Playground Favorites

Hopscotch

**Grade Level**
K through fifth

**Purpose**
To be the first player to successfully complete the hopscotch course

**Equipment**
Pebbles or beanbags and chalk to mark courses (unless permanent courses are available)

**Organization**
Four or five players at each hopscotch course

**Activity Description**
1. The first player in line throws a marker into box 1. The player then hops on one foot to the end of the court, hopping over the square that contains the marker. This same player, once in the last box, turns and hops back again. She stops at the second box, picks up the marker from the first box, and hops out.
2. If this player successfully completed her first turn without any faults, she would then proceed to throwing the marker inside box 2 and so forth. Players should take turns, always starting where they left off, until someone has successfully navigated all the spaces.
3. Wherever there are two boxes side by side, a player can land with one foot in each block performing a jump. Single boxes are hopped on one foot.
4. A player forfeits a turn and must return to the back of the line when a fault is committed. Faults include the following:
   - Failure to throw the marker completely inside the intended box
   - Stepping on a line
   - Hopping into a box that contains the marker
   - Using hands to support oneself while picking up a marker
5. The first player to complete the course successfully wins the game, and a new game begins.
**Kickball**

**Grade Level**
Second through fifth

**Purpose**
To score runs against the other team

**Equipment**
One kickball and four bases per 12 to 16 players

**Organization**
Organize the bases as on a softball field (home, first, second, and third in a diamond or square formation). Divide the group into two teams with equal skill ability. Teams should have no more than six to eight players to allow for maximum physical activity. One team is the kicking team. The other team is the fielding team; these players should be spread out to cover the infield and outfield areas.

**Activity Description**
The game is played similarly to softball and with the following rules:

1. The ball is rolled by the pitcher to the kicker. After the kick, the kicker runs the bases as in softball.
2. The fielding team can put the kicker out by catching a fly ball, tagging a runner who is between bases, or forcing the runner out by getting the ball to a base before the runner gets there. A force-out occurs only if the runner has to run to the base and does not have the option to return to the previous base.
3. No leading off or base stealing by the base runners is allowed.
4. The players can determine if they want to play two outs, three outs, or unlimited outs. With unlimited outs, the teams switch places after everyone on the kicking team has kicked. With two or three outs, the teams change places after the fielding team has successfully caused that number of outs. One point is scored each time a player on the kicking team safely returns home.

**Variations**

- **No-Outs Kickball.** This game is played much like regular kickball. The objective for the kicker is to kick the ball out into fair territory and run the bases without stopping before the catcher gains possession of the ball and says “Freeze.” This is the signal for the base runner to stop running and stay in that position, even if he is not on a base. When the next kicker kicks the ball, the base runner or runners start running around the bases again until the next “Freeze” signal. The base runners do not stop after circling the bases once. Base runners continue to run and score until everyone on their team has kicked. A point is scored each time a base runner touches home base. Teams switch places after everyone has kicked.

- **Long-Base Kickball.** This version of kickball is played with only one base. Kickers can either run to the base and back or stay on the base. Base runners can stay on the base until there are three players on the base; then on the next kick, all the base runners must run. Runners who successfully go to the base and touch home base score 1 point for their team. Outs are made just as in regular kickball. Teams switch places after everyone has had a chance to kick.
Wall Ball

Grade Level
Second through fifth

Purpose
To catch and throw a ball against a wall while attempting to cause the opponent to make an error

Equipment
One tennis ball and a wall with a blacktop or hard surface

Organization
Two to four players are about 16 feet (5 meters) from a wall. The first two players are side by side, and the remaining players are in line waiting their turn. A clear line is drawn for starting the game. To increase activity time, no more than four players should be involved in one game. However, several games can be going on simultaneously.

Activity Description
1. With two players standing side by side, one begins play by throwing the ball against the wall.
2. The other player must then catch the ball after it bounces once, but before it bounces twice.
3. If she is successful, the two players continue throwing and catching until one player catches it before the bounce, after two bounces, or misses it completely. The player who makes the error is out and goes to the end of the line of waiting players. The winner of that round is awarded a point and stays in the game to take on the next opponent. When play time is over, the one with the most points wins the game.
4. Another version of scoring is similar to Pig or Horse in basketball. Every time a player loses a round she receives a letter. Once someone spells the word, start a new game.
Tetherball

Grade Level
Second through fifth

Purpose
To wrap the rope around the pole before the opponent does the same in the opposite direction

Equipment
Tetherball and pole per two to six players

Organization
Poles, with removable ropes and balls, should be permanently sunk into the ground. Poles should not be positioned on a hill, next to other equipment, or close to each other. A typical tetherball court is a circle that is 6 feet (about 2 meters) in diameter, with the pole in the middle. A line divides the circle into two halves. Players or teams must stay on their own half at all times.

Activity Description
1. This game can be played between two individuals or two teams, each with two or three players.
2. The player or team designated to start first with the ball may strike the ball with the hand either to the right or to the left. The opposing player or team attempts to strike the ball back in the opposite direction. The two players or teams continue striking the ball back and forth, trying to wrap the ball completely around the pole. This action results in a point, and the other player or team gets the ball to serve next.
3. Snagging the rope as a means of stopping the ball is prohibited and results in a free serve for the opponent.
4. Catching or throwing the ball is not allowed and results in a point for the opponent.
5. The game continues until one player or team reaches 10 points or a predetermined ending with rules established by the players.
Four Square

Grade Level
Third through fifth

Purpose
To eliminate other players and try to take over the fourth square

Equipment
One playground ball and a Four Square court per four to seven players

Organization
The court consists of four equal-sized squares drawn on a paved play space. The size of the court can range from 8 by 8 feet (2.4 by 2.4 meters) for younger players to 16 by 16 feet (about 5 by 5 meters) for upper elementary players. Squares are labeled 1, 2, 3, and 4. The server’s square, square 4, is sometimes marked off with a service line drawn diagonally across it. Additional players stand behind a wait line that is located next to square 1.

Activity Description
1. Each player stands in one of the four squares. The server, in square 4, starts the game by dropping the ball behind the serving line and striking it, with both hands in an underhand motion, into one of the other squares.
2. The player receiving the serve must let it bounce once before hitting it into another square. Play continues until a fault has been committed by one of the four players. Faults include the following:
   - Stepping over the line while serving
   - Hitting a ball out of bounds
   - Hitting a line with the ball (Children often eliminate this rule on the middle lines because it stops play too often. They also like to play using the rule that on the line is good, but outside the line is out.)

- Failing to return a hit made to your square
- Using a throw instead of a strike or striking the ball with a fist
- Allowing the ball to make contact with any other part of the body

3. When four people are playing, the one who committed the fault moves to square 1 and the others rotate to fill in the empty squares. For example, if the server commits the fault, she moves to square 1; the player on square 1 moves to square 2; the player on square 2 moves to square 3, and the player on square 3 becomes the new server. After each fault, everyone moves up to fill in the square opened as the result of the fault.

4. If a game has more than four players, the one who commits a fault leaves the court and joins the line of players waiting to get in the game beside square 1. A player in the front of the line always starts in square 1. In order to maximize activity, it is recommended that no more than six or seven players be involved in one game.

Variations

- **Around the World Four Square.** This variation has rules similar to those of Four Square with one exception—the ball has to be hit in a certain direction. If the server serves to the right, the ball has to continue around the square to the right. However, the server can call out “Left” and change direction anytime the ball lands in his square. Play continues until someone commits a fault.

- **Doubles Four Square.** This game is the same as Four Square but with two players (partners) at each square; one partner is in the square and the other waits outside the square. As soon as the partner standing inside the square hits the ball, she quickly gets out and her partner steps into the square prepared to hit the next ball. Partners continue alternating hits throughout the game. Regular Four Square rules are used, so if one partner commits a fault, both partners go to the end of the waiting line.

- **Battle Four Square.** The game is played as regular Four Square unless the server calls out “Battle!” before serving. When this happens, the server can hit the ball to anyone, but the other players must always play the ball back to the server. This continues until a fault is committed or the server calls out “Battle’s over!” When the “Battle’s over!” call is made, play resumes as regulation Four Square.

- **Team Four Square.** Team Four Square is a great way to keep many children actively involved. It is a bigger version of Doubles Four Square. The squares need to be larger than for regular Four Square—about 16 feet (about 5 meters) would be ideal. There can be a team of three or four players in each square; unlike what happens in Doubles Four Square, players stay inside their squares without alternating turns. The rules and faults are the same as for regular Four Square.