

Games

You In The Box- Have kids take turns putting interlocking mats together to put one child in a box while the other works to make it fun. As they are putting the box together, tell them that you will pretend you don't know where the child in the box could have gone- "Where's Sean?" And then sometime, we don't know when, Sean will burst out of the box and we will all scream in surprise. This is exciting for kids and then you reverse roles, this teaches willing suspension of disbelief that is required for pretend play and taking turns at working to make it fun for your friend.

Red Light, Green Light- listening and following directions from peers, introduce off colors like purple for fun to try and "trick" players into false starts.

Happy Means Yes, Sad Means No- Can be adult and child or two children. The coach hides a prize within a small, defined area. The finder enters and is instructed to watch the coaches eyes and face. The coach looks at where the object is hidden and smiles when the child is "warmer," frowns when "colder," or moving away.

Monster- take turns being the monster. Creep around and make horrible yells or growls when you see someone else. They scream and shriek in mock terror, running away. Add several masks you can change out for surprises. This can be fun with a tent, the monster can be in or out of the tent and roaming around the windows or opening, peering in with the monster face mask.

Mother May I- take turns being the mother, or father, add a twist to this traditional game- the mother or father smiles when they can go, and frowns when they stop. Teaches appropriate use and attention to affect.

Parachute- Use a blanket or tablecloth, put a soft object in the middle, and have each person grab a corner or side, count to 3 and pull back to make the object- ball or stuffed animal, fly in the air. This teaches working together and coordinating action for fun and excitement

Architect-Builder- the architect, without words, shows the builder which blocks to put where. The architect may not touch the blocks. The builder moves the blocks and watches the architect. Build it up high, then count to three and knock it down. A variation is just to build blocks up together and take turns knocking them down. Teaches how to use and watch for nonverbal indicators, share control, follow instructions from peers.

Bubble Pop- Take turns blowing bubbles while the partner(s) see how many they can pop

More Games!

Monster-Monster- two or more kids huddle in a designated spot 20ft from a tree or bush or chair the child who is “it” can hide behind. The huddled children say in unison “monster, monster, don’t come get us!” This cues the “monster” to come running and growling to eat the huddled “victims,” who shriek and say “monster, monster, go back to your mountain.” This makes the monster have to go back and hide until summoned again, then he tries to be scary and run and grab away a child to take back to his mountain before they can tell him to go back to his mountain. This game is especially exciting, teaches that not all language can be taken literally, and to distinguish between mock threatening pretend behavior that is just for fun and when someone is really mad. It also creates a strong sense or bond of togetherness for the children being “attacked.” Give everyone a chance to be the monster, including the adult. Be ready the kids will improvise and a monster may ignore a command and attempt to steal a child anyway, which is unexpected and surprising but fun and promotes spontaneity and flexibility.

Crash Cars- sit the children or child and adult very close and give them balls or cars. Show them how to move their cars or balls towards one another on each count of 1-2-3, releasing on 3 to try and make them collide. Add variation and challenge by adding new objects and increasing their distance. This helps them watch each other, synchronize movement, and share excitement.

Category Tag- One person is “it” and picks an item for the others to guess. He gives a clue by naming the category of the object- a car, clothing item, kind of food, etc. The other children face “it” with their backs to something like a small building they can run around. When someone guesses right, “it” says yes, and everybody runs like crazy around the building. It’s really fun when players go in opposite directions and surprise each other as they pass on the backside of the building, this makes them yell and laugh. The first person back to touch the wall where they started is the next “it.” This helps kids think about categories and big picture not just details, gets them willing to make guesses when they don’t know the right answer and tolerate being wrong, helps them think about others thinking by picking items that are not too obscure to guess but not too easy, either. You can coach them to offer clues or ask for them, and ask them what is happening when the other kids start to look frustrated, so they can read the nonverbal cues and adjust by offering clues before the other kids give up and disengage.

Pie tag- Make bases like a baseball diamond. Have a spot designated for “it” to stand where they can’t hear the others whispering. Those not it each pick a kind of pie, and whisper it to the others without “it” hearing. It then begins naming kinds of pie and when they get one right, the child who picked that flavor runs like crazy around the bases, with “it” in hot pursuit. If caught you have a new it, if not, it keeps trying with the others remaining. Ask the kids why they think they are supposed to whisper their pie flavor to the others, see if they can guess the cheating prevention and if they can guess about and maintain the right volume of whisper so “it” can’t hear.

Hide 'n' Seek- reinforces thinking about others when you can't see them, knowing you need to be quiet and wait to go hide until the "it" covers their eyes, exciting build of anticipation.

All these games require and encourage thinking about your play partner(s), looking at them, watching their face for expression and where the eyes are looking, synchronizing your activity with someone else, fast action and multiple simultaneous levels of attention, and having fun being successful at play with others. Chase and peekaboo variations can be fun with younger children, as well as sensory play with turn-taking.

