

# OUTDOOR GAMES



Playing – both free play and organised play – has long been recognised as a very important part of child development.

Play promotes health, and both physical and mental well-being.

Playing is fun, but children also learn from it – they discover new things and make friends, and often make decisions by themselves and with other children.

They discuss rules and participation, and learn to solve problems; they also develop their communication and leadership or management skills.

In school, playtime often allows children to mix and to work with children younger or older than themselves, and to teach or pass on skills and to learn new ones.

At home, play can be solitary, but it also affords parents and carers an opportunity to relax and enjoy time with their children.



## EXPLORING GAMES WITH YOUR CLASS

### LEARNING GAMES FROM OLDER GENERATIONS

By telling children about games played 'in the olden days' or 'when we were young', and by teaching them those games, parents, grandparents and older family members help children to appreciate and understand not only important family history, but also social history.

Within the Local Studies strand of the History curriculum for fifth and sixth, the strand unit suggests 'Games and pastimes in the past' and states that the child studying this unit 'should be enabled to explore aspects of the leisure interests and games of local people in the past' (see Curriculum Links in Teacher Information in this pack).

- Children might study the games and/or the history of the games currently played in the locality and explore any that are peculiar to their area.
- They might compile, after a class 'thought-shower' to elicit as many games as possible, separate lists of those games played by their parents, by their grandparents and by themselves.
- Children might (almost certainly would!) discover that there is a decline in the number and variety of outdoor games played by them compared with those played two or three generations ago, and might speculate on possible causes for this decline (dangers of playing unsupervised outside, children taught to stay away from strangers and from roads and housing estates with heavy traffic, televisions much more common nowadays and even found in children's bedrooms, computer games, Wii etc).
- When they know more about the active outdoor games played by previous generations, they might also reflect on the possible future effects on their health and well-being because of the more sedentary lifestyle of twenty-first-century children.
- Separate lists could be made of indoor and outdoor games, and ultimately the whole school could hold two 'Play for All' days (one for indoor games and a second for outdoor games) with a station or stop for each game. The stations or stops could be organised and managed by the senior children, who would teach the rules of their chosen game and help the groups to play it, before sending them on to the next station, where they will again be helped and motivated by other senior children.

### PLAY IN ART

The artist Pieter Bruegel (sometimes spelled Brueghel) is known as 'Pieter the Elder' because he had two sons, also famous artists, one of whom was also called Pieter. He painted many pictures in which he depicted sixteenth-century village life – meals, festivals, dances, games and, of course, children's games.

By visiting the website of the University of Waterloo, [www.gamesmuseum.uwaterloo.ca/VirtualExhibits/Brueghel/index.html](http://www.gamesmuseum.uwaterloo.ca/VirtualExhibits/Brueghel/index.html) or [www.tinyurl.com/6fw29m](http://www.tinyurl.com/6fw29m) you can see one of Brueghel's most famous paintings, 'Young Folk At Play' (Children's Games) and possibly recognise versions of some of the games shown (eg blowing bubbles, rolling a hoop), though the painting is of European children playing in Belgian streets in the 1500s.

This web page allows the visitor to enlarge the images and, by placing the cursor over many of the 200 children shown playing in the painting, to read information about the particular game. Twenty of the eighty children's games depicted in the painting are individually discussed and illustrated.

### OTHER FORMS OF PLAYING

The verb 'play' is also used when people are making music using instruments – we 'play' musical instruments just as we play games and sports. The paintings 'The Banjo Lesson' (1893) by Henry Ossawa Tanner (see [www.artchive.com/artchive/T/tanner/banjo\\_lesson.jpg.html](http://www.artchive.com/artchive/T/tanner/banjo_lesson.jpg.html)) and 'Ring Around the Rosie' (1910-1915) by Edward Henry Potthast ([www.bridgeman.co.uk/search/view\\_image2.asp?image\\_id=151629](http://www.bridgeman.co.uk/search/view_image2.asp?image_id=151629)) could be examined and discussed with the class as could other images of children playing instruments or playing with toys, eg 'The Hobby Horse' (c1840) now in the National Gallery of Art in Washington. These and other images of leisure activities can be looked at and responded to in the full-colour *Children: A First Art Book* by Lucy Micklethwait (see Relevant and Related Books in this pack).

Walter Osborne (1859-1903) painted a scene 'The Doll's School', a watercolour which focuses on the intimate world of children at play, and which the children can enlarge and view by visiting the website of the National Gallery of Ireland [www.nationalgallery.ie](http://www.nationalgallery.ie) and going to the gallery online shop link in the main menu.



# TEAM SPIRIT

In 'Team Spirit' we see Abbi and her friends playing a game of football. They are wearing football kits, have nets and even floodlights; their team has a coach and we see a referee (though he clearly could pay more attention to the match!). We also see Sadiq's family playing with a football in their village, but this is not an organised game and these children clearly lack some or all of the facilities available to Abbi and her friends in Ireland.

Many children all over the world not only lack the facilities, toys and equipment that would enable them to play like Abbi and her friends do, but they never experience the opportunity to play because they are forced to work from a very early age. Sometimes this work is done with the family and contributes to the family income, just as Irish children in the recent past would often have helped on family farms when such help was really necessary – and often classrooms would be empty or nearly empty as children left to help their families with harvesting potatoes or saving the hay. (See Children Working and Child Labour in this pack)

## CO-OPERATIVE GAMES

These are games where there are no winners and no losers, sometimes called non-competitive games. The children who were involved in the writing and production of *Fair and Square* (see Relevant and Related Books in this pack) point out that 'small children can be very competitive and cry if they don't win.' Rhymes and games that will enable children to pick sides or team-players without prejudice are suggested and explained in *What Will We Do Next?* Children often find it easier to accept that teams are picked by the rules of these games for 'picking sides'.

- Can the children think of, and play, other co-operative games?

## PLAYGROUND GAMES TO TRY

### 1 **Duck, duck, drake** (also known as **Duck, duck, goose**)

Children sit in circle, except for one child who is 'on'. That child walks around the outside of the circle, tapping each sitting child on the shoulder and saying 'duck'. The child tapped with the word 'drake' chases the tapper around the circle as (s)he tries to get back to the space where 'drake' had been sitting without

being caught. If (s)he succeeds, then that 'drake' is now 'on'. If not, the game continues.

### 2 **Land, Sea, Air**

### 3 **Dodgeball**

Instructions on how to play the above games, along with safety tips and materials/resources needed, are in *Fair and Square*.

- Ask the children to think of and play other popular playground games (suggestions below) and/or to write clear and detailed instructions on how to prepare for and play the games, reminding them that rules for safe play must be made clear.
- 4 **Noughts and Crosses** – nine squares chalked on yard. Best played with eight children, two teams of four. Toss a coin to decide which team goes first. If it's the noughts team, one child from that team stands in any square. Then a child from the crosses stands in a square. Children try to get a line of three consecutive noughts or crosses.
- 5 **Hopscotch** / 6 **Kick the can** / 7 **Statues**
- 8 **Playing conkers** (string through hole bored in chestnut, each person tries to smash opponent's conker by hitting it with theirs).

The children could be encouraged to experiment with some of these and other outdoor games.

## SPORTS DAY

Children might enjoy: sack races / three-legged race / blindfold chases / egg-and-spoon races / tug-of-war / greasy pole.

## STREET GAMES TO LEARN AND PLAY

Street games were invented because city children didn't have the open spaces available to their country cousins. These games were played on paved streets, up against the kerbs or pavements, and many can be played with a small rubber ball, bouncing it on the ground or against a low garden or other wall, or on the gable wall of a house.

Rhymes are often used to keep count as the ball is bounced or thrown. The game Kerbs was played with one such small ball – you scored if you could hit the opposite kerb and make the ball bounce back to you.





# TEAM SPIRIT

## OUTDOOR GAMES

### SOME RHYMES TO LEARN

There are many variations on the rhymes used in these games, varying from locality to locality. Children might check the words with their parents or grandparents, who may also be able to explain the games that go with the rhymes. Often, words ignore or confuse complexities such as political, gender, class issues.

Slightly different versions of the street games below, with others, appear, with instructions on how to play them, in *What Will We Do Next?* (see Relevant and Related Children's Books in this pack).

Teachers might also like to learn about more street games and songs from

[www.playinireland.ie/playdayo6/street.pdf](http://www.playinireland.ie/playdayo6/street.pdf)

1 *Relivio*

Relivio – who has the ball?  
Is she big or is she small  
Is she fat or is she thin  
does she look like a rolling pin?

2 In and out go saucy bluebells  
In and out go saucy bluebells  
In and out go saucy bluebells  
Sé Sé the master.

Tapper-apper-apper on the shoulder  
Tapper-apper-apper on the shoulder  
Tapper-apper-apper on the shoulder  
Sé Sé the master.

These rhymes occur with many variations throughout the country. Here's the Cork version of the above, and it's played as a game with all children in a ring holding hands, and raising them into a looped circle. A loose player runs in and out under the arms of the others until the chorus is reached, when she/he taps on the shoulders of the person at whom they've stopped. That person then chases the loose player, who tries to occupy their spot in the circle.

In and out goes Darky Bluebells  
In and out goes Darky Bluebells  
In and out goes Darky Bluebells  
She'll be the master.

Tapper-apper-apper on her shoulders  
Tapper-apper-apper on her shoulders

Tapper-apper-apper on her shoulders  
She'll be the master.

Follow her to Londonderry  
Follow her to Londonderry  
Follow her to Londonderry  
She'll be the master.

- 3 Grandmother's Footsteps/ Giant steps
- 4 What's the time, Mr Wolf/Mr Fox?
- 5 Hokey cokey

### SKIPPING GAMES

- 1 Vote vote vote for DeValera  
In comes (name of child) through the door-i-o  
(name of child) is the one who will have a bit of fun  
So we don't want (name of different child)  
any more-i-o.

See a slightly different version of this game, along with other skipping games, in *What Will We Do Next?* (see Relevant and Related Books in this pack)

- 2 Using a 'rope' made of rubber bands or elastics looped together tightly to form a large band, children (mainly girls) stretched this 'rope' between two pairs of legs and made complicated jumping patterns to the rhyme:

England, Ireland  
Scotland, Wales  
Inside, outside  
On the rails.

This game is said to have come from China originally.

Teachers and children might like to learn more about Games around the world from [www.teachnet.ie/clane/2006/games.htm](http://www.teachnet.ie/clane/2006/games.htm)

