

IDEAS FOR ACTIVE INDOOR RECESS

UP, DOWN, STOP, GO

SUPPLIES NEEDED: NONE

This is a game of opposites. Choose an instructor who will call out the commands: Up, Down, Stop, Go, Together, Apart. The students must then do the **OPPOSITE** of the command.

UP = Squat down and touch the floor

DOWN = Stand up with arms raised to the ceiling

STOP = Run in place

GO = Freeze

TOGETHER = Jump and land with your legs apart

APART = Jump and land with your legs together

If a student makes a mistake, have them do 5 of specific exercise (jumping jacks, squats, elbows to knees, etc.) and then rejoin the game.

Game courtesy of Playworks.org

LET THE GOOD TIMES ROLL

SUPPLIES NEEDED: A SET OF DICE

Have a student name a physical activity (lunges, crunches, push-ups, squats, mountain climbers, burpees, etc.), and then roll the dice. Whatever number the student rolls, the class must complete that many reps of the exercise. The first student to complete all their reps is the next to roll the dice.

KEEP IT UP

SUPPLIES NEEDED: SEVERAL BALLOONS, BEACH BALLS, OR OTHER LIGHT WEIGHT BALLS

Divide students into groups of 3 to 5. Each group is tasked with keeping a balloon/beach ball from touching the ground or any furniture in the classroom for as long as possible. The goal is to be the last group with your balloon/ball in the air. The same student may not hit the ball two times in a row. After a student hits the ball once, another student must hit the ball before the first student may hit it again. To provide an extra challenge, direct students to only use a certain body part to hit the ball (a single finger, fist, elbows, feet, etc.).

OVER AND UNDER RELAY

SUPPLIES NEEDED: 2 BEAN BAGS OR ERASERS OR SIMILAR-SIZED OBJECTS

Have the class form two lines with an equal number of students in each line. Everyone in line must face the same direction. Give the first student in each line a bean bag. When the teacher says go, the students must pass the bean bag backwards over their head to the next student in line and continue until the last student. When the last student in line has the bean bag, they must run to the front of the line and begin the second round-passing the bean bag to the student behind them between their legs. The game keeps going, alternating between over the head and under the legs, until every student has had a turn at the front of the line. And the first line finished wins! You can also invent other ways to pass the bean bag to keep the game interesting.

A GO FOOD OR SLOW FOOD?

SUPPLIES NEEDED: NONE

This game helps children understand how eating different types of food impacts their bodies.

HEALTHY FOODS – “GO” FOODS – Fuel kids up with nutrients and provide energy to learn, play, and grow!

UNHEALTHY FOODS – “SLOW” FOODS – Cause kids to feel sluggish and drag them down.

The leader calls out different names of food. If it's a healthy food (banana, spinach, berries, broccoli, water, eggs, etc.), students yell “GO” and move in place as fast as they can. If it's an unhealthy food (chips, sodas, burgers, etc.), students yell “SLOW” and do funny movements in slow motion. Let students take turns being the leader and calling out food. If there is a disagreement on whether a food is healthy or not, let the students discuss their opinions.

FREEZE DANCE

SUPPLIES NEEDED: EQUIPMENT TO PLAY MUSIC (PHONE, COMPUTER, ETC.)

When the music plays, students dance.

When the music stops, students freeze.

If a player does not freeze immediately, they have to do 10 jumping jacks before joining back in the game. To keep things aerobic, players should not get "out." To keep students engaged, have them take turns serving as "the leader." The leader may introduce new dance moves that other students have to copy.

Game courtesy of Playworks.org

FOUR CORNERS

SUPPLIES NEEDED: NONE

Identify four different corners of the room, and number them 1 through 4 (or give each corner a distinctive name—such as four of your favorite veggies). Select a leader to stand in the center of the room, cover their eyes, and count backwards from 10. Everyone else must quietly hop to one of the four corners to stand in. When the leader reaches zero, he or she will call out a corner (eyes still closed). All students standing in that corner must come to the middle of the room and do an exercise (sit ups, arm circles, hop on one foot, etc.) while the leader and other students play another round. When the next group of students (who were in the chosen corner) come to the middle to do their exercise, the first group of students can rejoin the game.

Game courtesy of Playworks.org

DAY AT THE ZOO

SUPPLIES NEEDED: NONE

Assign one student to be the "zoo keeper." The zoo keeper calls out the name of an animal and a movement. For instance, the zoo keeper might call out, "Horses fly!" "Birds crawl!" or "Fish swim!" If the animal and the movement match up, as in the latter example, then the students should all perform the movement (swimming in the example given above). If a student moves when the zoo keeper calls out an animal and a movement that do not match up, that student is out. Instruct students who are out to keep active by doing their favorite exercise (jog in place, knee lifts, plank, etc).

Game courtesy of Valleyair.org

REMOTE CONTROL

SUPPLIES NEEDED: NONE

Students should stand at the back of the room and the leader should stand at the front. Leader calls out commands on a remote control and students move accordingly.

PLAY = students walk towards leader

FAST-FORWARD = students run towards leader

REWIND = students walk backwards

SLOW MOTION = students move forward in slow motion

PAUSE = students freeze

POWER OFF = students crouch down to the ground

POWER ON = students stand up

If a student performs an action that does not match the command given by the leader, they must go back to the starting line. The first student to reach the leader is the winner and becomes the leader for the next round.

Note: For younger grades, start with fewer commands and add more as they master the original cues.
Game courtesy of Playworks.org

WOULD YOU RATHER

SUPPLIES NEEDED: NONE

The leader offers students two choices to a silly question and assigns a movement to each possible answer. For example:

"Would you rather kiss a squirrel or kiss an elephant?"

"If you'd rather kiss a squirrel, move your arms in circles as fast as you can."

"If you'd rather kiss an elephant, do basketball shots."

Have students do the action associated with their individual answer for 20 to 30 seconds. Have students share with a partner the reasoning behind their answers and then try another silly "Would you rather..." question.

SHIPS AND SAILORS

SUPPLIES NEEDED: NONE

This game is complex and better suited for older students.

Have a captain call out these commands and crew does the following:

PORT – Move to the left side of the room

STARBOARD – Move to the right

CAPTAIN'S COMING – Stand at attention

HIT THE DECK – Drop to the floor

THREE MEN ROWING – Form groups of three and pretend to row a boat

FOUR MEN EATING – Form groups of four and pretend to eat a meal

MAN OVERBOARD – Form groups of two and "look" for the man overboard.

The last student to perform the command is eliminated. In the case of the group actions, any student who does not have a group is eliminated. After a few rounds, when students have a grasp of the commands, the winner may take over as the new "captain" at the end of each round.

WALK THIS WAY

SUPPLIES NEEDED: NONE (STEREO OR OTHER MUSIC PLAYING DEVICE OPTIONAL)

Select one student to serve as the “leader” and have the rest of the class form a line behind them. The leader leads the class in a circle around the perimeter of the classroom. The leader may move around the room in any way they choose - walk, skip, jump, etc. The rest of the class must mimic whatever movement the leader chooses. To make the game more exciting, the teacher can call out commands such as “freeze,” “go,” or “reverse direction.” The teacher may also play music, and instruct the students to freeze each time the music stops and change directions when it restarts. When students change directions the student at the back of the line becomes the new leader of the group.

MOUSETRAP

SUPPLIES NEEDED: NONE

Have two students form an arch by clasping their hands together above their heads. The rest of the class forms a line and moves in a circle, repeatedly passing underneath the arch. When the teacher calls “snap,” the two students forming the arch bring their hands down to trap whoever is walking under the arch at that time. Students who are caught in the trap are out. Once two or more students are eliminated, the students who are out can begin forming additional arches for their classmates to walk under.

Game courtesy of Valleyair.org

CLEAN YOUR ROOM

SUPPLIES NEEDED: USED PAPER FROM THE RECYCLING BIN

Divide the students into 2 groups and divide the classroom in half (a row of desks or chairs can serve as the divider). Have students crumple scrap paper into balls (every student should have the same number of paper balls to begin with). The objective of the game is to have the cleanest room, and the side with the fewest paper balls on the ground is the cleanest! Once the teachers says “go,” the balls start flying to the other side. Continue to toss to the other side for 1 minute. Decide on the winning team and try again. Remind students: no kicking or throwing paper balls at people!

Game courtesy of Valleyair.org

AS IF

SUPPLIES NEEDED: NONE

Encourage students to try some wild new moves! Have a leader call out the “as if” commands and let the students get creatively active for 30 seconds. You can also ask a student to be the judge and choose the best performance for each “as if.”

- Jog in place as if a big scary bear is chasing you
- Walk forward as if you’re walking through chocolate pudding
- Jump in place as if you are popcorn popping
- Reach up as if grabbing balloons out of the air
- March in place and play the drums as if you are in a marching band
- Paint as if the paint brush is attached to your head
- Swim as if you are in a giant pool of jello
- Move your feet on the floor as if you are ice skating
- Shake your body as if you are a wet dog

Let students create some of their own “as if” commands for continually new ideas.

BETWEEN THE LEGS BALL

SUPPLIES NEEDED: BOUNCY BALL

Push desks to the side and have students form a circle. Students open their legs a bit farther than shoulder-width apart, so that their feet touch their neighbors’ feet on both sides. Put a bouncy ball in the middle of the circle and students can use an open palm (no throwing) to try to get the ball through another student’s legs. Students should try to block the ball from going through their own legs.

FOR EVEN MORE IDEAS FOR ACTIVE INDOOR RECESS, CHECK OUT:

- www.playworks.org
- www.cosmickids.com
- www.gonoodle.com
- www.movetolearnms.org