of each child in the class.



Games for Preschoolers

1. Train Ride

Option A. The Traditional Train: Have each child stand in a hula hoop, which is their pretend boxcar. Children can also hold onto a rope train or each other's shoulders. If their hands are free, they can move them in a circular motion. Invite one child to be the conductor (line leader) and one child to be the caboose. Travel around the room chanting, "Chugga chugga chugga choo-choo!" You may also want to pick up a wooden train whistle for effect.

Use this activity to get from one place to another, as a transition, or as a creative addition to a lesson plan (Let's take a train ride to Israel.)

Option B. The "I Spy" Train: Invite the children on board the "I Spy Train."

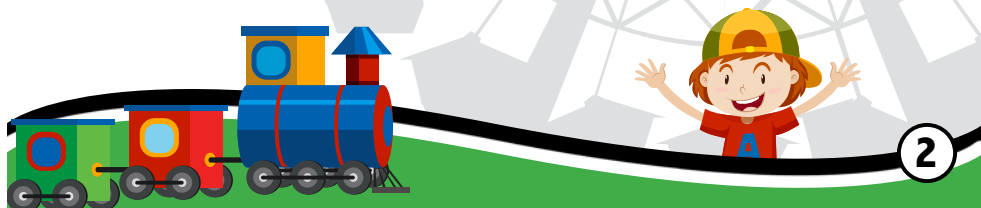
This train can be set up as a number of chairs in one or two straight lines. The children won't officially travel anywhere, but you'll still pretend with tickets, sounds, the movement of their arms, and a conductor.

Have them look for particular theme related items that you have pre-arranged to be in the room. For example: I Spy... The Fruit of the Spirit (with the qualities written on pieces of fruit), I Spy... Easter (with a cross, a tomb, a palm leaf, a donkey, etc.), I Spy... Thankfulness (with items children can be thankful for: water, food, the Bible, friends, teachers, etc.)

2. Hide and Seek

Hide multiple theme related items around your space and have the children search for them. Have fun, be creative, and if you don't have a particular item available, use your children's symbolic thinking skills.

If you're talking about Noah and the flood, hide animals. If it's the fifth day of Creation or a lesson on Jonah, hide fish (plastic fish, fish crackers, or paper cutouts.) If you're talking about a wall like Jericho or a building project in the Bible, hide bricks or building materials. If your lesson is on sin, hide "dirty" socks, because sin likes to hide. Explain that sin stinks and brainstorm ways that we all fall short of the glory of God.



3. Let's Freeze

Play praise music and lead the children in movements (stepping side to side, clapping their hands, stomping their feet, tiptoeing, following the teacher in a circle, doing jump and jacks, reaching up high and down low, etc).

Have an assistant shut the worship music off and have the students freeze, standing completely still. Play the music again and repeat multiple times. For an added challenge, while students are freezing, recite a memory verse and begin again.

4. Create Your Own Obstacle Course

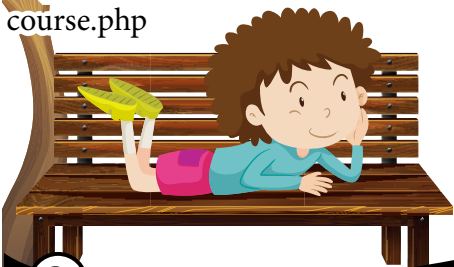
Make a simple obstacle course out of anything: furniture pieces, masking tape on the floor (a straight line can be a balance beam, a circle a tube to jump in, a triangle a piece of pizza to squash), cushions, sheets over tables, etc.

Have the course made prior to the children's arrival. While constructing the course, it is imperative to ensure that it is safe for your students. If it can be hazardous, it will be, so don't take the chance. Preschoolers do not have great gross motor skills anyway, so the easier the course, the better!

Always demonstrate how to go through the course first (expect a few giggles if you're going to try to squeeze into a tight spot!) Use the obstacle course simply as a fun activity to get the kids moving. Or draw parallels with faith. Is it easy to get to God? How do we find Him? What gets in the way sometimes? Are there instructions we can use to get through life easier?

YouTube video on making an obstacle course:

<http://www.childrenareimportant.com/myCMU/series/series-obstacle-course.php>



This game helps your students get to know one another
All ages



How To Play Remember Me?

Get your two teams to mingle together for a couple of minutes, and introduce themselves to each other.



The two teams sit on either side of the bed sheet. Two leaders pull the bed sheet up, hiding both teams from each others view. Then both teams select a player silently for the round, and both players move and sit facing the bed sheet in the middle. When the leaders can see that both players are ready, they drop the sheet so they can see each other.

The first player to yell the other person's name wins a point for their team.

Keep playing rounds until everyone has had at least one go.

Materials Needed

Bed Sheet, or blanket, or tarp

Option: instead of points, whoever lost that time had to switch sides.

When names are well known, switch to favorite sports, snacks, TV shows, after school activities, etc.

Everyone's It!

This game helps students release energy

Get everyone to put their non-preferred hand on their head. This exposes their elbow of that hand. Then, everyone has to run around in the specified area and get other people out by touching their elbows. Last one in wins.



Matthew Mark Luke John

Players sit in a circle.

Each seat is assigned a name or number, starting with Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, one, two, three, etc.

Everyone joins in, repeating a four-count rhythm, slapping their legs twice, clapping once, and snapping their fingers once (slap, slap, clap, snap).

“Matthew” always starts.

On the fourth count (finger snap), he calls the name/number of another position. That person must then call out the name/number of another’s position on the following fourth count (finger snap). If someone misses the rhythm, calls their own name or number, etc., they go to the last position, and the game starts over.

Object:

Become Matthew, and stay in that position as long as possible.



Screaming Toes

This is a very simple Game, maybe good for a time filler.

Form a tight circle facing inwards.

Everyone looks down and picks a pair of toes to stare at. When the leader says 'Go' everyone has to look up into the eyes of the feet they picked. If two participants are looking at each other then they must scream (not too extreme) and they are out.

Keep going until there are two players remaining, they are the winners.

Shoe Talk

This is a great ice breaker game that does not put too much pressure on everyone.

1. Split the group into 2 halves.
2. Get each half of the group to line up against opposite sides of the room or hall.
3. Get each person to take of 1 shoe and make a pile of their team's shoes.
4. Get each person from one team to come a select a random shoe from the other team's pile and then find the person that shoe belongs to.
5. Once they have found their match, have a question ready so each person in the pair can ask each other a get to know each other a little bit better. Make sure you don't leave this time too long, but don't make it too short either, give both people a chance to answer.
6. Get the other team to do the same process with the first team's pile of shoes.





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