

HOW TO . . . DESIGN GAMES TO FIT YOUR NEEDS

GAMES LIST

What games has your group played? Take three minutes to list the games you remember.

1. _____	11. _____	21. _____
2. _____	12. _____	22. _____
3. _____	13. _____	23. _____
4. _____	14. _____	24. _____
5. _____	15. _____	25. _____
6. _____	16. _____	26. _____
7. _____	17. _____	27. _____
8. _____	18. _____	28. _____
9. _____	19. _____	29. _____
10. _____	20. _____	30. _____

PICK YOUR TOP TEN

Review the list of games and circle your top ten picks, then number them one (most favorite) to ten.

GAME CATEGORIES

This is one way of many to categorize games.

1. Tag
2. Goal scoring
3. Capture games
4. Relays
5. Hide and seek
6. Base running
7. Race
8. Head to head
9. Prop driven

10. Word games
11. Quizzes
12. Paper
13. Playground games

STARTING POINT: A BOX OF CREATIVITY

The Ironwood staff often use a box of creativity when brainstorming on a new camp or project. The sides of the box—purpose, time, money/resources, and people—represent our limits or expectations.¹ When creating a game, we can also use a box of creativity by changing the sides to the four key aspects of a game.

Group

1. How many people will play?
2. What are the ages of your group?
3. Does your group have any unique characteristics?

Goal

1. What are you trying to accomplish?
2. What is the purpose for the game?

Time

1. How much time do you have?
2. Do you want to play multiple rounds or multiple games?

Resources

1. What do you have to work with?
2. Is there a certain prop that you want to use?

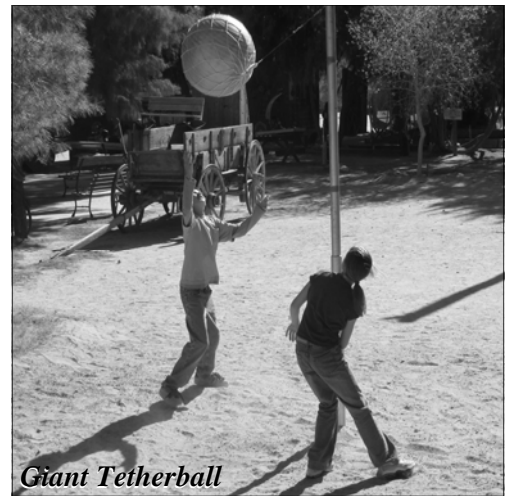
	GROUP:	
	Substitute—	GOAL:
	Combine—	
	Adapt—	
	Modify/magnify—	
	Put to some other use—	
	Eliminate/reduce—	
	Reverse/rearrange—	
RESOURCES:		
	TIME:	

The acrostic SCAMPER² (see the Creativity Toolbox chart on the previous pages) is a good way to change a familiar game into something unique or quite different. Take the games that best fit with your identified needs to create unique games by adapting, switching, and rearranging in order to meet the purpose that you are playing the game to accomplish.

TIPS

1. Remember the law of diminishing returns—good games can lose their thrill with regular repetition. However, changing certain aspects of a game makes it unique, eliminating the need to play a bigger and better game.
2. Create some game traditions—certain games become traditions and can be something exciting to anticipate.

3. Incorporate a variety of familiar and new games—people like to do things they know, so mixing the new with the familiar establishes a comfort zone and allows a smooth transition into the unfamiliar.
4. Plan for the ripple effect—realize that when you make changes that there will be a ripple effect to the way the game plays.
5. Take time to practice—this allows you to discover the problems of the ripple effect and deal with them before the “official” first game.
6. Add more props for larger groups—to keep games moving with larger groups, you may need to add more props (e.g., balls, noodles, flags) so that more players can be active at the same time.
7. Organize for the size—a larger group requires more organization and supervision; also, communication will be more difficult. To communicate well with a large group, consider using a portable sound system, whistles, a megaphone, and more staff who know the plan.



EXAMPLES OF MODIFY/MAGNIFY

1. **LCR**—each player begins the game with three chips. Instead of using dice, we made three 4 x 4 cubes with three blank sides (keep your chips) and a letter on each of the other three—*L* (pass to your LEFT), *C* (CHOOSE which direction you pass to), and *R* (pass to your RIGHT). A player (or team) would roll all three cubes and pass one chip at a time based on what he rolled. We modified the original game by changing what *C* stood for—choose to give/take.
2. **Giant tetherball**—we super-sized the ball; the kids do the rest.



EXAMPLES OF COMBINE

1. **Capture the Flag SS**—add spud shooters to a game of capture the flag (CTF). When a player is hit, he must return to his base to reenter the game. We did not have jails because of our numbers. We played many CTF variations like center flag and moving your flag to the other team’s base.
2. **Hot Spot and Survival**—combine volleyball and four square (see *Small Group Games in the Right Brain*).

EXAMPLE OF COMBINE, PUT TO SOME OTHER USE, AND ADAPT

Derailment—we dug a pit (to be filled with water when we were playing the game) and constructed a wooden platform that looked like two footbridges crossing like an *x*. Players wear one or more inner tubes, depending on the rules for that particular round.



Players from the two teams try to cross to the other side at the same time; on their way across, they try to derail the opposing players. Players who make it all the way across earn points for their team; they do not earn points for any opposing players whom they derailed. Even though they aren't earning points, the players enjoy derailing opposing players into the water.

IDEAS

1. Add windmill scoring to a base-running game. Home is a scoring base but not a safe base or the end of running. Players score on home but must make it all the way to first to be safe. Players can continue to run and score as long as they are not tagged out.
2. Allow multiple players on a base at a time.
3. Change the flag in CTF to something else or many things.
4. Change the frisbee in frisbee football to an odd-ball object or a stuffed animal.
5. Combine water balloons, parachutes, and a splash zone.
6. Play soccer with multiple balls in a field full of trees and bushes.
7. Combine crossing paths, inner tubes, bridges, and water.
8. Change the bases to people in kickball.
9. Combine power tools and a wood race track to have power-tool drag racing (not recommended for youth groups, great for a men's activity).

10 PRINCIPLES FOR GREAT GAMES

See it big.

Keep it simple.

Keep it moving.

Keep it close.

Keep it fair.

Keep it balanced.

Keep it safe.

Keep it suspenseful.

Keep it clear.

Keep it building.

Bibliography

1. Sam Brock, "A Box of Creativity," *Manager in Ministry*, no. 6 (2005), 5.
2. Michael Michalko, *Thinkertoys* (Ten Speed Press: Berkeley CA, 2006), 74.