

Co-operative Games



Item Code FS170016 June/08 Edition no 1

0845 300 1818

What are co-operative games?

Co-operative games are those in which there are no winners or losers. All work together.

The addition of co-operative games to the programme does not mean dropping competitive games. Competitive games can be great fun and a challenge to those who wish to play against opponents of a similar standard. However, co-operative games do provide relief from competition, and a chance for the less able to participate on equal terms. Co-operative games can also be used when there is a problem of aggression or too great a competitive spirit.

The challenge of co-operative games is purely personal, so that people of all ages, sizes, and abilities can be included. There are no firm rules other than the Leader's or Group's discipline for safety. Everyone helps everyone else. Any solution is acceptable if the whole group is involved. One's fellows are more important than the outcome of the game. For these reasons, those with special needs can easily be included, and part of the fun is finding a way to include everyone. Games can be played with or without equipment and include from two to hundreds. They can be quiet and thoughtful, physical and strenuous, or otherwise.

How to start

Most Leaders have discovered the problems of knock-out games. Co-operative game players prefer a system of transferring ends or functions, or having two different games running simultaneously. Those knocked out move from one game to the other. Full co-operation, particularly in games, may not be familiar to the young people in the Packs, Troops, and Units. Beaver Scouts, however, will have played in this way.

It is better not to introduce too many games at once but one or two different styles occasionally

over a number of meetings. The Patrol Leaders' Council or Sixers' Meeting may well offer improved ideas. Games might be introduced deliberately and with explanation as part of the preparation to receive a child with special needs.

A challenge could be offered to produce a board game on the training programme, offering an element of choice reflecting that which is available through the training Sections. For the Leader the best way to learn new games is to play them.

Games around a parachute form a special attraction which might be used at an event. A self-supporting circle, perhaps previously advertised, would also be an attraction. The self-supporting circle starts as a circle with everyone behind each other at bent arm's distance apart. On the word from a Leader, everyone sits on the knees of the person behind and stays there until told to stand up again.

Board games

Snakes and ladders is a good example, where each takes a turn to throw the dice as usual. However, all move the same counter and share the thrills and spills. Large plastic sheets with this and other games on can be bought for about £10. These can be played by bigger groups, or those with restricted movement or vision, on the floor. Most board games can be adapted to be co-operative, but don't discard the extra counters, as lessons can also be learned from competitive games in a competitive society.

Partner games

These usually involve physical contact and trust in one's partner. Such games include making arches and leaning further and further forward supporting each other by the hands, palms together.

Inuit rocking game Face a partner, sit knees bent on the partner's toes and vice versa, then

rock backwards and forwards. This has a see-saw effect. The height reached depends both on strength and trust in each other.

Back-to-back Sit back to back, link elbows and stand up. If a couple have difficulty, they can be encouraged or helped by others. This game can be played in fours, sixes and eights.

Dodgem cars One member of each pair is blindfolded. They are guided round the room by means of pressure exerted on the shoulders by their partner who is standing behind them.

Tennis If tennis players of different standards are playing, rather than scoring in the conventional manner, they count the number of times the ball passes over the net. The better player gains experience at placing shots for the less able, while the less able player gains confidence in returning shots. If these are inaccurate, so much the better for the other player.

Group games

The human knot The group forms a circle and hold hands. Then by twisting and ducking under each other's arms or climbing over them, without letting go hands, they form a knot. Then they stop and untangle the knot to get back into a circle. It is not fast moving, the participants direct one another, and if anyone has problems moving an arm, the group can decide how to cope. They may hold on to the person, tie a scarf round their waist and hold on to that, or another member may hold an arm behind their back to even things out. If this is done, the end result will be a line. Eight to twelve is the best number for this, but again, others who have unknotted more quickly can make suggestions to help.

Musical chairs is another such co-operative game. Although chairs are taken away while music is playing or singing is in progress, no-one is out. At a pre-given word the music stops and the participants perch on someone else. Unless the chairs are particularly sturdy, cushions on the floor or sheets of newspaper might prove safer.

A human pyramid is also a co-operative game.

Note:

These games may provide a basis for looking at other cultures as many are derived from the Inuit people of Arctic North America and Lapland, and from Borneo and the Far East.

Gathering coconuts In Borneo gathering coconuts is played, in small teams of three or four.

Each team has one less coconut than the number of players and the game is to gather coconuts from other peoples' stores, so that you have one each on the home base. This is not particularly co-operative except that, when everyone is tired, they share the coconuts.

Team games

Conventional team games can be played but in such a way that no team has an advantage over the other. For instance, each time a player touches the ball, the player changes sides and/or each member of the team must touch the ball before it is passed to the other side. This is easiest in volleyball. Games can be devised where the whole team have to work together, such as blanket ball, where a large beach ball is passed over a net by means of tossing it from a blanket. Both teams score each time the ball passes over the net and the idea is to improve upon the score.

More Games

Jigsaws

Equipment Commercial jigsaws, cut cards, or mounted pictures (from magazines, calendars, etc.)

There should be 2-12 pieces depending both upon the ability of the group and the programme of activity to be followed once the grouping has taken place.

The jigsaws might be sheets of a single colour, pictures from magazines, which might be recognised and discussed, or maps or clue sheets which have to be used when fitted together.

When several puzzles are used, decide whether it is necessary to have clearly distinguishable puzzles.

One puzzle might be made by the group to offer a group achievement. However, this is usually played to divide a large group into sub-groups or mix existing groups. The pieces are given out at random or scattered and picked up, one for each player. The jigsaws are then formed.

If the players already know one another, the next activity can be started straight away. If not, introductions should be made. However, if most of the players are strangers to one another, the game can be continued thus: Players move around the room and, as they pass another

player, exchange their puzzle pieces and give their names, perhaps shaking hands. After a short time music can be introduced. When the music stops, puzzles are made up by a different group of people.

This also offers a different start to a parents' evening or joint Scout-Guide party.

Circle of friends

In this game you literally fall into the hands of your friends, who prevent you from hitting the floor. About 8 children kneel down (or stand) and form a tight circle, shoulder to shoulder. One person stands in the middle of the circle, stiffens the body and falls in any direction. The person in the middle keeps arms at the sides and should not move the feet. This game helps develop trust, as the people forming the circle learn to work together to catch the middle person in their hands and gently shove in another direction. Children take turns in the middle. As proficiency increases it is possible to enlarge the circle a bit giving more room to fall.

Dragon's Tail

Equipment Strips of material (optional).

This game is played by 4-8 people who stand one behind the other, holding the waist of the person in front. The person at the front, the head, then tries either to grab the material tail (tucked into the waistband of the last in the line) or actually catch the tail player. Those in the middle can wriggle to help head or tail but must keep hold of the person in front.

When the tail has been caught, or at the end of a set time period, the head moves to the back of the line and becomes the tail and a new head takes that place.

Hot potato

The players sit down in a circle. A 'hot potato' (beanbag or ball) is passed around the circle from one person to the next until the potato-caller (who is outside the circle facing the other way) yells, 'Hot potato!' The person with the potato in his or her hands at this time joins a separate potato-callers circle and chooses a number (up to 20) to which the callers count softly together before yelling 'Hot Potato!' in unison. The game continues in this manner until the last person has switched to the potato-callers circle and all the others have had a chance to select a 'hot potato' number to count to. Both circles are 'in'. If so

desired the game can continue until everyone has switched back again.

Tug of peace

Equipment Rope or ropes of not less than 8 mm diameter.

Tie these to form a circle of the required size for the number of participants. They all stand around the outside of the rope, holding it loosely. On the instruction of a Leader, all pull on the rope and feel the tension. Now let go of the rope and sit down in a circle. Take up the rope and take the strain. On the word from the Leader, all stand up. Then try to sit down again slowly.

Musical bases

This is similar to musical chairs but pieces of paper or card, or cushions are used as bases.

As in the competitive game, music is played, and more and more bases are removed each time the music stops. In this game though, people have to team up together, sitting or standing on bases to keep everyone in the game. In the end, all who started the game are huddled on and around one base, as opposed to all standing on the sidelines with one winner on one chair.

Boxed games

The family pastime games have been imported from Canada. Try to adapt existing games or make up your own. Please share the results. Enjoy playing.

The examples given above are offered to suggest the scope of co-operative games. The details of many more are to be found in the Useful Publications listed at the end of this factsheet

Equipment

Ordinarily, the equipment for co-operative games is very simple (except for table top or parachute games). Pieces of material or scarves can be knotted to be passed or used as balls. Beanbags are useful for passing but can be heavy and awkward for throwing and catching in these sorts of games and in whacking games, a piece of foam rubber inserted into an old, clean sock, is very useful and a great deal of fun. Of course, where other equipment is available, games can be adapted or devised to utilise it.

Conclusion

Having read this factsheet you may have discovered that you are already practising the principles of co-operation and wish to develop them. If the subject is new, you may have gone beyond the unease some people express, and discovered that almost any game can be played cooperatively, also that little equipment is required. We in Scouting were among the first to see the value of co-operative games in the training of young people. This example shows how we aim to keep ahead with new ideas, and are prepared to experiment. This should appeal to parents, especially if they are thinking of getting into a Scout Group.

Useful publications

The Youth Games Book by Alan Dearling and Howard Armstrong, IT Resources Centre, Quarries Road, Bridge of Weir, Renfrewshire, PA1 1 3SA ISBN 1852020083

Global Teacher, Global Learner by Graham Pike and David Selby, published by Hodder and Stoughton ISBN 034040261X

The new youth games book by Alan Deading and Howard Armstrong. ISBN 1898924007

Co-operative Games by Terry Watson published by Printforce ISBN 0948834617