

Bag of Tricks for Counselors of Young Children

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Creating a backpack with some or all of the following items and a printed list of games can support your counselors in engaging children during transitions or other unstructured times of day.

Balloons

- Keep it up: Everyone works to keep one, or more, balloons from hitting the ground. Count how many “taps” before it falls.
- Keep it up – no hands version!: Same game, but no hands.
- Name game: One child throws a balloon up into the air and says a child’s name. That child has to try to catch the balloon (and say ‘Thank you, (child’s name)’).
- Foot pass: Sit in circle and try to pass a balloon using feet.

Bean Bags

- How long can you walk around with a beanbag balanced on your head (or shoulder or other parts)?
- How far can you throw a bean bag?
- Can you hit the (tree, chair, counselor) with the bean bag?

Blindfold

- Name game: One child is blindfolded in middle of circle. Another child says “Hi, _____”. Blindfolded child guesses who is speaking.
- Pin (tape) the *something* on the *something* (like pin the tail on the donkey, but not....)

Bubbles

- free play bubble-blowing
- catch or pop the bubbles blown by counselor

Hand lenses

- model examining a flower or leaf. Free explore nature (or anything else!)
- find something interesting through the lens and show it to your partner. Switch!

Markers (washable)

- color scavenger hunt – hold up one marker or give each child their own – find something that color
- impromptu drawing session
- draw a dot on each child’s forehead (others can see it, child cannot see their own.) Find everyone with the same color!

Masking/Painters Tape

- make nature bracelets – sticky side out and have children collect small things to attach
- make impromptu sculptures with natural materials
- part of game 'Pin (tape) the *something* on the *something*'

Picture books

- any time can be story time!

Sheet

- Everyone closes eyes. Cover one child with sheet. Open eyes: Everyone guesses who is underneath.
- Make a shelter in the woods or an indoor fort w/furniture and sit underneath for snack or story
- Everyone holds on to edge of sheet and flaps their arms up and down to make waves (like a parachute)
- Place a balloon, small ball or stuffie on the sheet and bounce it around without letting it fall to the ground. See if you can get to 10, 20 or 100 bounces. Count aloud.

Sidewalk Chalk

- Hopscotch or “walk on this line, curve, circle.....etc)
- Impromptu drawing session on pavement

Small plastic animals

- What's on My “Butt”?: Lie down on your belly. Have a child place an animal on your butt or back. You guess what it is Twenty Questions-style. Repeat.
- Make animal sounds: Hold up an animal. The whole group acts out that animal with motions and/or sounds. Give children turns to pick the animal.
- Guess my animal: Child chooses animal out of bag (secretly). Acts out or gives clues for other to guess.
- Camouflage: You, or the children, hide the animals in an outdoor area. Everyone tries to find the animals.

Nothing (classic fun games that require no props at all)

- Simon Says
- I spy
- Red Light/Green Light
- Telephone
- Freeze dance
- Songs with motions (hokey pokey, green grass grows all around, aroostasha, boom chicka boom, head shoulders knees and toes, if you're happy and you know it)
- Lie on back and stare at the clouds