

Let's Work Together

Why is team building important?

The skills learned from team building are important parts of personal and group development in children. During team building activities, children have the chance to communicate with each other and work towards a common goal. By practicing being an effective team member and team leader, children develop confidence in their own abilities. Learning how to work with others and communication are important by-products of team building.

*"The art of communication is the language of leadership."
— James Humes*

Working as a team.

Team building with children means you are developing their ability to work together toward a common goal. This makes the work or job easier because the children are working together. When a team works together to solve a challenge, everyone in the group wins and all children have a positive experience. Conduct team building activities with children that emphasize cooperation and collaboration, not competition. The skills learned from being part of a team are necessary for positive action in everyday life in school, work, and the community.

Conducting team building activities with children can help children work on developing the following skills:

Problem solving	Idea exchange
Communication	Working with others and different groups
Cooperation	Leadership
Listening	Creative thinking
Self-esteem	

The following suggestions are for activities that encourage team building among children. These activities work well with both older preschool and school-age children.

Safety of children should be the number one concern. Make sure rules are clear on the proper use for equipment and expected behavior for each activity.

Activity: "Cats and Dogs"

Materials: None

Age: Preschool children

Description: This is an excellent activity for making teams or groups. Every child must choose to be a cat or a dog, and the goal is to find and join others of the same animal. Children must make the sound of their animal to locate others because everyone has their eyes closed. The game is over when all the dogs and cats have found each other. Children may take turns to suggest animals other than dogs and cats.

Activity: "Create a Work of Art"

Materials: Large piece of paper, crayons, paint or markers

Age: Preschool or school-age

Description: Decide on a theme for the artwork. Spread a large piece of paper on the floor and have children work together as a team to create a piece of artwork based on the chosen theme. Encourage children to share ideas and divide duties to create a masterpiece.

Activity: "Knot Me"

Materials: A piece of rope. The rope should be at least 1-2 feet long per child.

Age: School-age

Description: This game requires children to work together toward a solution to a problem. Take the piece of rope and tie a knot about every 2 to 3 feet. There should be one knot per child. Lay the rope out and have each child stand by a knot. Have each child grab the rope with one hand, holding onto a side of a knot. The

children have to use their free hand to untangle the knot. Children have to work together to figure out how to untie the knots without letting go of the rope.

After each activity, discuss some of the following team building questions:

Did your group work together?

How did the group communicate?

What did you learn from this activity?

Other common games that can be used as easy team building activities include:

Jump rope Simon Says Red Light, Green Light

Activity: "Group Puzzle Activity"

Materials: Puzzle

Age: Preschool or school-age

Description: Take a puzzle from your classroom and divide the puzzle pieces among the children. Have the children put the puzzle together as a team. Encourage them to communicate and collaborate as they use the pieces to complete the puzzle.

Resources:

Pica, Rae. 2006. *Great Games for Young Children*. North Carolina: Gryphon House.

Heck, Tom. 2009. *Duct Tape Teambuilding Games: 50 Fun Activities to Help Your Team Stick Together*. Asheville, NC: Life Coach, Inc.

References:

Katz, Lillian. 1993. "All about me: Are we developing our children's self-esteem or their narcissism?" *American Educator*, 17(2), 18-23.

Midura, Daniel W., and Donald R. Glover. 2005. *Essentials of Team Building: Principles and Practices*. Maryland: Sheridan Books.

Other classroom ideas that support the development of team building skills:

Problem solving. Encourage children to think independently by asking open ended questions throughout the day. Example: Jose wants to play with the blocks and Sierra is already playing with them. Ask Jose, "What can you play with until it is your turn to play with the blocks? What else do we have in the classroom that you can use to build something?"

Communication. Good communication is necessary for successful teams. Teach children to send clear messages through the day and in all classroom activities. Get their full attention to what is being said, encourage them to ask questions if they don't understand, and have them repeat back to you what is being said.

Cooperation. Teaching children to take turns is an excellent way to develop cooperation.

Self-esteem. Giving children choices helps them feel like they have some control over what is happening. This can be as simple as asking them which color marker they want to use or what color cup they would like for their milk at snack time.

Idea exchange. Group projects are ways for children to come up with an idea and work as a team on a project. For example, have children work on a paper quilt. The teacher or children can choose the topic for the project. Have each child create a work of art on a piece of square paper. Once the pictures are completed, they can be glued together onto a paper drop-cloth. The finished project can be used as a classroom display.

Leadership. Give children the opportunity to take leadership roles in the classroom. Create leadership situations in the form of classroom jobs. Make sure everyone has a chance to have a leadership role such as door holder, snack helper, line leader or clean up helper.

Choking Cautions

Young children can choke on small objects and toy parts. All items used for children under three years of age and any children who put toys in their mouths should be at least 1¼ inch in diameter and between 1 inch and 2¼ inches in length. Oval balls and toys should be at least 1¾ inch in diameter. Toys should meet federal small parts standards. Any toys or games labeled as unsuitable for children under three should not be used.

Other items that pose a safety risk and should not be accessible to children under three include, but are not limited to: button batteries, magnets, plastic bags, styrofoam objects, coins, balloons, latex gloves, and glitter.

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