

Games List

10 Keys to a Great Kids Ministry Games

Nov 29th by Wayne Stocks -- PRINT PRINT -- EMAIL

Children's Ministry Games

Follow these tips for a better game time in your kids ministry

On Sunday mornings, I teach kids about the Gospel of Jesus of Christ. It is the highlight of my week without fail. It combined two things that I am very passionate about – kids and the Gospel. On Wednesday nights, though, my role is a little bit different.

On Wednesday nights, I am the “Game Guy” for our Awana program. We have something like 300 kids every Wednesday from age three all the way up through sixth grade. I don’t keep exact numbers, but I get them in three groups – 1) T&T Boys (3rd – 6th grade), 2) T&T Girls (3rd – 6th grade) and 3) Sparks (Kindergarten – 2nd grade). Puggles (aged 2) and Cubbies (aged 3 & 4) have their own self-contained programs, so I don’t get to see them, but I lead 3 separate 30 minutes long game times for the older kids in groups probably ranging from about 50-75 (maybe a little larger).

Anyhow, over the course of the last year or so, I’ve picked up on a few things that you need to know if you are leading games (especially in a large group setting), and I thought I would share them with you.

1. Don’t “Wing It”

Have a plan. Think about what games you want to play and what you need to play those games. Just because it’s game time doesn’t mean that YOU shouldn’t take your responsibility seriously.

2. Know the rules and explain them clearly.

Make sure that you know exactly how the game is played and that you have given some thought to how you are going to explain it to kids. Your explanation should be as quick as possible and should convey ALL of the rules of the game. Do not assume that they know, or remember, how to play even if you just played the game last week. My own personal policy is that I will not explain the rules until everyone has stopped talking. First, this is a principal they would do well to learn. More importantly, it is the kids who are talking who will ask 47 questions about what you just explained if you try to talk over them. Finally, have someone demonstrate the game as you are explaining the rules. This will help with the visual learners in your group.

3. Exude Confidence and Excitement

Whether you think the game will succeed or flop, your demeanor should be one of confidence in the game and excitement about the chance to let the kids play it. There is truth to the old adage that

excitement is contagious. Do not mutter or whisper. Speak up. Have fun. Enjoy the time, and the kids are likely to follow your lead.

4. You Can Not Make Everyone Happy All the Time

This was a real eye opener for me. Once I accepted this fact, it made Game Time more fun for me and for the kids. There will always be some kids who do not like the game you are playing, and most of the time, these are the most vocal kids in the group. Kids will invariably complain that they were wronged or someone else cheated. Make it clear ahead of time that the leaders' word go. If a leader says you're out, you're out. If a leader says team A won, they won no matter what the kids on team B think they saw.

5. It's Not OK to Ignore a Kid, but it OK to ignore their Suggestions and Complaints

Never ever ignore a child. Our role in working with kids, even if we're "just" running games, is the shine the light of Jesus into that child's life. We can't do that by ignoring them. However, there is nothing that says once you've listened to them that you have to accept all of their suggestions and complaints. Be open to them, their feedback is as valid as anyone else's, but evaluate things for yourself. Don't scrap a game because a handful of kids think it's childish and don't play the same game every week because it's the favorite of a handful of the kids. You are there to be the games leader – so lead.

6. Stick to the Rules

You should know the rules and the game beforehand and explain them to the kids. If you need to make some slight adjustments for fairness sake or because something isn't working, feel free to do that. However, generally you should stick to the rules as you originally outlined them. This is less confusing for you and for the kids!

7. Make the Boys Run

Boys have energy. Boys have lots and lots and lots of energy. Running is a great way to work off some of that energy. I start out most game times these days by having the boys run a little bit. If the game is not that physically active I have them run a little bit more than usual. If they're huffing and puffing, it's harder for them to talk while I'm trying to explain the rules too.

8. Have a Backup Plan

Sometimes that game that looks so awesome on paper fizzles out when you start to play it with the kids. You should always have a backup plan. What game are you going to do if the your original plan falls through? If you were going outside to play and it rains, what will you do inside? The kids may never know that you have a backup plan, but they will know if need one and don't have it.

9. Don't Take It Too Seriously

It's games! Don't lose sight of that. Games are meant to be fun. Game time, especially in a church setting, should be about building relationships. Don't take games so seriously, or your position of games director so seriously, that you lose sight of having fun.

10. Play With Them When Possible

Ministry is all about relationships and games are no different. When you can, and when it is appropriate, play with the kids. Join one of the teams and become an active participant in the game. It will take your relationship with the kids to a new level

I. Game List

A. Children's Ministry Encouragement Game

Have the children sit in a circle on the floor.

Use an object to designate which kid has a turn to speak – like a ball.

Model the game by sitting in the circle with the children.

Have them complete this sentence and then pass the object to the child they were talking about — “You are really good at _____ and I can imagine God using you to _____.”

The child who receives the object will go next. Instruct them to not repeat until everyone has had a turn. It creates a little surprise to see who they are talking about. You may need to redirect the comments if they become redundant or negative.

Example: “You are really good with babies and I can imagine God using you to be a good Mom.” Then hand the object to Sara.

Example: “You are really good at talking and I can imagine God using you to be a teacher.

Look for teaching opportunities. Play the game along with the kids. You might get encouraged yourself.

This game will work for Sunday school, Vacation Bible School, Children's Church, or anywhere you need a solid teaching game. Let me know if you find it helpful.

B) Huckle Buckle Beanstalk

Age group: 4-12

How to play: The counselor will hide an object away from the group and in a minute send the group looking for it. Each camper will try to find the object without letting the rest of the group know where it is. When someone finds the object, he or she may walk away from it, sit down, and say, "Huckle Buckle Beanstalk." The other players are not told where it is hidden. Instead, they must find it. When each does, each should say, "Huckle Buckle Beanstalk."

C) Zip, Zap, Zop

Age group: 4-12

All players stand in a circle. One person starts the game by clapping his/her hands together and pushing them towards another person while saying "Zip." Then, the player who was zipped repeats the motion while saying "Zap." Then, the player who was zapped repeats the motion while saying "Zop." The pattern repeats over and over until someone messes up. The person who makes the mistake can be out for only one round or can be out for the entire game.

D) Smaug's Jewels

Age group: 4-12

One player is Smaug who stands in the center of the circle, protecting but not touching the "jewels" (these could be a scarf or any suitable object). The other players kneel in the circle around Smaug. The object of this game is for the others to grab the jewels without being tagged by Smaug; if a camper is tagged, he or she becomes frozen. The strategy varies; it is up to the group to work out a way to capture the jewels. The player who is successful in capturing the hoard becomes the next Smaug. In a variation, there are two circles, with two Smaugs and two caches of jewels. When someone is frozen, he or she simply joins the other circle.

E) Around the Ball

Age group: 4-12

How to play: Divide the group into two teams and pick one camper in each circle to start with the ball. When the signal is given, the ball is passed around the circle as fast as possible. The distance between the players should be determined according to the throwing and catching skills of the players- the better they are, the further apart they sit.

The team must count aloud how many times the ball has gone around the circle. The first team to pass it around five times wins.

This is a good game to play over many weeks. It can be an ongoing competition.

F) Sardines

Age group: 4-12

How to play: Divide the group among the counselors; you should have at least three groups of children. This game is similar to hide and seek, but an entire group of kids hides together, while the other groups search for the first. As each group finds the first group, it should hide quietly with that group, until all the groups have found them. The first group to find those who hid first wins and will get to hide in the next round. Pick a large enough area to hide so that all the kids can fit easily.

G) Clapping Clues

Age group: 4-12

Before the campers begin to play this game, a counselor can demonstrate in a dramatically funny way, pretending to have great difficulty.

One camper is selected to go away from the group. The rest of the campers pick an object for the first camper to find. That camper returns to try to find the object. The group claps softly as the camper moves around looking for the object. As the camper gets closer to the object, the clapping becomes louder. If the camper moves away from the object, the clapping becomes quiet and soft. When the object is finally found, the camper gets a standing ovation. Another camper is selected to be next.

Variations:

Have a small object to hide which the camper sees before it is hidden.

Several campers may go together and look as a group.

H) Octopus Tag

Age group: 4-12

How to play: This game is played just like tag, except that the playing field is an ocean and the person who is "it" is the octopus. The octopus gives the signal and the campers can run around, trying not to get tagged. But when someone is tagged, that person must freeze and become a tentacle, now on the octopus's side. He or she must not move from where he/she is standing, but can wave arms around, trying to help the octopus tag the other players.

By the end of the game, the room should be full of tentacles waving their arms, with only one person still free. That person is the winner.

* * A variation on this is blob tag. In this game, the counselor is the blob, rather than the octopus. When he or she tags a camper, the 2 people hold hands and try to catch other people, expanding the blob. When the chain of people starts to get very long, the counselor may break them into groups of 2 or 3.

I) Introduction Shuffle

Age group: 8-18

People typically sit with people they know. This activity allows people to know something about everyone. Announce to all those present that they are going to tell the person in the seat next to them something about themselves that the other person may not already know. They will have a total of five minutes to talk before the people closest to the aisle are going to move to another seat. All the people closest to the aisle will rotate clockwise and immediately introduce themselves and tell something about themselves. As the facilitator, feel free to participate. Also note that the time span for the conversations can be variable.

J) Pushpin Soccer

Age group: 8-18

Set up the room with rows of chairs (like on a bus). The group is divided into two teams which are seated in every other row. Each team has one goalie armed with a pin: one at the front of the room, the other at the back of the room. A number of balloons (two colors) are tossed into the playing area with each team trying to get as many balloons of its designated color as possible to its goalie to pop. At the same time, each team attempts to keep the other team's balloons from that team's goalie. A team wins when all of its colored balloons are popped by a goalie.

K. Minute To Win It Games for Kids (Time Filler Games)

Bucket Head: Catch three balls in a bucket on top of your head.

Defying Gravity: Keep two balloons in the air.

Breakfast Scramble: Assemble the front of a cereal box that has been cut into eight pieces.

Dizzy Mummy: Unroll a small roll of toilet paper with 360 degree spins of the arm. (You may need to unravel some first to make it an attainable task.)

Elephant March: Knock over bottles using a baseball bat hanging from panty hose worn on the head.

Tissue Toss: Using both hands, empty a tissue box.

Play it By Ear: Place five cans with varying quantities of pennies in the correct order. (With a sharpie, place the numbers on the bottom.)

Separation Anxiety: Separate a pile of 25 multicolored chocolate candies into five separate containers in a set color order.

Candelier: Stack four layers of cans, with paper plates in between.

Tweeze Me: Players use tweezers to relocate five Tic Tacs from one bowl to another.

NBC provides a list of Minute To Win It games on their website.

L. Human Web

For this game you separate the boys and girls into two groups (hopefully, they will end up being somewhat equal). Have each group hold hands, forming a circle, and then have them all walk forward until they are close together and the circle is small and tight. Drop hands. Now each kid should grab any two different hands except for those of his immediate neighbor. This will form a colossal mess! Next comes the fun part! This kids need to untangle themselves without letting go of any hands. They will have to step over arms, duck under, and work at it; but it is fun and challenging!

M. Mummy Game

This is a great youth ministry ice breaker. For this game you need two rolls of toilet paper and six volunteers (three boys and three girls). Select one boy and one girl to become the "mummies" and the remaining volunteers to be the "embalmers." At your prompt to "GO!" the embalmers will begin to quickly wrap the mummies with the entire roll of toilet paper. Encourage them to be careful not to tear the paper. The first team to finish the entire roll wins.

N. Knobby Knees

For this ice breaker you will need two quarters and two jars (like quart canning jars). Obtain one boy and one girl volunteer and have them attempt to drop the quarter into the jar positioned below them. The catch... they must hold the quarter between their knees.

O. Knobby Knees II

This is a relay ice breaker, and you will only need a balloon (previously blown up) for each team. Simply have them clamp the balloon between their knees, run/waddle to the finish line, and race back to tag

the next person on their team. First team finished wins. Warning: Use discernment if you have girls wearing tight, straight skirts!

P. Banana Breakfast

Warning: messy Game! You will need four of each of the following: bibs, blindfolds, and bananas. Select teams of two boys and two girls. Have one person from each team sit in a chair with their partner standing behind them. The person in the chair must don the bib, and the standing partner will wear the blindfold. When you say, "Go!" the blindfolded students must feed the bananas to their partners from behind. First ones to eat the whole banana wins. (It is expedient to use large bibs for this game!)

Q. Pickle Pucker

For this game you will need two dill pickle spears and two packets of lemon Kool Aid (not the kind with sugar added, just the little packet -- and it can be generic). Choose the most sour looking boy and girl to participate. It's very easy; all they have to do is dip their pickle into their Kool Aid and devour! Oh, but is this super sour!!! They must dip after each bite. First one finished wins.

R. Frisbee Leak (Great Outside Game)

For this game, you will need two frisbees and two glasses or bottles of water. Select four or six participants from each side -- boys and girls. Send half of each team to one side of the room and half to the other. The object is to walk across the room with a frisbee on your head and pass it off to the team member, back and forth until everyone has gone. The catch: the frisbee is full of water!
Alternate Idea, Put slime in the Frisbee!

S. T.P. Over and Under

For Game, you will need two rolls of toilet paper. Divide your group into two teams (or just select 10 children to play, if you want to keep it small and simple) and line them up, one in front of the other. Give the first person in each line a roll of t.p. and instruct them to loosely unroll some and carefully pass it under their legs/over their head/etc. alternating all the way to the end of the line and then back again.

T. Mount Bubble Gum

For this game, you will need canned whipped cream, paper plates, and individually wrapped bubble gum. You might also want to have on hand wet cloths or baby wipes... to clean up the mess (or large bibs, if you're more into prevention)! Select two or three kids to compete against one another. Each of them will be placed behind a table containing a nice, big mound of whipped cream with a piece of bubble gum hiding in the middle. They must locate their gum with their faces only (you might have to tie hands behind backs) and blow a bubble as quickly as possible. This is very challenging even once the gum is discovered because the wet, sugary cream makes the gum really soggy and goopy. Warning: One can of cream does not really contain much of a mountain; you'll probably need 2-3 cans. Also, make sure that the cream is refrigerated and shaken well; and see to it that you don't spray it until immediately before the game.

U. BALL/CHIN RELAY:

Place balls on the floor or table and have a relay race to see which team can retrieve all the balls by picking them up with their chins and placing them in a bowl or bucket. First team done wins. This is really fun if you use wet sponges, too.

V. BALLOON/PLUNGER RELAY:

Divide into two teams and give each child a clean toilet plunger (or each team two plungers). The object of the game is to pass balloons down the line using only the plungers (upside down). Team that moves the most balloons down their line in a given time wins. For more fun, use water balloons!

W. MUSCLE BEACH:

Make teams of four. Have each team choose a boy representative & ask them to put on the sweatshirt. The object is to make a muscle man by blowing up, tying & stuffing as many balloons into the shirt of the guy until he is as muscular as possible. Give them 2 minutes. Determine the winner by a panel of judges.

X. The M&M's Gauntlet

We had two or three teams (depending on the number of teams we had) line up on one side of the room. Each team was given a bowl, and a plastic spoon. On the other end of the auditorium, we placed several bowls of M&M's. The point of the game is for one team member to go from one end of the room to the other side, pick up one of the M&M's on their spoon (without using their hands) and walk back to the other end of the auditorium without dropping the M&M. Here's the catch! Standing on the sidelines are all the players from the teams not running the race. Their role is to throw sponges or balloons at the contestants to try to knock the M&M's off of their spoons. This is the gauntlet part of the game! If the player drops their M&M before they get back and place it in their team's bowl, they run back to the start line, and give another player on their team a chance to go retrieve an M&M. The first team to accumulate a predetermined number of M&M's wins the round.

Y. Relay Game

Supplies: Whatever you have available; We used hoola hoops, plastic cones, balls, & bubbles with wands
Directions: Leader spins each child 5 times. Each child must hoola hoop for 10 seconds, stand behind the cone line and shoot a ball into the bucket, blow five wands of bubbles, complete 10 jumping jacks, and then run back to the start line and tag the next team member.

Z. Fun Noodle Balloon Air Hockey

2 Teams, each team member has a fun noodle. The "net" is a row of chairs. The "Air puck" is a balloon. The game starts when you throw in a balloon. The goal of each team is to use their fun noodle, bent into a U shape, and each end held in their hands, they must "serve" the balloon back over the "net". Have a countdown till the end, whichever team has the balloon on their side at the end of the time loses.
**Alternate, throw in an extra balloon every 15 seconds, and the team with the LEAST amount of balloons on their side after the elapsed time wins. HIGHLY Active!

II. Memory Verse Games(Idea: Code Breakers)

A. SMS Memory Verse

Write the memory verse out on a piece of paper using only the numbers used to write the words in an sms message, ie. the numbers that correspond to the letters on the keypad. (Eg. "843 56733 = "the lord"). Obviously there will be a number of words that will correspond to a pattern of numbers but that's all part of the fun for the kids to work out the memory verse. They can use their mobile phones for this game to help them work it out, or you can "create" a cell phone layout for them. Split the group into however many teams needed and if there is a person on each team who has credit and is willing to spend it, then you could say whoever is first to text the memory verse to the leader's mobile wins. Otherwise the winner can be whoever is first to decode it and write it out correctly.

B. Mad Gab Memory Verse

This is a good game for introducing a new memory verse. Just like the card game 'Mad Gab' from Mattel©. It's a game of words and phrases, it's not what you say, it's what you hear. Say the words "Day Leo Fur Rings" a few times and you'll find you're saying. "daily offerings!", just sound it out. Write up the memory verse in Mad Gab style (eg. "Iron hot ash aimed off day goes bell" = I am not ashamed of the gospel). If it's a large memory verse split it into sections (ie. If there are 3 sections to the memory verse then make 3 rounds to the game, and when a team has solved the first section, give them the second, and so on til they solve the whole verse). Players work in teams and compete against each other to solve the memory verse first, and when they have solved it, run up to the white board and write it out in full.

C. Jigsaw Puzzle (from p. 75 Creative Christian Ideas by Ken Moser)

Write the memory verse on cardboard and then cut it up to form a jigsaw puzzle. Split everyone into groups and give one jigsaw puzzle to each group. The team that pieces the memory verse together first is the winner.

D. Whispers

Get everyone in a big circle (or into smaller circles if the group is too big, but the bigger the group the better for this game). Tell the memory verse to the first person in the group and then they have to pass it on to the next person by memory, and so on... At the end of the group, see who has the memory verse most accurate. This activity will work as an introductory memory verse activity as well.

E) Word for Word Relay

Form teams for a relay race where each team member has to run up to the whiteboard and write one word of the memory verse (in correct order) until the entire verse is written. If time permits can do multiple rounds with different instructions e.g. Hop/jump to the whiteboard.