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Outdoor Co-operative Challenges

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Cooperative challenges (outdoors) provide a context for experiential learning including debriefing by the teacher in the outdoor and adventure education 'space'. For the purposes of today's session, these are called Outdoor Co-operative Challenges.

The Outdoor Co-operative Challenges aim to help ITE students

- to begin to grow as a learning community
- to experience and reflect on co-operative challenges that ITE students can use to support children's learning

Background

Adventure education is a philosophy embracing concepts such as trust, cooperation, discovery, problem-solving, enjoyment, challenge and taking risks

Outdoor education is linked to the concept of an outdoor environment such as a park, an outdoor and adventure centre or any natural or built area as a site for **activities** and **learning outdoors**. These activities are often linked to another concept: **experiential learning or learning by reflection on doing**.

Experiential learning involves

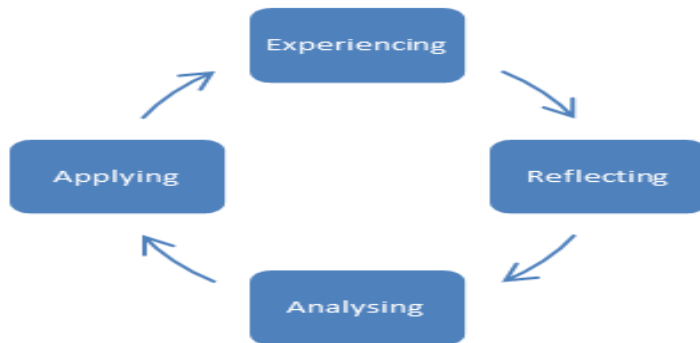
Experiencing: through an activity where we help children learn

Reflecting: children attempt to bring their own meaning to the experience explaining how they felt, how they tackled a problem, what successes and challenges they experienced.

Analysing/Generalizing/abstract conceptualisation: children draw conclusions from the experience, make new connections, analyse what happened and interpret what it might mean

Applying/Active experimentation: trying out what you have learned in future scenarios (see Figure 1 below)

Figure 1: Experiential learning



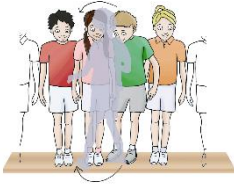
Planning debriefing (processing) questions (in a lesson plan) can guide reflection and discussion of the activities and experiences the children may have. Consideration of the lesson outcomes and the class context can help determine which strategy is selected to facilitate debriefing e.g. discussion, debate, draw

Following **experiencing** the challenges described below (p. 3- 7) some **sample questions** might help with the **reflecting** phase as well as the **analysing** phase before **applying** the learning gained in future scenarios:

- How did you feel during this activity?
- Was it challenging? Why? When?
- How well did you communicate (using a scale of 1 to 10?)
- Was there one leader or more than one?
 - ✓ Identify various leadership roles.
 - ✓ Were all included throughout? Why? Why not?

Outdoor Co-operative Challenges: Some sample activities

Shuffle pack

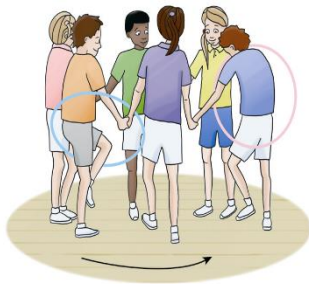


Place benches, mats or ropes around the activity space and ask 5/6 children to stand on each bench/mat/rope. Ask children to arrange themselves in alphabetical order of first names, without anyone leaving the bench.

Variations

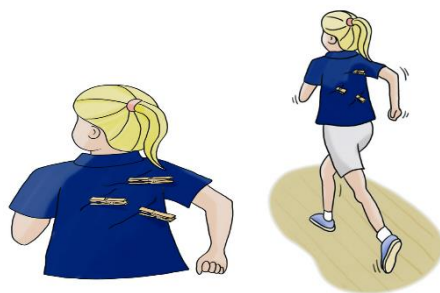
Arrange in order of birthdays starting with first in year, arrange in alphabetical order of surnames, numbers, letters etc.

Hula hoop circle



Ask children to make a circle and hold hands. Give the group a hula-hoop which they place on a child's arm and must move around the circle and back to the start. Challenge group further using smaller hoops, race against another group or have more than one hoop per circle and the group must have one hoop 'catch' the other. Even try moving the hoops around the group in different directions.

The peg game



Each child has three pegs attached to the back of his/her jumper. Three children are selected as 'taggers'. Aim: Try to gather as many pegs as possible in one minute. What rules might guide us? [Think about/discuss the following constraints: No grabbing onto other children? No 'protecting' pegs?] Taggers collect the pegs and drop them in a hoop or pin them to their own jumpers. Children may replace pegs from class hoop. After 30 seconds, how many pegs

have the taggers collected? Each group of taggers competes to establish which group collected the most pegs at the end

Feel a tree

The children work with a partner and one child puts on the eyeshade/blindfold. The partner takes the hand of the child who is unsighted and leads them to a tree, which is one of a number of trees in the area, and s/he feels the tree examining it for a minute or two. The partner then leads the unsighted child away from the tree chosen and prompts the child to turn around a number of times, before removing the eyeshade/blindfold. The child has to return and try to figure out which tree s/he felt when unsighted.

Blind trail



Set up a rope trail or, for progression, a rope trail with clues hanging from rope/twine at varying intervals. Divide group into pairs with one child wearing the eye shade. The partner leads the child with the eye shade to the course (if the course is circular then all children can take part starting at various intervals). The child with the eyeshade takes hold of the rope and feels along the course stopping or moving around/over/under any obstacle e.g. log, overhanging branches guided throughout by his/her partner.

Frogger



Divide the class into groups consisting of at least three children. Instruct these groups to form lines at the sidelines of the gym/yard/field, facing the play area. Each group, if possible, has three same-coloured hula hoops or discs (lily pads). All three children from each group will be active at the same time.

The object is for one member of the group (the frog) to move across the pond without getting wet i.e. touching the gym floor outside of the hula hoop. Two helpers (tadpoles) are to continually move the lily pads (hoops) forward so that the frog has a place to jump. The two tadpoles are allowed in the water. Once the frogs make it to the other side of the play area (the pond), they must return using the same method. After each trip across the pond, each

frog must switch places with one of the tadpoles. Continue this process until everyone has had a turn.

If a frog lands in the water, that frog must start over from the beginning. It is important that everyone has a chance to be both a frog and a tadpole. Remind children to place the hula hoops (lily pads) within jumping distance, but not too close together. This can be a co-operative game to test how quickly they can cross the pond but it may be undertaken without the pressure of time.

Stepping stones

A team of children have to get from A to B using the stepping stones (discs), without stepping on the ground anywhere between A and B. Use scenarios such as crocodile infested waters, toxic yoghurt, etc. which they must get across.

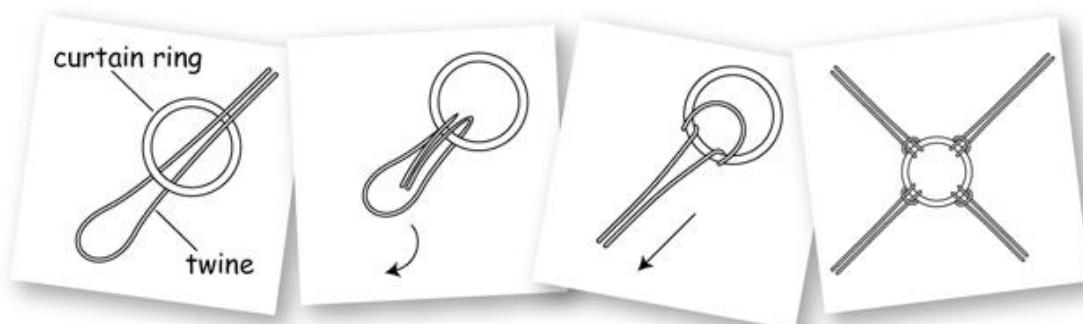
Initially you may want to give a 'stone' per child, but to make things more challenging, reduce the number of 'stones'. Challenge further by giving the children items to carry across with them. 'Stones' may not be thrown or slid back to the rest of the group (safety) as there may be a danger of losing them hindering the group in crossing the 'crocodile infested waters'.

Bull ring

The challenge is to carry a small ball using a metal ring and twine across an area or around a series of obstacles and place the ball onto a goal area.

Equipment

The Bull Ring is made from a 1½inch diameter metal ring, available at most hardware shops, and several pieces of string or twine. You'll also need a tennis or larger ball.



Variations

This activity can be made more difficult by transporting the ball around objects such as trees, tables, chairs and fences. Gentle slopes, stairways and narrow doorways also provide additional challenges. Heavier and larger balls are more difficult to transport and harder to keep on the metal ring. You can accommodate more participants, and include the additional element of trust building by blindfolding the participant holding the string and assigning a sighted person to assist them while moving. If you have fewer participants than strings, just allow participants to hold more than one string.

Cooperative 'Jigsaw' Relay

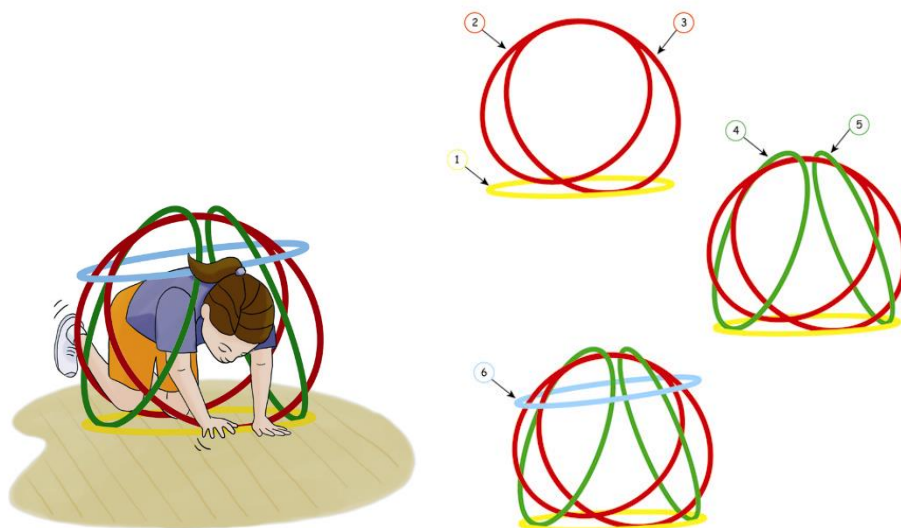
Children form teams of 4. Team leader collects a jigsaw and places pieces under four cones placed in a line in front of each team. Each child runs in turn (if space allows all can run together) and collects pieces from under a cone. The team sits behind the start line having collected the jigsaw pieces and makes the jigsaw.

Cooperative 'Symbol' Relay

Orienteering symbols and matching words are used for this relay. Children form teams of 4. Team leader places 4 symbols and 4 words under four cones placed in a line in front of each team. Each child runs in turn (if space allows all can run together) and collects symbols and words from under a cone. The team sits behind the start line having collected the symbols and words. They try to match each symbol to a word. [Sample symbols/words: Start, finish, railway, hill, cave, open land, steps, picnic tables, clearing, bench, etc]

[Note: the matching symbols and cards have to be held when collected so that the wind doesn't blow them away which adds challenge to the activity as the children work to match them!]

Hula huts



Ask children to explore and work out how to build a hula hut. There are a number of options. To begin, form groups of six, and give each team six hula hoops. One approach is to encourage the children to solve the building challenge without the pressure of competing against other groups. An alternative approach is to signal a shared starting time, each group works together to build their hula hut as quickly as possible. Once the hut is completed, each team must

successfully get all team members through one side of the hut and out the other without knocking it down. If the hut is knocked down, they must quickly repair it and attempt again to get everyone through the hut. The first team to complete this wins! Remember that everyone must go through the hut although there may be occasions when groups are challenged to nominate just one child who crawls through the hut although all will have built the hut.

A possible approach to building is outlined below but the challenge should be presented to the children to work this out.

[To build one, place one hoop on the ground (the foundation). Place two hoops on the inside edge of the foundation, but on opposite sides of each other. Lean them together at 45-degree angles. Place two more hoops on the inside edge of the foundation, but on opposite sides of the other two hoops. Again, lean them together at 45-degree angles over the first two hoops. The sixth hoop, which is the roof, is placed on top to hold the walls in place].

Variations: Add difficulty by having a few students in each group wear eyeshades. Teams must now use lots of verbal communication (no touching!) to get their teammates through the hula hut.