Other Fun Playground Activities

Pickle

Grade Level
Third through fifth

Purpose
The runner in the middle is to reach as many bases as possible without being tagged by the two fielders

Equipment
One ball and two bases per group of three or four

Organization
Two bases are situated approximately 15 to 20 feet (4.5 to 6 meters) apart (depending on throwing skill of fielders), and a fielder stands beside each base ($F_1$ and $F_2$). The base runner (R) starts play in the middle between the two bases.

Activity Description
1. In baseball or softball, the base runner is in a “pickle” when caught between two bases. The game of Pickle is a fun activity created out of this game situation.
2. To begin the game, the player with the ball throws the ball to the other fielder.
3. The runner can then run to the open base (the base from which the ball was thrown) and gain a point.
4. Play continues with the runner gaining as many bases as possible before being tagged out or reaching a maximum of 10 points.
5. Fielders can tag the runner after catching a ball or may chase the runner down.
6. A runner must leave a base after three throws.
7. The runner has the choice of returning to the same base he previously left but does not gain a point for this decision.
8. A fourth player can be added and serve as the referee.
9. After 10 points or one out, the players, including the referee, rotate positions.

Flies and Skinners

Grade Level
Fourth and fifth

Purpose
To earn the right to bat by fielding the ball

Equipment
One tennis ball or cloth-coated baseball or softball and one bat. Gloves are optional but give an unfair advantage if some have them and some do not.

Organization
Four or five players are scattered in an open field area, and one player has both the bat and ball in the batting area.

Activity Description
1. The batter tosses the ball in the air and hits it to the waiting fielders.
2. The fielders have to earn the right to bat by catching either one fly ball, two hoppers (balls caught on one hop), or three skinners (ground balls).
Long-Rope Jumping

With the evolution and popularity of Double Dutch jumping, many more students are choosing long-jump roping as a recess activity. Children as young as kindergarten can jump in a long rope—as long as they have good turners! Kids can learn to be excellent turners; it just takes time and practice. Most children can master turning in grade 2.

Grade Level
K through second with turning assistance, third through fifth on their own

Equipment
One long rope per group of three to five students

Beginning Progressions
This is a sample progression for learning to jump with a long rope, followed by some cues for the turners:

1. Start by standing on a reference line facing a turner; jump straight up and down, staying in one spot midway between turners.
2. Become proficient with starting in the rope before advancing to front or back door entry.
3. Learn front door entry (rope turning away from jumper; jumper “follows” the rope in as the “door” is opened; after it goes down by the face the jumper runs in to designated reference spot and jumps as it comes around; exit should be out opposite side after rope is jumped and lifts up by side).
4. Learn back door entry (rope turning up toward jumper; rope is jumped on the way in; jumper waits until rope comes up by face and runs in to designated spot, jumping the rope while coming in; exit should be opposite the side of entry just after rope is jumped).
5. Turners should make sure they do not have “spaghetti” arms (elbows stay close to belly button; rope hits floor each time; turners focus on rope, not on jumper, and keep steady pace for jumper).

Long-Rope Challenges
- Chants for jumping inside (e.g., “Cinderella dressed in yella . . .”)
- Playing school (jump in front door, jump the number of the grade, and go out back door [i.e., run through for kindergarten, one jump for first grade, two jumps for second grade, and so on; jumpers continue as long as they are successful, or “passing”])
- Double Dutch (two ropes turning simultaneously inward)
Chinese Jump Rope

Three players are needed for Chinese Jump Rope. A circular-shaped elastic rope is the only equipment needed for play. “Enders” face each other about 10 feet (3 meters) apart with the elastic rope positioned around their ankles while a “jumper” jumps the rope. The challenge is to jump successfully!

Grade Level
Second through fifth

Equipment
One Chinese jump rope per three to five students

Activity Description
1. Chinese Jump Rope begins with the circular rope held in basic position around the ankles of the rope holders.
2. The rope level goes higher once the pattern is completed successfully by the jumper.
3. The jumper jumps until a mistake or “miss” is made or a predetermined number of attempts are made.

Role of Enders
- Face each other and step inside the rope
- Place the rope around the ankles.
- Step back until the rope is stretched (two parallel jumping lines, about 12 inches [30 centimeters] apart, are stretched between the enders).

Basic Cues for Jumpers
1. **In:** Jump both feet inside the rope.
2. **On:** Jump both feet on top of the rope. The left foot lands on the left rope, and the right foot lands on the right rope.
3. **Out:** Jump both feet from the middle to the side of the rope. Feet land together on one side.
4. **Side out:** Jump over both ropes from one side. Both feet land together on the other side of the ropes.
5. **Straddle out:** Jump a straddle! The left foot lands outside the left side of the rope. The right foot lands outside the right side of the rope.
6. **Side by side:** Jump quickly side to side. Both feet start “out” one side of the ropes. Jumpers call the steps out loud while jumping. Calling helps the jumper remember the “pattern” of the jumps.

Sample Jumping Steps
- Jump 1: In, out, side by side, on, in, out
- Jump 2: In, straddle out, side by side, in, out, side out
- Jump 3: Side out, side out, on, side out, side out, on, side out
- Jump 4: Side by side, in, straddle out, in, on, side out