

Physical Fitness for Children with  
Special Needs

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## **Games and Activities for Children with Special Needs**

### Introduction

This resource provides an explanation of various games best suited for children who may have cognitive or physical limitations caused by Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder. Due to the nature of a spectrum disorder not all of the selected games will be appropriate for all children. Some changes and modifications will need to be made in order for the participants to safely participate. Ex. Some children with hyposensitivity may not recognize when they are becoming overheated. Most of the games can be played indoors and outdoors, with some minor changes.

### Acknowledgements

Information was provided by the Nishnawbe Aski Nation Back Pocket Games handbook Published by the NAN Recreation Sub Committee as part of the Ontario Active 2010 Strategy. Traditional Games and Activities of the Northern Ojibway and Cree was provided by the Ojibway and Cree Cultural Centre written by Jim Hollander.

### Disclaimer

Any physical activity comes with risks. Please use caution when choosing games to play with children with special needs. Some children with FAS also experience Sensory Integration Impairments or other physical deficits which may limit their ability to participate. 100% supervision is highly recommended. The Union of Ontario Indians cannot accept any responsibility for injuries incurred during the participation of the included games.

## **Games and Activities for Children with Special Needs**

The ages identified for the following activities are to be used as a general guideline.

### **Preschool Age 4-6**

Very young children need activity in short bursts with many breaks. Activities that allow children to experience movement and to develop such fundamental movement patterns as walking, running, jumping, kicking, throwing and catching are best. With repetition and corrected practice, children will have begun to learn the dominant movement patterns.

The following loco motor activities are recommended:

1. Running
2. Skipping/hopping/galloping

3. Jumping
4. Kicking
5. Throwing
6. Striking
7. Catching/trapping
8. Rhythm and dance
9. Ball Games
10. Follow the Leader
11. Dramatic Play

### **The value of Music**

Music is a valuable tool when teaching preschool children. Children naturally like to move to music, and it also helps in the following:

1. Explore rhythm, learn basic rhythmic beats
2. Guide children through specific actions in a song
3. Modify the mood or pace of a class
4. Teach listening skills
5. Enhance social skills
6. Indicate a transition to a new activity, signal circle time or clean up
7. Provide a common bond of activity
8. Stimulate imagination

Some of the following games selected are co-operative in nature emphasizing social skills from age 6 and up. Other games selected vary in intensity; the leader will need to use discretion when choosing which games are appropriate at any given time.

### **British Bulldog/Octopus**

**Ages 6 -9**

Players: 6+

Equipment: None

Time: 20 minutes

Description: the playing area is a rectangular open field with well-defined boundaries. One person stands in the middle and is the bulldog. Everyone else stands on one end outside the boundary. When ready the bulldog yells, "British bulldog, one, two, three." Everyone must run from one end of the field to the other. The bulldog must tag people and yell, "British bulldog, one, two, three." Each caught person then becomes a bulldog also. Eventually everyone will become a bulldog.

### **Octopus**

A slight variation of British bull dog, children can kneel or sit in one position waving their arms to simulate tentacles.

### **Simon Says**

Simon says can be played without eliminating those who forget to wait for Simon's instructions! Simply create a second circle for those who miss the Simon cue. Then everyone plays all of the time.

### **Crows and Cranes:**

**Ages 6 -9**

Players: 10+

Equipment: None

Time: 15 minutes

Description: Divide the players into two teams. One team is called the Crows; the other is called the Cranes. A centre line is marked and a goal line is made around 25 feet back from it on both sides. Each team picks a side and lines up at the centre line. (The teams can be lined up around 3 ft apart from each

other.) When the leader calls out Cranes, the Cranes turn and run back to their own goal, while the Crows chase them. Any Cranes that are tagged must join the Crows. And when the leader calls out Crows, the Crows run back to their goal line, while the Cranes chase them. Any Crows caught join the Cranes team. Eventually all of the players will become either Crows or Cranes.

### **Dox- en- eye**

**Ages 6 -9**

Players: 8+

Equipment: straight stick

Time: 15 minutes

Description: The game begins with two equal-sized teams sitting and facing each other about ten meters apart. One member from each team comes forward to compete for the Dox-en-eye, a straight stick one meter long. The game begins with one team pounding the ground with the stick, shouting, “dox-en-eye, dox-en-eye, send us Shirley!!” Shirley must immediately turn stone-faced, get up, get the stick and return to their seated position without smiling. The opposing team can do everything and anything (except touch the person). If the person called smiles or laughs, they join the other team. Another person is then called. If the person called gets the Dox-en-eye stick successfully back to the team from which they came, that team then does the calling. The game continues until everyone is on one team.

### **Feet off the Ground Tag**

**Ages 6 -9**

Players 10+

Equipment: none

Time 15 minutes

Description: One person is ‘it’. The other players cannot be tagged as long as his/her feet are off the ground. Sitting on an object, hanging from a tree branch and on your back with legs in the air are all legitimate safeties.

## **Kick the Can**

**Ages 6 and up**

Players: 4+

Equipment: A can (room to kick a can) and hiding places.

Time: 30 minutes to several hours

Description: Kick the Can may be played on asphalt, concrete, dirt or grass. It's important to have some clear areas and some good hiding spots. A central base, usually about six feet in diameter, is chosen and marked. This is referred to as the 'home base' or 'jail'.

This game is very similar to hide and seek, except a can is used as home base. The person chosen to be "it" counts to 20. Everyone else finds a hiding spot. When the person who is it spots someone, they call out their name, and touch the can before the participant can. All participants who are caught wait in 'jail'. If the person hiding touches the can before the person who is it, then they are safe. A participant can also kick the can to 'free' all teammates who are waiting in jail. Then the game has to start over with the same person 'it'. If the person who is 'it' finds everyone before the can is kicked, the first person caught has to be it.

## **Sardines**

**Ages 6 -9**

Players: 5+

Equipment: None

Time: 30 minutes to several hours

Description: This game is much like hide and seek but in reverse. One player goes out to hide while the other players count to 100 and then they go in search of the hider. If one of the players finds the hider, s/he sneaks away so the others don't see them and joins the hider. As the other players spot the hider, they too join them. If they are hiding in a small area, they will all crowd together like sardines. They wait until the last person finds them.

## **Statues Race**

**Ages 6 -9**

Players: 6+

Equipment: none

Time: 15 minutes

Description: First, set up a starting line and goal line about 100 yards apart. One of the players acts as the leader. The leader closes his/her eyes and counts to ten out loud. As the leader counts, the other players run towards the goal. At the count of ten everyone must stop running and hold any position they are in when ten was called. These “statues” are usually very peculiar looking. At ten, the leader opens their eyes. If s/he sees anyone move, that player is sent back to the starting line and must begin over again. Everyone else stays as is and the leader repeats the counting and sending back. This continues until one player reaches the goal and becomes the winner.

### **Tag- Everybody's It**

**Ages 6 -9**

Players: 6+

Equipment: none

Time: 10 minutes

Description: All participants can tag anyone. If you are tagged you must freeze. Anyone can free a tagged person by ‘high-fiving’ them. Participants choose to either tag people, free people or try a combination of both.

### **Tag-frozen**

**Ages 6 -9**

Players 8+

Equipment: none

Time 10 minutes

Description: Two or more people are ‘it’. They try to tag as many as they can. When a player is tagged, she must stand still, but can be thawed if touched by a free player. The object of the game is for the people who are it to freeze the entire group.

## **What Time Is It Mr. Wolf?**

**Ages 6 -9**

Players: 4+

Equipment: none

Time: 15 minutes

Description: All of the children line up behind a leader. The leader pretends to be a wolf leading the little sheep away from home a line placed anywhere on the playground. The children follow the wolf asking, "What time is it Mr. Wolf?" He or she answers giving any time of the day. However, when he says, "Dinner time", the wolf turns and chases the sheep trying to tag them before they can return home. The sheep that are tagged become Mr. Wolf's helpers.

## **Tag-Hook On**

**Ages 8 and up**

Players: 8+

Equipment: none

Time: 10 minutes

Description: Couples are in a scattered formation and are standing with inside arms linked. There is a runner and the person who is "it". To escape, the runner links arms with one of the partners and the other must run in his/her place.



## Aerobic Activities

### Ages 9-14

- Brisk walking/hiking
- Jogging
- Cycling
- Rollerblading
- Ice-skating
- Road/ball hockey
- Aerobics
- Water aerobics
- Swimming
- Soccer
- Broomball
- Hockey
- Tobogganing
- Snowshoeing
- Canoeing/paddling

## Traditional Games and Activities of the Ojibway

### Wolf Tag, Hunter and Moose Tag

One child is chosen to be the wolf by drawing sticks. The child who draws the shortest stick becomes the wolf and the rest become caribou. Once the wolf attacks (tagged) a caribou he is considered captured. The game continues until all caribou are caught.

### The Arrow game

Place an arrow about ten to fifteen feet from the players. A simple dowel or stick can be the arrow. Then have them throw two arrows one at a time each to see if they can touch the first. The one who touches it most or gets closest is the winner. Older children can attempt to cross the stick in order to score.

### Reverse Ring Toss with Arrow

Place a wooden or metal “wagon hoop” size hoop on the ground. The player stands about 2.5 to 3 meters from it. The player faces away from the hoop. He then tries to throw sticks (arrows) into the hoop.

## **Ball Games**

### **Ball Race**

A game of ball race would be easy to set up by simply giving the kids something to kick while timing them from one point to another. Something like an old wash cloth tied into a rough knot/ball could easily be used for safety. Remember that the course should be as long as possible.

### **Hand and Foot Ball**

Give kids a large leather ball which they let fall alternately on their foot and knee, again throwing it up and catching it, and thus keeping it in motion for a length of time without letting it fall to the ground.

Variation: Throw the ball up from the foot only. Modify using a large ball.

### **Hand Ball #1**

Four participants stand in a square; each pair standing in opposite corners, throw the ball one to the other, striking it with their hands. Those who continue longest have won.

### **Dodge Ball Variation**

Play with a large, soft ball, and make a mark with your foot across the middle of the playing field. Choose sides, half on one side and half on the other. One side takes the ball, and one of the players on that side runs forward with it to the line and tries to strike a player on the other. If he hits that player, the latter goes to the striker's side, but if he misses, the other side throws the ball. Be certain to use a very soft ball or tied cloth.