

Troop Games for Small and Large Areas

TROOP GAMES – SMALL SPACE

These games can be played in a smaller space. They're not about putting Scout skills into action—they're mostly just about having fun. Depending on the activity, Scouts will find some of them more challenging than others. Some are more mental, and some more physical. All of them provide the grounds to interact with members of other patrols in a Scouting activity that is light-hearted and fun.

"small" = small area for those activities that do not require as much space, or can be carried out in close quarters, or with a smaller number of Scouts

"in" = indoor activity

"out" = outdoor activity

BLINDMAN'S BUFF (small, in or out)

– *Materials:* neckerchief or bandana as blindfold

– *Method:* Scouts form a circle around one Scout who is blindfolded. How wide the circle is, depends on the number of Scouts playing, but the circumference should be wide enough to give the Scouts room to move around comfortably with enough space between them so that no Scout is right up against another. On signal, the Scouts run around their blindfolded troop mate, until a leader calls, "Halt!" at which time the blindfolded Scout attempts to touch another Scout. Scouts can move their bodies to avoid the blindfolded Scout, but cannot move their feet. When he touches a Scout, he tries to identify him by sense of touch. If he can, that Scout becomes the next to be blindfolded.

BUZZ, BING, BANG (small, in or out)

– *Method:* The troop sits in a circle and begins counting off, substituting "buzz" for the number seven and any multiples of seven. If a mistake is made, start over with the next person. After circling twice, add to the mix by substituting the word "bing" for the number five and any multiples of five. If a mistake is made, start over at the point of the error. After circling twice, add to this mix by substituting "bang" for the number three and any multiples of three.

– *Variation:* When a person makes a mistake, they are eliminated.

CAPTAIN ON DECK (small, in or out)

– *Method:* Captain on Deck is something of a combination of O'Grady and Stand By Sixes. The Captain calls out orders and the group responds with actions and sounds. Like in Musical Chairs, if a person or persons can't find a chair they are eliminated. In Captain on Deck if a person or group of people either don't respond correctly or can't make a group of the correct size, they will be eliminated from this round of the game. They can join in again when a new game starts. The commands are as follows:

– "Captain on Deck!" (Scouts stand at attention facing Captain.)

– "Cannon Ball!" (Scouts bend down with their hands grasped around their knees and jump up and shout "Boom!")

– "Man Overboard!" (Two Scouts needed. One bends down on a knee and the second places a hand over his eyes and the other hand over the eyes of the other Scout, as if looking out over the water for a lost soul at sea.)

– "Crow's Nest"! (Three Scouts stand back to back to back and join elbows behind their backs.)

– "Captain's Table!" (Four Scouts act as if they are sitting at a table eating a pirate meal with each other. Sounds of rowdy pirates talking as they eat should be heard.)

– "Walk the Plank!" (Five Scouts stand in a column behind each other.)

– *Scoring:* The winners of each round are the last one or two left playing

HAWAIIAN HANDCLAP CIRCLE (small, in)

– Method: Scouts sit in a circle. A 1-2-3 rhythm is established with all Scouts, in unison, slapping their knees on the first count, clapping their hands on the second count, and snapping their fingers on the third count. Once the rhythm is set, the first Scout says a word as he snaps his fingers. The Scout next in the circle must say a word that will logically follow the first word in forming a long, run-on sentence, and so on around the circle. The object is to say a word that will make sense in the sentence. Action is stopped if a Scout says a word too soon or too late, doesn't say any word, or says a word that doesn't make sense.

HAWAIIAN HANDCLAP LINE (small, in)

– Method: Scouts sit in a line, and count off. A 1-2-3 rhythm is established with all Scouts, in unison, slapping their knees on the first count, clapping their hands on the second count, and snapping their fingers on the third count. Once the rhythm is set, the first Scout calls a number at the instant he snaps his fingers. Maintaining the rhythm, the Scout whose number has been called waits until the instant of snapping his fingers to call another number. If Scout who calls a number too soon or too late, doesn't call any number, or calls a nonexistent number (all of which happen frequently), he loses his number, and goes to the end of the line. All Scouts then count off again. The object is to get to be number one and stay there.

HOT OR COLD (small, in)

– Method: A troop member is selected and leaves the room or playing area. During his absence, the patrol designates an object for him to identify on his return—anything, from someone's button or neckerchief slide to a nearby tree. When the patrol member returns, the patrol starts chanting "cold" or "hot" depending on how close he comes to the object. The closer he gets to the object, the "hotter" he is; the farther away he gets, the "colder" he is. When he is right on top of the object or touches it, the group cries "Fire!". Then the next troop member is selected and sent out to try his luck, and so on.

HUNKER DOWN (small, in or out)

– Materials: 20-foot length of 1/2-inch soft, synthetic rope, two platforms 6 to 8-inches tall (two halves of a cinder block or two cuts from a downed tree, 8-inches in diameter)

– Method: Two Scouts stand facing each other 12 to 15 feet away on the platforms. On signal, each tries to unbalance the other by either pulling or letting up the tension on the rope. Both must hold onto the rope at all times while trying to unbalance the other. Have a troop tournament, play, patrol against patrol, or Scout against Scout as a gathering period activity.

– Scoring: The Scout left standing the longest on his platform while still holding onto his rope wins. If a Scout lets go of the rope, he's out, even if he's still standing on his platform.

IDENTIFYING SOUNDS (small, in)

– Materials: a tarp or blanket to use as a curtain, a variety of items that will produce a recognizable sound

– Method: The troop is seated in front of the curtain. Behind the curtain are one or two leaders who produce various sounds for those gathered in front to recognize and remember, such as turning the pages of a book, crumpling a cellophane wrapper, breaking a stick, striking a match, hammering a nail, and so on. Each Scout is furnished a pencil and paper and in turn writes down what he thinks each sound is. After all the sounds have been made, the curtain is removed and each is made again.

NAME THE MERIT BADGE (small, in)

– Materials: a picture of each merit badge, each picture numbered but not identified by title ("see the Merits of Scouting" poster), one sheet of paper and a pencil for each Scout

– Method: The numbered merit badge pictures are spread out on one or more tables. The Scouts are instructed to study the merit badge pictures for five minutes and write down the correct title of each badge beside the corresponding number on their sheets of paper.

- Scoring: The Scouts exchange papers and score each other's sheets as a leader reads the correct numbers and titles of the badges. The Scout who correctly identifies the most badges wins.
- Variation: For a pre-opening activity, as each Scout arrives at the meeting, they are given a sheet of paper and a pencil and asked to number their paper from one to whatever the highest-numbered merit badge is. Just before the opening ceremony, all papers are collected, and the correct answers tallied. Later the winner(s) are announced and can be presented with a small prize.

O'GRADY (small, in or out)

- Method: Troop assembles in a single line formation, facing the leader who is four or five steps in front. The leader yells commands, but the players obey commands only if O'Grady says to. If the leader commands "O'Grady says: Arms up!" all arms go up. But, if the leader calls "Arms up!" no arms should move. Players who obey that command are out of the game. As the game progresses and few players remain, the leader speeds up his commands and a player who makes the slightest false move must drop out of the game.
- Scoring: The last Scout in the game is the winner.
- Variation: Divide the group into two facing lines. One side obeys O'Grady, the other does not. If the leader yells, "O'Grady says: About-face!" the obeying line does an about-face and the other line stands still. When the leader calls "About-face!" the second line does an about-face, but the first does not. The object is to see which line remains in the game longer.

PRISONER'S ESCAPE (small, in or out)

- Materials: a 3-foot length of cord with a small fixed loop on each end for each Scout
- Method: Each length of cord forms a pair of "handcuffs" by slipping a bight through the loop. Scouts form buddies, and one slips a hand through the sliding loop on each end of the cord, and the other slips one hand through one sliding loop, passes the free end behind his buddy's cord and then slips his other hand through the other sliding loop of his own cord. In this way, both Scouts are "handcuffed" together. They must escape, but cannot untie the knots or slip either hand out of a loop.
- Solution: The trick to escaping is for one Scout to bend the middle of his cord and pass the bend behind one of his buddy's sliding loops and over his buddy's hand.

STANDING STAVES (small, in or out)

- Materials: Scout stave for each Scout
- Method: Scouts stand in a large circle facing inward. Each Scout holds his stave upright before him with his right hand resting on the top. When the leader calls, "One up!" all Scouts move to the right and try to catch the next stave before it falls. If the leader calls "One down!" all Scouts move to their left and try to catch the stave before it falls. If the Scout fails to catch the next stave, he drops out of the game and the gap in the circle remains. If "Two up!" or "Two down!" is called, Scouts must bypass one stave and catch the next. When two Scouts are left, a leader stands between them. They move to the left of him for "Up!" and right for "Down!".

SUBWAY (small, in)

- Materials: two rows of chairs facing each other, five feet apart, enough for two thirds of the troop.
- Method: The troop is divided into thirds. One third stands in the aisle between the rows of chairs (the "straphangers") and the remaining Scouts ("passengers") take a seat. When the "conductor" (senior patrol leader) calls out a stop (use names of cities in your area), everyone seated must switch sides. The straphangers take this opportunity to try to get a seat. The first Scout to get his behind on a chair wins the seat. Those without a seat become straphangers. After a couple of stops, the conductor yells "City Hall. Everyone off!" All the Scouts must exit one end of the subway, circle, reenter the opposite end, and find a seat. After a complete loop from City Hall to the terminal, the "express" is run. Start the whole process over, slowly at first, but pick up speed, spending less time at each stop.

THIMBLE FINDING (small, in)

- Materials: small object like a thimble, coin, ring, etc.
- Method: Scouts leave the room. One remains and places the small object where it is perfectly visible, but in a spot where it is not likely to be noticed. Then the Scouts come in and look for the object. When one of them sees it, he should go and quietly sit down without indicating to the others where it is. The others, if they see it, do the same. After a fair time, any one of those sitting down is told to point out the article to those who have not yet found it. The first one to see it is the winner, and he sends, the others out again while he hides the object.

TIME BOMB (small, in or out)

- Method: Organize into groups of two to 10 Scouts and have each group form a circle. The first Scout in the circle starts counting from 1 and says up to three numbers. (He could say, “1,” “1, 2,” or “1, 2, 3.”) The next person in the circle continues the sequence by saying the next number in order. Depending upon what the first Scout said, the next person continues with the next consecutive number, saying up to three numbers counting up towards the number 12. Once again, on each Scout’s turn, they can choose to say either one, two, or three numbers. Continue until someone is forced to say 12. That Scout is now out. The last Scout standing is the winner.

Troop Games – Large Area

These games require a large area. Many of Baden-Powell’s wide games were played in a vast outdoor arena, much more extensive than what we normally can provide at a troop meeting. But, like in Scouting’s early days, many of the games listed here have the same capacity to transport our Scouts to a land of adventure and challenge where troop teams can let off steam while having a lot of fun.

“wide” = large indoor or outdoor setting for those activities requiring a greater amount of space

“in” = indoor activity

“out” = outdoor activity

ANTELOPE RACE (wide, in or out)

- Method: On signal, troop teams run in single file, each member with one hand on the belt of the Scout ahead, to a point 50 yards away. They make a left turn and run back to the starting point. Falling down or breaking apart disqualifies the team.
- Scoring: The fastest team wins.

BLINDFOLDED SOCCER (wide, out)

- Materials: blindfolds for half the Scouts, two soccer balls
- Method: Each team tries to kick the ball past the other team’s end zone as many times as possible. Divide the Scouts into two teams, or use patrols. Each team then divides into pairs. One member of each pair is blindfolded. The game starts when the referee throws or kicks two soccer balls into the middle of the soccer field or playing area.
- Rules:
 1. Only the blindfolded Scout may kick the ball; the sighted Scout can only offer verbal directions to his partner.
 2. Team members may not intentionally touch one another. Normal game contact is allowed as long as the touching is not used to direct a blindfolded participant.
 3. There are no goalies.
 4. If a ball is kicked out of bounds, the referee will throw the ball into the middle of the field and play resumes.
 5. Any additional rules are at the discretion of the referee.

– **Scoring:** Each successful kick earns one point for the team. The team with the most points at the end of the game wins.

CAPTURE THE FLAG (*wide, in or out*)

– **Materials:** two flags (neckerchiefs, bandanas, pieces of cloth)

– **Method:** The game can be played in an open field, gymnasium, the woods, or any large non-hazardous area. A center line is designated, separating the playing area into two sides. The troop is divided into two teams each of whom place their “flag” at the far end on their side. The flag can be in plain sight, or partially concealed, but should be positioned so that an opposing team member can easily pick it up. The object of the game is for one team to “capture” the other team’s flag by bringing it to their side without being tagged by a member of the opposing team. At any time during play, if an opposing team member is tagged on the other team’s side, he is sent to jail. A team’s jail is a well-defined space in a back corner of each team’s side. Once a Scout is in jail, he stays there for the duration of the game, unless freed by one of his team members who safely reaches the other team’s jail and tags anyone on his team held prisoner. In so doing, all those in the jail are freed and proceed safely back to their side before taking any other action for their team. When a flag is captured, the game ends, and depending on the time allotted, additional games can be played.

CATCH TEN (*wide, in or out*)

– **Materials:** playground ball, neckerchiefs or bandanas for half the troop

– **Method:** The troop is divided into two equal teams. All the members of one team are identified by tying neckerchiefs or bandanas on their right arms. The ball starts in the hands of one team member, who tosses it to a teammate. The other team tries to intercept the ball. As the first Scout catches the ball, he shouts “One!” and throws the ball to another teammate, who shouts “Two!” as he catches the ball. This continues until “Ten!” has been called. If a Scout from the opposing team intercepts the ball, he shouts “One!” and his team then tries to reach ten. As teams intercept the ball, they must always start over with the number one.

– **Scoring:** The first team to make ten completions is the winner.

CRACK THE DEW LINE (*wide, in or out*)

– **Materials:** enough neckerchiefs or blindfolds for blindfolding one team

– **Method:** The troop is divided into two teams—the “aggressors” and the “DEW line.” The DEW (Distant Early Warning) line Scouts are blindfolded and line up side by side with their feet spread wide apart and touching each other’s. All DEW line Scouts have two “depth charges”—their hands, which they hold at shoulder height. The aggressors try to penetrate the DEW line by crawling through. The DEW line Scouts must eliminate the aggressors by touching them with a depth charge. If a DEW line Scout makes a hit, the aggressor is out and the DEW line Scout’s depth charge is still good. If he misses, his depth charge is wasted and he must put that hand on his knee. Limit the playing time to five minutes and then change teams.

– **Scoring:** The team that gets the most members through the DEW line wins.

CROWDED CIRCLE (*wide, in*)

– **Materials:** masking tape, a large room in which the lights can be turned off instantly causing complete darkness and easily turned on to quickly light the room back up

– **Method:** With the masking tape, mark out a nearly circle-shaped area on the floor about 6 feet in diameter. With the lights on, Scouts walk freely along the room’s periphery. Without signal, the lights are turned off for 10 seconds. In the darkness, the Scouts must try to get inside the circle. When the lights go back on, everyone must freeze on the spot. All Scouts found outside the circle are out of the game. The game resumes with shorter darkness periods, if necessary, until only one Scout remains in the circle.

– **Scoring:** The last Scout in the circle wins.

– **Variation:** Instead of one circle, form three circles on the floor and number them. When the lights go out, announce which circle should be used.

CROWS AND CRANES (*wide, in or out*)

– *Method:* The troop is divided into two teams. The teams line up down a center line, back to back. Each team facing a home line about 30 feet away. One team are the crows, the other team are the cranes. If the SPL shouts “cranes!” the crows must turn around and try to tag a crane before he can reach his home line. Any member of the cranes that gets tagged has to join the crows team. If the SPL shouts “crows!” the crows team has to run to their home line without getting tagged by the cranes team. Any member of the crows that gets tagged has to join the cranes team. If the SPL shouts, “crabs!” everyone must stand still. Anyone that moves must join the opposing team. Play starts off each time with both teams lined up back to back across the center line. The game ends when one team has all the Scouts (or whenever). You can have a lot of fun elongating the RRRRR’s— “CRRRRRRRRABS!” “CRRRRRRROWS!” “CRRRRRRANES!”

DEER STALKING (*wide, out*)

– *Prerequisite:* densely wooded area

– *Method:* One Scout is selected as the “deer” and goes “grazing” in the woods. The rest try to get within six yards (or any suitable distance) without being seen. If the deer notices a tracker, he calls his name and points in his direction. That Scout must move back 50 feet. If the deer hears a tracker near him, he may “stampede,” but not more than 30 feet (the tracker must remain in place). The first Scout to get within the agreed distance trades places with the deer.

– *Variation:* The deer is in a circle about 50 feet in diameter. The Scouts try to enter the circle unnoticed. If the deer sees a Scout and calls his name, that Scout is out of the game. The patrol with the most Scouts in the circle within a certain time wins.

FLYING DISC SOCCER (*wide, out*)

– *Materials:* plastic flying disk, a field marked for soccer with a semicircular penalty area surrounding the goal

– *Object:* To send the disk across the other team’s goal line (sliding on the ground or sailing through the air) as many times as possible

– *Method:* The troop is divided into two teams. The teams are positioned on each half of the soccer field. Each team chooses a goalie, who stands in his goalie box.

– *Rules:*

1. Play begins when the referee throws the disk high into the air.
2. After catching or picking up the disk, a Scout may run toward the opponent’s goal. If he is tagged above the waist with two hands, the tagged Scout must drop or throw the disk within three seconds.
3. A throw at the goal can be made from anywhere on the field except within the goalie box. The only person allowed in this area is the goalie. The goalie may leave or enter his goalie box at any time.
4. If two or more Scouts grab the disk simultaneously, a “jump” ball is called. A leader stops the action and throws the disk into the air at the point where play was stopped.
5. The only penalty is for excessive roughness. The first infraction results in a two-minute penalty: one Scout is removed from the field. The second infraction means removal from the game. Body contact is inevitable, but intentional roughness is unnecessary.

– *Scoring:* Each goal scores one point for the team. The team with the highest score wins.

JUMP THE SHOT (*wide, in or out*)

– *Materials:* soft weight, such as a rolled-up cloth or sandbag, tied to the end of a rope at least 10 feet long

– *Method:* The Scouts form a wide circle. The leader in the center swings the rope around inside the circle to get it going in a steady, circular motion. Then the rope is swung wider, around the circle below the knees of Scouts, who must “jump the shot.”

– *Scoring:* Any Scout who is hit by the rope or weight drops out. The last Scout in the game is the winner.

– *Scoring variation:* To play as a patrol game, each patrol begins with 50 points. When a Scout fails to “jump

the shot," 5 points are deducted from the patrol score. All Scouts remain in the circle. The game is continued until one of the patrols is "in the red."

PAPER-WAD TENNIS (*wide, in or out*)

– *Materials:* masking tape, about 100 sheets of paper crumpled tightly into wads

– *Method:* The meeting room is divided in half with a line of masking tape on the floor. The paper wads are scattered around the room, equally distributed on both sides of the line. Each troop team takes one side of the "court," and no one can cross over to the other side. The object is to throw as many paper wads onto the other team's court as possible, throwing only one at a time. A timekeeper facing away from the action calls "Go!" and the game begins. When he yells "Stop!" the team with the most paper wads on their side wins that round.

– *Scoring:* The team with the most winning rounds is the winner.

RING BALL (*wide, in or out*)

– *Materials:* playground ball

– *Method:* Scouts form a circle with one Scout who is "It" in the middle. Play is begun by passing the ball to a Scout other than It. The ball is passed around or across the circle from Scout to Scout, while the Scout who is "It" tries to intercept the ball and force it to touch the floor. If "It" can make the ball touch the floor, the Scout who last touched the ball before "It" did goes to the center and the game continues. It's not enough to just touch the ball as it's being passed around. "It" must actually make the ball hit the ground.

SHOOT THE GAP (*wide, in or out*)

– *Materials:* large playing area marked with two goal lines

– *Method:* The troop is divided into two teams, each lining up behind one of the goals. One Scout is chosen to be "Guardian of the Gap," and stands in the middle of the playing area. The guardian starts play by calling out the name of any Scout on one team. That Scout immediately shouts the name of a Scout on the other team. These two Scouts must then try to change goals without being tagged by the guardian. If the guardian tags one of them, he changes places with the tagged Scout and joins the team toward which the tagged Scout was running. The tagged Scout is the new "Guardian of the Gap," and starts the next round by calling out another name. The guardians may not call the name of a Scout who was already called until all have participated.

SKEDADDLE (*wide, in or out*)

– *Materials:* ten different objects found in nature like pine cone, burr, maple leaf, oak leaf, granite rock, sand stone, birch bark, etc. or ten ropes tied with different knots and lashings

– *Method:* Troop divides into two equal teams, and each count off so that every Scout on both teams have a number. Each team faces each other, 15 feet from a center line, in order, with "Number 1's" on each team's left. The leader gives the name of each object. He then calls out the name of one object and a number. The Scout with that number on each team runs to the center, tries to pick up the object named and race back to his line without being tagged by the other Scout. The object is then returned to the center and the leader calls another number.

– *Scoring:* Scouts score one point for their team by picking up the correct object, and two points if they can get back to their line without being tagged. If a Scout returns to his line with the wrong item, his team loses a point. If a Scout tags another Scout who has picked up the wrong item, his team loses a point.

STAND BY SIXES (*wide, in or out*)

– *Method:* Scouts scatter throughout the playing area. The leader blows a particular number of blasts on a whistle. Whatever number of blasts the leader blows, that's the number of Scouts that need to combine into a group, hands joined and held high. If there are three blasts, the Scouts must get into groups of three, four blasts, groups go four, etc. If a Scout can't find a group corresponding to the number of whistle blasts blown, he's out.

- *Scoring*: None. Play continues until time runs out or all Scouts are eliminated.
- *Variation*: The leader yells out a number and Scouts are not allowed to move until they hear the whistle blow.

STEAL THE BACON (*wide, in or out*)

- *Materials*: large playing area, neckerchief, whistle
- *Method*: Troop counts off by twos, and all “ones” line up on one side of the playing area, all “twos” on the other. From left to right, both teams then count off by ones so a number can be assigned to each Scout. The neckerchief is the “bacon” and is placed in the center of the playing area. The leader calls out a number and the Scout with that number on each team runs to the center when he hears the whistle. The object of the game is for a Scout to snatch the “bacon” and get back to his side without being tagged by the Scout with the same number from the other side.
- *Scoring*: Score two points if a Scout can “steal the bacon” without being tagged. Score one point for the opposing team if the snatcher is tagged.

TROOPOLO (*wide, out*)

- *Materials*: playground ball, two flags on 5-foot poles
- *Method*: A playing field is marked out at least 40 square feet. On each side, there’s a 6-foot square goal box, and in the center of each, a flag is planted three inches deep. The troop is divided into two teams. The object of the game is to knock over the opposing team’s flag by hitting it with the ball.
- *Rules*:
 1. The ball must be passed by hand, punched, or headed; no kicking and no running with the ball
 2. Only the goalie may be in his team’s goal square.
 3. Absolutely no tackling, shoving, and tripping.
 4. When the ball goes out of bounds, it’s thrown back in, as in soccer.
- *Scoring*: Score one point for knocking over the opposing team’s flag.

TUG OF WAR (*wide, in or out*)

- *Materials*: one rope at least 1/2-inch in diameter and 25 to 50 feet long, playing area large enough to safely accommodate all participants
- *Method*: Two teams line up single file, facing each other. The Scouts take hold of the rope, and, on signal, start pulling. The rope may not be tied around the waist of any Scout, nor can any Scout hold onto posts, trees, or any stationary objects.
- *Scoring*: The first team to pull or drag its opponents across a designated line wins.

WHERE’S THE WHISTLE? (*wide, in or out*)

- *Materials*: large playing area, blindfold for each Scout, whistle
- *Method*: Scouts line up at arm’s length along one end of the playing field where they are blindfolded. The leader who will be the whistle blower goes to the other end, and every now and then blows his whistle. The blindfolded Scouts must reach the whistle blower and touch him by following the sound of the whistle. He may stoop down, but his feet must stay planted on the ground. As soon as a Scout touches the whistle blower, he slips off his blindfold and goes to one side to watch. Other leaders should be stationed around the field to serve as safety officers, assuring Scouts don’t wonder off the field or into any obstruction.