

Games of the Past

(Games for the Listening to the Past Try-It)

Dodge Ball

Playing field: Generally an enclosed basketball or hockey rink. A hard surface is especially important since grass or dirt impedes gameplay.

Teams: Group is split into two teams, one opposite sides of the court.

Boundaries: Players cannot cross into other team's territory. Some courts allow for a "Neutral Zone" where players from both teams may use.

Tagging: If a player is hit with a dodgeball and fails to catch, he is out. On the contrary if he catches the ball, the other team's player is out.

Outline: When a player is ruled "out", he must walk to the side of court determined as the "Outline". The outline consists of all players who have been tagged out and they can return into gameplay once a member of their team catches an opponents ball.

Red light, green light

Red light, green light is a game played mostly by children. The "it" person stands at one end of the playing field, with the rest of the players at the other end. "It" turns their back to the others and calls out "Green light!" The players then run as fast as they can towards "it". At any time, "it" can face the players, calling out "Red light," and the others must freeze in place. If anyone fails to stop, they are out or must return to the starting line. Other variations include calling out "Yellow light" as a diversion, or where they must walk instead of run to "it". Calling Yellow Light has no consequence. The first player to reach the person who is "it" wins and becomes "it" for the next round.

Tic-tac-toe

Tic-tac-toe, also called noughts and crosses, hugs and kisses, and many other names, is a pen-and-paper game for two players, O and X, who take turns to mark the spaces in a 3×3 grid. The player who succeeds in placing three of their own marks in a horizontal, vertical or diagonal row wins the game. Players soon discover that best play leads to a draw, regardless of where the first player plays. Hence, tic-tac-toe is most often played by very young children.

A player can play perfect tic-tac-toe if they choose the move with the highest priority in the following table.

1. Win: complete three in a row.
2. Block: block their opponent from completing three in a row
3. Fork: threaten a win with two possible completions in two ways
4. Block Fork 1: if there is a configuration where the opponent can fork, create two in a row to force a block
5. Block Fork 2: if there is a configuration where the opponent can fork, block that fork
6. Centre: play the centre
7. Opposite Corner: if the opponent is in the corner, play the opposite corner
8. Empty Corner: play an empty corner
9. Empty Side: play on an empty side

The first player, whom we shall designate "X," has 3 possible positions to mark during the first turn. Superficially, it might seem that there are 9 possible positions, corresponding to the 9 squares in the grid. However, by rotating the board, we will find that in the first turn, every corner mark is strategically equivalent to every other corner mark. The same is true of every edge mark. For strategy purposes, there are therefore only three possible first marks: corner, edge, or center. Player X can win or force a draw from any of these starting marks, however playing the corner gives the opponent the smallest choice of squares which must be played to avoid losing.

The second player, whom we shall designate "O," must respond to X's opening mark in such a way as to avoid the forced win. Player O must always respond to a corner opening with a center mark, and to a center opening with a corner mark. An edge opening must be answered either with a center mark, a corner mark next to the X, or an edge mark opposite the X. Any other responses will allow X to force the win. Once the opening is completed, O's task is to follow the above list of priorities in order to force the draw, or else to gain a win if X makes a weak play.

Simon says

Simon says is a game for three or more players (most often children). One of the people is "it" – i.e., Simon. The others must do what Simon tells them to do when asked with a phrase beginning with "Simon says". If Simon says "Simon says jump.", the players must jump (players that do not jump are out). However, if Simon says simply "jump", *without* first saying "Simon says", players do not jump; those that do jump are out. In general, it is the spirit of the command, not the actions that matters; if Simon says "Simon says touch your toes.", players only have to show that they are *trying* to touch their toes. It is the ability to distinguish between valid and invalid commands, rather than physical ability, that matters here.

It is Simon's task to try to get everyone out as quickly as possible, and it is every one else's job to stay "in" for as long as possible. The last of Simon's followers to stay in wins (although the game is not always played all the way through).

It is considered cheating to give impossible commands ("Simon says 'lift your left leg'. Simon says 'lift your right leg'. Simon did *not* say 'put your left leg down!'") or phrase the commands in such a way that the other player has no option but to 'go out' ("Simon says 'jump up'. Come down."). However, at least in some versions, it is allowed for Simon to eliminate players by asking them to do something seemingly unrelated to the game (example: "Anyone remaining join me up here.")

Guess who I am (Aka: Twenty Questions)

One player is chosen to be the *answerer*. That person chooses a subject but does not reveal this to the others. All other players are *questioners*. They each take turns asking a question which can be answered with a simple "Yes" or "No." In variants of the game, multiple state answers may be included such as the answer "Maybe." The answerer

answers each question in turn. Sample questions could be: "Is it in this room?" or "Is it bigger than a breadbox?" Lying is not allowed, as it would ruin the game. If a questioner guesses the correct answer, that questioner wins and becomes the *answerer* for the next round. If 20 questions are asked without a correct guess, then the answerer has stumped the questioners and gets to be the answerer for another round.

The most popular variant is called "Animal, Vegetable, Mineral, Other". In this version, the *answerer* tells the *questioners* at the start of the game whether the subject is an animal, vegetable, mineral, or other. Other versions specify that the item to be guessed should be in a given category, such as actions, occupations, famous people, etc.

Kick the Can

Kick the can (a.k.a. "Tip the can") is a game, related to tag, hide and seek, and capture the flag which can be played outdoors by anywhere from three to a few dozen people (kids from about age 7 or older).

In general the game goes something like this: One person (possibly a team of people) is (are) designated as "it" and a can (paint can or metal pail (bucket)) or similar object is placed in the open (usually the middle of a backyard, a green, a cove or *cul de sac*, parking lot or **very** lightly traveled street). The other players run off and hide while the "it" covers his eyes and counts to a previously decided number.

"It" then tries to find and tag each of the players. Any player who is tagged (caught and touched) is sent to the holding pen (jail) which is simply a designated area for all the captured players to congregate, generally in plain sight of the can. Any player who has not been caught can "kick the can" (thus the name of the game). If they can kick the can without being caught then they set all of the captured players free. If "it" catches all of the players he or she wins that round and generally a new "it" is designated for the next round. Thus this game is one of skill, strategy and stealth as well as fleetness.

Variations

In some variations "it" merely has to call out a player's name and hiding place rather than tagging him by touch. In some variations, "it" must jump over the can after calling the player's name and location. This rule can also be invoked to be fair for smaller children playing with teens or pre-teens.

One variant can be played in the dark late at night (sometimes on Halloween night). The intent is to heighten the excitement of the game by introducing the sudden, loud noise of a can being kicked in an otherwise nearly silent ambient environment.

Jacks

Jacks (sometimes called jackstones, fivestones or onesies) is a playground game for children. The game originated hundreds of years ago, when the only playthings boys and girls had were materials they found near their homes. They collected small stones and animal bones and learned to use them in a game. They tossed them into the air in a way similar to today's version of the game.

Pieces: A set of jacks consists of ten (or perhaps fifteen) small metal six-pointed stars, called 'jacks', and a rubber ball. The playing surface is any flat area, such as the tarmac of a playground. Sometimes an area may be delineated in chalk, but more often it is just the space between the two players.

Play: The players decide who goes first, usually through "flipping" (when the set of jacks is placed in cupped hands, flipped to the back of the hands, and then back to cupped hands again; the player who keeps the most from falling in his/her turn, goes first). Then the jacks are scattered loosely into the play area. The players take it in turn to bounce the ball off the surface, then pick up jacks, then catch the ball before it bounces twice. There are variants on this procedure. Sometimes the ball is thrown into the air rather than bounced. Sometimes it is bounced against a wall or target, if that is in the vicinity of play. Sometimes no bounce is allowed at all.

In some variants, the players must pick up as many jacks as possible in each turn. Perhaps more commonly, the number of jacks to be picked up is pre-ordained and sequential: at first you must pick up one ("onesies"), next two ("twosies"), and so on. In most versions of the game, only one hand may be used. To simplify play, both may be used; to make it harder, or to impose a handicap, a player might be required to use their off-hand (eg, the left if right-handed).

Winning: The winning player is the one to pick up the largest number of jacks. If playing with fifteen, that goal is rarely, if ever, achieved. If ten jacks are used, the person who gets to the highest game wins. Game 1 is usually single bounce (onesies through tensies); game 2 is chosen by whoever "graduates" to game 2 first, and so on.

Crack the Whip

Crack the Whip is a simple outdoor children's game that involves physical coordination, and is usually played in small groups, either on grass or ice. One player, chosen as the "head" of the whip, runs (or skates) around in random directions, with subsequent players holding on to the hand of the previous player. The entire "tail" of the whip moves in those directions, but with much more force toward the end of the tail. The longer the tail, the more the forces act on the last player, and the tighter they have to hold on. As the game progresses, and more players fall off, some of those who were previously located near the end of the tail and have fallen off can "move up" and be in a more secure position by grabbing onto the tail as it is moving, provided they can get back on before some of the others do. There is no objective to this game other than the enjoyment of the experience.

References to this game go back to the 1890s in England.

Sharks and Minnows

Sharks and Minnows is a popular tag game played in swimming pools.

Rules: Generally Sharks and Minnows is played in the deep end of a large pool. The game starts out with one person selected as the shark and the rest as the minnows. The shark starts in the water on one side of the pool and the minnows usually start on the deck of the other side (if they are playing in water deep enough to dive into). The

game starts by the shark calling out "Sharks and Minnows, one two three, fishies, fishies swim to me!", "Cross my ocean!", "All minnows come!", or some variant of such phrase, at which point the minnows may begin to dive in to swim to the other wall. If the shark manages to tag a minnow while before he touches the wall, then that minnow becomes a shark in the next round. After all the minnows have either reached the wall or been tagged the shark(s) swim to the other wall and the cycle starts again. If some of the minnows refuse to enter the pool, the shark may swim to the other wall and tag it; whoever was still out of the pool when the shark tags the wall becomes a shark. The game is played until all of the minnows have been tagged, then the first person tagged becomes the shark who starts the next round.

There are many variations and additions to these rules:

- Drain base: minnows who are underwater on the pools drains cannot be tagged out.
- No underwater tag: sharks can only tag minnows when some part of the minnow is above water.
- Pull up Shark: addition to rule of no tag underwater, the shark is allowed to force minnows to the surface of the water in order to tag them. The shark is not allowed to pull off goggles or bathing suits. All other means of pulling minnows up are acceptable.
- "No sharks charge": called by minnows while shark is saying "Sharks and Minnows...", prevents sharks from tagging wall.
- "All Minnows in": called by sharks immediately after "Sharks and Minnows..." before anyone calls "No sharks charge" to force all the minnows into the pool immediately.
- Depending on the size of the deep end, the amount used at the beginning when there is only one shark may be limited until he has tagged a certain number of people. This often helps increase turn-around in the game.
- The game can also be played on dry land with a soccer ball; a square is marked off with cones and all of the kids except one get a soccer ball, when a player with a ball, "the minnow", dribbles out of bounds or gets his or her ball kicked out of bounds by the player without the ball, "the shark", they are out. When only one person with a ball is left he or she will be the shark for the next round.
- This game may also be played in the deep end of a swimming pool with a group of people in SCUBA gear who are the "minnows" and an equal size group of people in snorkel gear who are the "sharks". The minnows must stay in the deep end of the pool and the sharks must make the minnows surface (the equivalent of 'tagging' them) by ripping off their scuba gear or dragging them to the surface.
- In another form of this game the shark must make the minnows go under water using whatever force necessary to do so.