

TOP 10 SOCIALLY DISTANT GAMES

To play in the classroom or the playground.

CONTENTS AND INTRODUCTION

This is an interactive PDF, this means that you can click on page numbers on the contents to take you to that page. You can also click on links within the document.

Cover Page	1
Contents and Introduction	2
Add Your Own/Inside or Outside?	3
Wink Murder	4
Splat!	5
Rhythm Detective	6
Grandma's Footsteps	7
Be My Eyes/Hide and Seek	8
Hangman	9
Distance Olympics	10
The Car Game	11
Contact	12

Introduction

Play is an essential part of every child's physical, social and emotional development. Compared with desk-based learning it is considerably more difficult for children to play in a physically distant (PD) manner. Many of the classics (e.g. tag) are currently off-limits and large numbers of children have been socially isolated during lockdown. We created this list to support teachers, parents and professionals to re-introduce play as safely as possible as and when it is safe to do so.



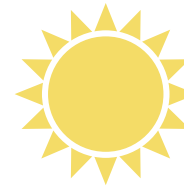
Our top tip!

Our top tip for adults facilitating these games is to make physical distancing part of the game. For example in "Grandma's Footsteps" we add the rule that each child has a 2M bubble around them and if any two people 'burst' each other's bubbles they are both out. (sent back to the beginning) This not only makes distancing fun but it can also help children to take ownership of the rules. We have witnessed extensive "self-policing" spilling over from our games sessions into the rest of the day with children saying "watch my bubble" when passing in corridors. Making this enjoyable can help alleviate anxieties children may be experiencing during these unprecedented times.



Add Your Own

This is not an exhaustive list! There are infinite permutations to every game and as we know children have an incredible capacity to invent new games at will. We created this list alongside a group of primary school students who directly contributed to each individual risk assessment. We adopted a “features-based” approach where we identified which “features” were banned. (e.g. human contact, throwing and catching etc) Young people then took it in turns to pitch a game to the group which was scrutinised in a “Dragons Den” style. Each game was collectively risk-assessed, physically played then added to our “safe games list”. We would encourage adults working with groups of children to create your own safe games list to be displayed on classroom walls. You could even send them to us to add to this list!



Inside or Outside?

Many of the games on this list can be played inside or out. Government guidelines suggest that being outside is always the better option for infection purposes and most of these games work better outside too. They can however be played inside with specific considerations.

To play a physically distanced circle game (a game where players stand in a circle) you must have adequate space and this is worth checking beforehand. If you are playing indoors with a group of 14 students you will need a 9X9M space to maintain 2M gaps. If your group is a different size you can calculate the space required using your own maths ($\pi = C/D$) or an [online circumference calculator](#). Involving young people in this process is a brilliant activity if appropriate.





WINK MURDER

Many readers will already be familiar with the basic mechanics of this game. One player will be selected to be the “detective” (publicly) and one player will be selected to be the “murderer.” (with everyone except the detective knowing) The murderer winks (or blinks) at players one by one to “kill” them which they display by sitting or lying down. (See 'different versions' section for details) The Detective gets 3 guesses to identify the murderer correctly. If they are successful the detective wins. If not the murderer wins.

Different versions

This game works best standing in a large circle. The detective stands in the middle of the circle and makes accusations from there. If you have insufficient space for the circle version this can be played whilst sitting at desks. Young people should be encouraged to keep looking around the room and not look too much or too little in the direction of the murderer.

Considerations

Young people who have played this game with Unique Voice before will know that we encourage “dramatic deaths” for the victims. We have had to tone this down during physically distanced games encouraging a dramatic noise followed by a more uniform death - either lying down on your desk or sitting in your place in the circle.



Our uncontested lockdown favourite! This is another circle game so checking you have adequate space before playing is essential. You can play as a group of 7 in a 5X5M space whilst others watch if necessary.

Players stand in a circle with one person (usually the adult is first in this role but children can do it too) in the middle. The middle person is the "chief splatter" and is not competing. The chief splatter chooses people in the

circle to "splat" by saying the word whilst pointing at them. That person must duck as quickly as possible - which initiates a race between the two players either side of them to "splat" each other. The player who is slowest is out and sits down. If the first player to be "splatted" does not duck in time (by the time one of the players next to them has splatted) then they are out instead.

When only two players are left we have a final splat off! They stand back-to-back (2M apart) and a "splat word" is selected. (IE potato) The chief splatter says words one by one (IE Porridge, Pony, Police) and participants take one step away from each other each time. When the chief splatter says the "splat word" there is a race to turn around and splat your opponent.



RHYTHM DETECTIVE



This game is best played in a circle but can also be played at desks. One player is selected to be the “rhythm detective” (publicly) and one player is selected to be the “rhythm leader”. (with everyone knowing except the detective) The rhythm leader taps a beat on any part of their body which all players must copy. The detective has 3 guesses to identify the leader. If groups are not confident with rhythm or if you need to be quiet, one variant of this game is “movement detective” which is essentially the same but all players must copy the movements of the leader. (IE hand up and down)



GRANDMA'S FOOTSTEPS

Another classic played by children and professional theatre companies alike! One player is “grandma” and faces away from the group. All other players must move towards that person whenever their back is turned. Grandma turns around periodically and sends anyone who they see moving back to the start. When one player gets close enough to grandma they are the winner.

Considerations

Usually we say that players must tag grandma but to make this game PD appropriate we introduced the rule that there is a line (approx 2.5M from grandma) which you must cross to win. This keeps players a safe distance from grandma and also stops them needing to congregate in the middle of the playing area - each player should be encouraged to move forward in a straight line forward. We also add the rule that each child has a 2M bubble around them and if any two people ‘burst’ each other’s bubbles they are both out. (sent back to the beginning)



BE MY EYES

One player must cover their eyes or wear a blindfold if appropriate. (ie their own jumper) The other players must designate a part of the space which that person must end up in. Players then take it in turns to give a verbal instruction to their blindfolded friend. (IE take two steps forward, turn left then take one step forward)

It is worth reiterating to the group that the safety of the blindfolded individual is in their hands and that trust is imperative to this activity working. This game has infinite permutations from simple steps to a whole assault course and can be done in a classroom with everyone (except the blindfolded individual) sitting at their desks.



HIDE & SEEK

This is one game which won't work in a classroom. Give clear instructions to all players where they can and can't hide and invite all but one of them to do so. The remaining player counts to 10 before coming to find them. This game is a really good opportunity for them to run around larger spaces when they do have access to them.

Considerations

Many children will regularly say that the 'seeker' must tag the players who they find. This is no longer appropriate so we must be clear from the outset that you must find people without 'bursting their bubbles'. If anyone is hiding so well that they can't be identified without going within 2M of them the seeker can just say "found you in the bush" without having to know who it is. The last person to be found is the winner.



HANGMAN

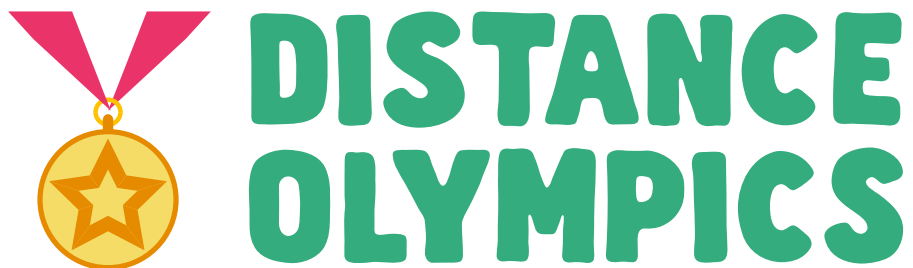
Another absolute classic which needs very little introduction or modification as it is already fairly PD compliant. If you are new to facilitating this game in a classroom setting you start by secretly choosing a word and making an underscore on the board for each letter. If I chose the word “unique” I would mark _ _ _ _ _ and tell students they are looking for a 6 letter word. Next establish how many wrong guesses it takes for them to lose. We usually start with 8 for KS2 and 12 for KS1. (so they are very likely to win!) The class guesses letters one by one and if

that letter is in your word mark it on the appropriate underscore. If the guessed letter is not in your word put it on a separate list of “wrong guesses” and draw a part of a hanging person. Time the drawing sections so that the drawing is complete when they have used up all of their guesses. The class wins if you guess the word, you win if you draw a hanged person!

We have found this game a really great way to introduce a daily theme and a good way to explore vowels/ consonants with students.

Considerations

We usually allow students to take a turn at being the “hangman” and essentially taking your role for a round but this presents difficulties with pen sharing etc.



This is another game which cannot be played in a classroom. It can however be played in a hall/large space where hide and seek may not be possible. So many favourites which involve chasing each other are now off-limits so this is a great way to get them running at full speed! There are essentially infinite permutations of how you can modify olympic sports to make them PD appropriate but here are three which we have enjoyed.

1 - Relay races - small groups of players on a team must run to an agreed point then return. Normally they would pass a baton or tag their team mate but in this case they

simply pass a line which allows their team mate to go. It is worth marking out space to ensure adequate PD where players do not run directly back to their team. Instead they run to a marked point 2M to one side of their team mate waiting to go. You therefore need at least 4M width per competing team

2 - Long jump - You can do this from a static two footed-jump or with a run up. You can individually mark players distances or just have one mark for "the furthest jumped today"

3 - The marathon - Call it a marathon but actually make it 400 - 1500 meters depending on your group! Remind them of their bubbles before they set off or do it one by one with a timer whilst others are doing another activity.

Considerations

Space markers are key to making these activities work - you can essentially use anything which is not itself a trip hazard but it is important that only one person (IE you!) moves them around.



THE CAR GAME

This game was invented by students as a way of demonstrating physical distancing to their peers but they enjoyed it so much we kept playing! Players mime being in cars which are 3M long and wide. They move around the space being careful not to get too close to each other. If the judge believes that two vehicles have crashed (drivers less than 3M apart) they are both out no matter whose “fault” it was. It is worth establishing from the beginning that the judge's word is final because you will have to make some fairly arbitrary judgement calls about distances.

In terms of space this game can be played in anything from a 5X5M classroom to a school hall or marked outdoor space. It is particularly good on a marked “road system” which many playgrounds have on them. (It was invented on one of these!) Whatever space you are in - start by having everyone outside of the game area and introduce “vehicles” one at a time. Let one lone driver navigate with ease then watch it get steadily more difficult as more vehicles arrive. Any ‘crashed’ players must leave the space and join a cue to re-enter. In any given space you find a “capacity” of people who can safely share the space together.

Considerations

We set the “crash distance” to be 3M so even when students inevitably break the 3M limit they are comfortably outside of the 2M guidelines.

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