

RECREATION

GAMES, MIXERS,
SKITS & MORE

Remix

*ProTeens*TM

Recreation: Remix

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INTRODUCTION

What is the purpose of a recreational program in youth ministry?

Some people think that Christians never have fun. But God is the giver of all good things, and He gave us the ability to enjoy life. We Christians have extra reason for enjoying recreation—we know the true Source of pleasure, and we know that our enjoyment in this life is merely a foretaste of knowing God more fully in eternity.

While recreation shouldn't take center stage in any ministry, it can serve as a tool to focus your teens on God.

Break Down Barriers

Games help teens to relax and open up, especially if they don't know each other well. Activities also direct a teen's attention from self and insecurity onto a common objective. By focusing on similarities rather than differences, we promote unity within the group.

Teens learn not only through hearing, but also through watching and interacting. You can teach your teens a great deal about love and truth by interacting with them positively during game time.

Promote Fellowship

Teamwork allows your teens to learn about each other. Recognizing vulnerability in each other, teens can learn to respond with encouragement and bond over shared experiences. Instead of cultivating a prideful, competitive spirit, a recreational program should teach teens to honor and bless one another.

Encourage Evangelism

Planned activities offer a way of reaching new teens. Fun activities create a low-pressure environment for unreached teens to see the love of Christ and know Him through your group. Of course, don't use the prospect of fun to mislead visitors—be upfront when inviting teens, and let them know that ultimately you want them to meet God.

Channel a Desire for Fun

Teens love to have fun. So why not channel that desire into constructive activities, instead of leaving them to pursue destructive alternatives? Fun is a vital part of our education—it's a key ingredient to building good friendships and working relationships, and it deserves attention, care, and training.

We pray that this resource compilation aids your ministry as you teach teens about God's character. Have fun!

ORGANIZATION

Well-planned organization helps every activity run smoothly. Here are a few things to consider when preparing.

Equipment

Collect and prepare all of your equipment in advance. For some of your activities, it will be wise to set up the equipment beforehand and try it out to make sure it works. Water hose fights can be a real drag if the faucet doesn't work.

For skits and stunts, make sure you have all the needed props and equipment well in advance.

Facilities

Find out beforehand if there are restrictions on the property you intend to use for an activity. Always get permission before using property for an activity. The saying, "it's better to ask forgiveness than permission," does not reflect a loving, respectful attitude.

Make sure to leave places better than you found them. Always clean up after yourself when an activity is over. If by accident property is damaged, notify the owner immediately and offer to compensate them.

Always abide by all laws and regulations, especially for activities that require driving or riding in a vehicle. Communicate this clearly to anyone helping you.

Time

As much as possible, begin and end on time. Be prepared to use every minute of your allotted time. Don't find yourself standing around with an extra hour and nothing planned. It's better to over-plan than under-plan.

If an activity requires a rehearsal or training beforehand, make sure to schedule extra time for that so you don't use up activity time.

Players

Determine ahead of time the criteria you'll use to mix or divide players for a game. Consider the age differences of your group members. You might not want the junior high students getting tackled by the high school senior football players. Minimize injury by matching competitors as evenly as possible.

Notify teens beforehand if the activity requires special preparations on their part, like a change of clothes. Any event flyers, calendar notes, and announcements should include this information.

Structure

Every activity and game involves four basic elements that all participants should clearly understand.

Objective

Without a clear objective in mind, your activity will break down fast. When introducing the activity, start by describing the game in one sentence, without including any rules just yet. For example, the objective of basketball would be, “The object of this game is to put the ball through the hoop.” Make the objective as clear and simple as possible.

Mention later in your description how the game will be scored. For example, “Each basket from the floor will count two points, and each penalty shot will count one point.” State also how to determine the winner—“The team with the most points at the end of the game is the winner.”

Rules

The rules dictate the way to achieve the objective. Rules have three components:

1. “You *can* . . .” Make these items pretty general, since it’s assumed that anything not specifically banned is allowed.
2. “You *cannot* . . .” Be as specific as possible here, being careful to keep your “can’t’s” airtight. If, during the game, you run into some “can’t’s” you didn’t think of before, add them the next time you play.
3. “You *must* . . .” Include all the positive restrictions that apply to your game. For example, “You must dribble while moving with the ball.”

Boundaries

Specifically include any off-limit objects or areas.

Duration

This statement describes how the game ends. It can be stated in terms of points, minutes, rounds, or achieved objectives.

Injuries

Always watch for potential injury. Common sense goes a long way in minimizing risks. Don’t have teens running through the woods or a field in the dark if you haven’t scouted the area beforehand in daylight. Check your playing equipment regularly to guard against malfunctions.

If you don't already have one, create or buy a first aid kit. You can get ideas online for assembling a basic kit. At bare minimum, you should include:

- Instant cold packs
- Bandages, large and small
- Disposable nitrile gloves
- Non-stick sterile pads
- Adhesive tape
- Pain relief medication
- Antiseptic wipes
- Antibiotic ointment
- First aid instructions, emergency contact info, medical information for all your teens, and phone numbers for emergency services

Some risky activities—such as horseback riding or whitewater rafting—will require a liability waiver. Stand your ground on this one, and don't let teens participate if a parent or guardian has not signed a waiver. Keep a waiver for each teen in a file. Review the terms of your ministry's insurance, as well.

All of your teens and visitors should fill out a medical form listing their allergies, medical conditions, emergency contact numbers, and other relevant information. It's too late to get this information once the injury or medical crisis occurs. Create a response plan for a medical emergency.

Volunteers

Enlisting responsible volunteers will help activities run smoothly and ease your workload. Volunteers can keep score, offer advice, counsel teens, and provide extra sets of "eyes" for you.

Find responsible, mature adults who want to serve teens. Avoid asking parents to assist, if at all possible, to ensure fairness and to give teens some space to fellowship with one another.

Avoid allowing children to attend teen activities. Not only can children interrupt the program and squash teens' enthusiasm, but they will also divide the volunteers' attention between childcare and assisting the youth leader. Keep teen activities separate from children's programs so that kids will look forward to joining your group when they grow older. If your volunteers have children but no arrangements for childcare, make your own arrangements for a sitter to watch the kids on the premises, away from the activity.

Communicate clearly with your volunteers. At the beginning of the year, hold a training meeting so you can explain your policies and expectations. Encourage your volunteers not only to assist with activities, but also to reach out to the teens on a personal level.

Enthusiastic, well-trained volunteers are gold! Don't take them for granted. State your appreciation for their service regularly, and pick a specific time to honor them in front of your teens.

Planning

Develop a philosophy for your activities. What are the primary goals for your group? How will this activity help you achieve those goals?

Make a calendar to plan your activities far in advance. Plan a mix of athletic games, socializing, and quiet, "thinking" games so there's an enjoyable activity for every type of player. At the end of this book, you'll find a Game Formula Worksheet to help you create your own games.

Keep a record of the activities you do throughout the year, noting what worked and what didn't, how much time each took, and any other suggestions.

Customization

Make a game more enjoyable by customizing it to the needs and interests of your group. Be flexible! If your teens don't find a particular activity fun, set it aside and do something else. Be willing to recognize a flop and adjust your plan accordingly. Always have one or two simple activities as a backup, and use your stockroom assets for any last-minute alterations.

THE RECREATION STOCKROOM

Here's a list of the basic equipment for most games in this book. This is just a starter list—over time, you'll be able to refine your stockroom to better fit your needs.

Balloons

Get both large and small. Keep a stock of water balloons handy. A water-balloon fight makes a great standby activity, provided teens wear clothing that can get wet.

If you play with water balloons outdoors, check with the groundskeeper to see if you'll need to pick up the pieces of balloons after the end of the activity.

Masking Tape

Buy masking tape in various widths. It's a great tool for marking off a course or an indoor playing area. When used as an armband, tape helps players identify their teammates.

Plastic Milk Jugs

Jugs make good course markers when weighted with water or sand. If you use jugs to create a water course in a lake or pool, attach the jug to something heavy—like a rock—with a rope or line.

Marking Spray Paint

Buy some cans of marking spray paint to use on grass, or some chalk spray paint to use on pavement.

Inner Tubes

Get some new inner tubes from a tire supply store. Use them in Keep Away, Tug-O-War, and relays.

Whistles on Lanyards

Save your vocal chords by using a whistle. Make sure to get plenty for your volunteers. Blowing a whistle instead of shouting will help your calls sound clear, confident, and credible.

Rope

Get as many kinds, diameters, and lengths of rope as you can store. They can be used to string up a volleyball net, tie up a canopy, make a guide for spraying a boundary line, or to play Tug-O-War.

Balls

Collect an assortment of balls, making sure the inflatable ones are pumped and ready to go before an activity starts. Volleyballs, Ping-Pong balls, basketballs, kickballs, Nerf® balls of all sizes, soccer balls, and footballs all come in handy. Many games require some sort of ball, so be sure to have plenty on hand.

Air Pump and Inflation Needles

Keep spare needles on hand, and bring your inflation equipment with you if your activity is held off-site.

Felt Tip Markers

Have a variety of both permanent and water-soluble markers in different sizes. Use these to designate teams and make signs.

Plastic Trash Can

Get a large plastic trash can to use as a container for your equipment, or at least to put trash in when the activity is done and it's time to clean up.

Scorekeeping Materials

Get some clipboards, and have pens, pencils, and paper on hand at all times.

No matter how well you plan an activity, something can always go wrong at the last minute. Maybe you've planned a softball game, and a thunderstorm rolls up minutes before the start. Or maybe at the beginning of the big annual volleyball tournament, the server accidentally nails the neighbor's cactus with your only volleyball.

It's times like these when you wish your teens would settle for a rip-roaring game of checkers. But with adequate preparation, you can save an activity from catastrophe by keeping your stockroom in good shape and by preparing some simple backup activities.

TEN CARDINAL RULES OF OFFICIATING

Teens have an acute sense of justice when they believe their personal rights have been violated. To prevent heated arguments about fairness—and to make sure you’re paying attention—always adhere to the following rules when acting as referee.

- 1. Never anticipate.** Sometimes you may be ready to make a call before it actually happens. As in any athletic event, the impossible usually occurs. So wait to make sure your calls are accurate.
- 2. Get in the best position to make accurate calls.** An official who is constantly distracted or out of place can’t make consistent, accurate calls.
- 3. Call what you see, and only what you see.** If you get blocked by players and miss the action, no call should be made. In addition, be sure to call what you see even if other players disagree.
- 4. Be confident.** Don’t hesitate to make a call when it’s needed. Confidence comes from being in the proper position, knowing the game rules, and consistently paying attention.
- 5. Be consistent.** Call the game as evenly as possible. If you miss a call, don’t try to make it up later just to even the score. The game itself will compensate if you do accidentally miss a call.
- 6. Don’t call the unnecessary.** Overlook unintended action as long as it doesn’t slow the game. If teams incur violations simultaneously without slowing the game, there’s little point in disrupting a game because the violations will cancel each other out.
- 7. Make the calls in your own area.** When the playing area is divided and each area has its own referee, don’t make calls outside of your area unless a very obvious violation has been overlooked.
- 8. Do not coach.** It’s the official’s job to judge, not to coach. Enforce the rules of the game without interpreting them for teams or players. Don’t offer advice or verbal assistance to either team as it can give an unfair advantage.
- 9. Don’t get distracted.** As an official, stay oblivious to anything said about you or to you during a game—the only exception being when a player has a legitimate question.
- 10. Don’t break the flow of the game.** Officials should attempt to stay out of the way during games so they don’t distract the players. Officials control the progress of the game so the players can play and determine the outcome of a contest. A game dominated by whistle-blowing officials is boring to spectators and frustrating to players.



MIXERS &
STUNTS

To loosen up your teens, start out with a low-intensive game to mix them up and get them talking to each other. The following activities require minimum effort to prepare.

SIT DOWN IF

- **Equipment:** List of statements
- **Number of Players:** Any
- **Duration:** 5 minutes
- **Playing Area:** Any
- **Prep:** Prepare your list of statements in advance.

Instruct everyone to stand and inform them that you're going to read a list of statements. If a statement is true for any person in the room, that person must sit down and remain seated. Tell them to be as honest as possible. The list provided will get you started, but feel free to add some statements of your own.

Sit down if . . .

1. Your socks don't match
2. You have a hole in your sock
3. You forgot to wear socks
4. You didn't brush your teeth today
5. You sing in the shower
6. You snore
7. You need a haircut
8. The person next to you needs a haircut
9. You need more hair
10. You're still standing

KISS THE KING'S RING

- **Equipment:** 2 rings; blindfold; sheet; crown
- **Number of Players:** Any
- **Duration:** 10 minutes
- **Playing Area:** Any
- **Prep:** Select several volunteers and send them out of the room. Select someone to be "king" and give him one ring to wear on his hand, and one for his toe.

Bring each volunteer back, one at a time, wearing a blindfold. Tell participants they are entering the throne room of the king and that to become a part of the king's court, they must kneel and kiss the king's ring. Lead the rest of the observers in a chant as each participant re-enters the room.

Have some "guards" help each participant kneel and lean forward to actually kiss the ring *finger* of the king. Then have the teen stand up and remove the blindfold. He or she will see the king (wrapped in a sheet and wearing a crown) with a ring on

his bare toe. The teen will think he or she has actually kissed the king's toe! Be sure the king hides his ringed finger before the blindfold is removed.

SMELL THE STICK

- **Equipment:** A long stick
- **Number of Players:** Any
- **Duration:** 10 minutes
- **Playing Area:** Any
- **Prep:** Acquire a long stick, such as a broom handle. Before your activity, arrange for an assistant who will brief each volunteer "smeller" in secret.

Hold your stick horizontally with both hands. In front of your group, ask for a few volunteers, whom you will then send out of the room (to be briefed by your secret assistant). Explain to the rest of the group that they may touch one spot on the stick, and the volunteer will be able to smell the spot where they've touched it.

Have someone come up and touch the stick. The first volunteer then enters and smells the stick. Of course, the volunteer isn't really able to identify the spot by smelling; he or she is watching for you to provide a clue by lifting your foot slightly when the volunteer reaches the right spot with his or her nose.

Ask for explanations as to why the volunteers keep getting correct answers, and see how long it takes for someone to catch on.

TOP SECRET

- **Equipment:** A long stick
- **Number of Players:** Any
- **Duration:** 10 minutes
- **Playing Area:** Any
- **Prep:** Select a volunteer and meet with him or her ahead of time to explain how to break the secret code.

Here's another trick. Make sure your room contains several easily identifiable objects (like furniture), and get your long stick.

The volunteer whom you've planted will leave the room after he or she has been chosen from the group. Get the group to pick an item in the room, such as a lamp. Call the volunteer back in and give that person the secret code, as follows.

You will basically spell out the name of the object to your assistant. You'll identify the first letter of the item by starting your sentence with a word that begins with that letter.

So for the lamp, the first letter is “L.” You might say, “Listen closely and see if you can break this code.” The word *listen* will cue the assistant that the first letter is “L.”

This applies only to consonants; you’ll use another method for vowels.

“A” is the second letter of lamp—a vowel. Assign a number to each vowel. You’ll communicate that number to your assistant by tapping your stick on the floor.

A = 1 tap

E = 2 taps

I = 3 taps

O = 4 taps

U = 5 taps

When the assistant is listening for taps, they’ll have an easier time deciphering them by thinking “A-E-I-O-U” along with the taps rather than simply counting them.

To finish the “lamp” code, tap once for “A.” For “M” say, “Many times you’ve seen this item.” Next, say, “Please identify the correct item now,” for the final “P.” Hopefully the assistant has been paying attention and will give the correct answer.

Make sure to add pauses and misleading gestures to your tapping and sentences. Deceive the group by pretending to write on the ground with your stick. Instruct your assistant to watch the stick moving. Just make sure to distinguish your taps from other stick movements, and enjoy mystifying your teens.

CLOCK MIXER

- **Equipment:** Copies of the diagram for each participant; writing utensils
- **Number of Players:** 15 or more
- **Duration:** 45–60 minutes
- **Playing Area:** Any
- **Prep:** Make copies of the following diagram and cut into half. Give one half-sheet and a writing utensil to each person as they arrive.

Give teens 15 minutes to find an “appointment” for each hour on the clock. Tell them to write the name of each person they find on the lines of the clock. In order to schedule an appointment with that person, both teens should have the same hour free. Players can’t make more than one appointment with any one teen.

Encourage your teens to have an even number of girls and guys to get them out of their comfort zone.

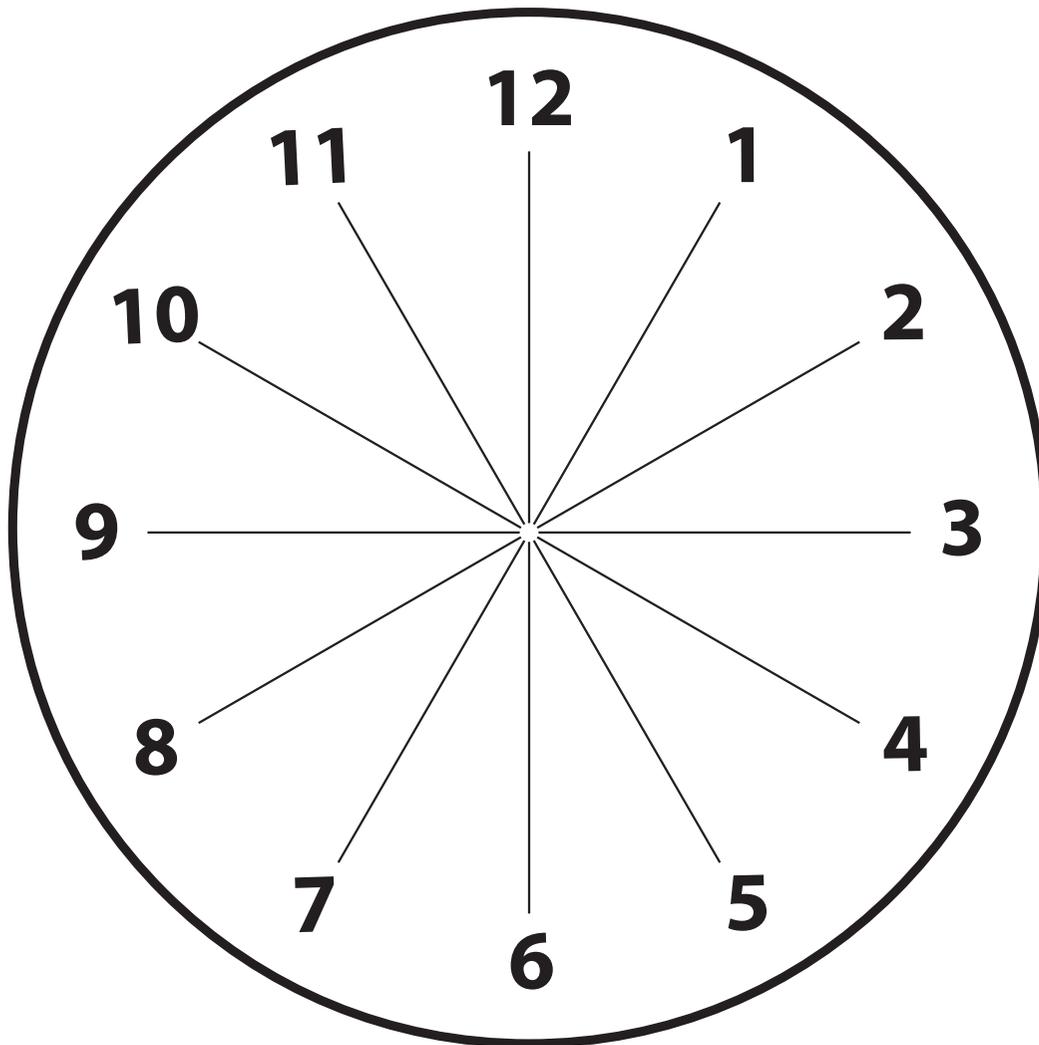
When the 15 minutes is up, announce that it is now one o’clock. Teens must find their one o’clock appointment partner and socialize. Make each “hour” three or four

minutes long. (If you don't have much time for this activity, reduce the number of hours on the clocks.)

Encourage teens to get to know one another. Suggest questions for them to ask, such as "Where were you born?" or "What's your favorite food?"

Any remaining free hours on a teen's clock means that teen must be a "wallflower" and sit in a designated area. There they may join up with another wallflower and so create a last-minute appointment.

Continue until the last hour is finished.





SKITS

Skits involve more prep than a mixer or stunt, but if performed well, they will be a big hit. Usually you will have to round up some props, assign parts to volunteers, memorize lines, and schedule a couple of rehearsals.

Even if you don't have exactly the right props or the lines perfectly memorized, good actors can carry the day. Use volunteers who can over-act and who aren't afraid to goof off in front of people.

Take time to properly organize and rehearse. When it's curtain time, let go and have fun.

|| PRINCESS CHARMING

Select four or five unsuspecting teens from the audience and have them line up side by side in front of everyone. The leader stands on one end and says, "I'm Princess Charming and I went to Paris and I bought a fan that goes like this." She waves her hand in front of her in a fanning motion. The leader then instructs the person next to her to repeat the statement and accompanying hand motion.

After each person in line repeats the statement, he or she must continue performing the action. When the last in line finishes, the leader introduces a new statement and a new motion is added. Example: "I'm Princess Charming and I went to Paris and I bought a fan that goes like this, [keeps waving hand] and a pair of scissors that goes like this [makes scissors motion with fingers of other hand]."

Then this statement and motion are repeated down the line. Remember, no one may stop any previous motion; they must continue the previous motions and add the new one.

Third round: "I'm Princess Charming and I went to Paris and I bought a fan that goes like this, [keeps waving hand] and a pair of scissors that goes like this [makes scissor motion with fingers of other hand], and a horse that goes like this [bends and straightens knees]." Repeat down the line.

Fourth round: "I'm Princess Charming and I went to Paris and I bought a fan that goes like this, [keeps waving hand] and a pair of scissors that goes like this [makes scissors motion with fingers of other hand], and a horse that goes like this [bends and straightens knees], and a cuckoo clock that goes like this [makes a high-pitched cuckoo sound intermittently]." Repeat down the line.

Final round: "I'm Princess Charming and I went to Paris and I bought a fan that goes like this, [keeps waving hand] and a pair of scissors that goes like this [makes scissors motion with fingers of other hand], and a horse that goes like this [bends and straightens knees], and a cuckoo clock that goes like this [makes a high-pitched cuckoo sound intermittently], and I met a bunch of nuts like this [points to the other participants]."

I SAW A BAR

Have four volunteers stand shoulder-to-shoulder up front, close together. Tell the participants you all will talk like hillbillies. The leader stands at the end (stage left) of the line. He begins by reciting the following lines and performing the accompanying action.

First Statement:

Leader: I saw a bar!

First Person: Whar?

Leader: Over thar! [points with left hand across to his right side].

The first person will now address the second person:

First person: I saw a bar!

Second Person: Whar?

First person: Over thar! [points with left hand across to his right side].

[Continue until the line and the motion have reached the last person in line.]

Second Statement:

Leader: I saw a bar!

First Person: Whar?

Leader: Over thar! [points with left hand across to his right *and* points with right hand across to his left side].

Third Statement:

Leader: I saw a bar!

First Person: Whar?

Leader: Over thar! [points with left hand across to his right *and* points with right hand across to his left side, *and* extends right leg straight out].

Final Statement:

Leader: I saw a bar!

First Person: Whar?

Leader: Over thar! [this time, the leader throws his weight against his neighbor and topples over the line of teens].



GAMES

IRON STOMACH RELAY

- **Equipment:** Two paper bags; food and drink items for each bag, such as:
 - Two jars of baby food
 - Two green onions
 - Two cans of warm Coke
 - Two boxes of raisins
 - Two tins of anchovies
 - Two oranges
 - Two sandwiches
 - A lemon sliced into two halves
 - Two pickles
- **Number of Players:** 6 or more
- **Duration:** 30 minutes
- **Playing Area:** Any
- **Prep:** Divide into teams. On a table, place two paper bags filled with the consumables. Make sure to have one food or drink item per player.
- **Messiness Factor:** Slight, if anyone gets sick

Instruct each team to line up. At the start, the first person of each team will run to the bag and pull out an item, which he or she must then eat. (Be sure to find out ahead of time if anyone has food allergies, and adjust the bag contents accordingly.) Players must eat the first item they discover. Make sure that each player completely finishes eating before allowing the next player to go. After eating or drinking, the player returns to the back of the line, and the next player runs to the bag. The first team to completely eat or drink its food wins the race.

GIANT SACK RELAY

- **Equipment:** 6 burlap (or similar material) sacks cut and sewn into 2 large sacks (each sack approximately 5 feet high and 3–5 feet in diameter at bottom and top)
- **Number of Players:** 10 or more
- **Duration:** 10–20 minutes, depending on number of players
- **Playing Area:** Large
- **Prep:** Mark off a starting line and an end point for the course.

Divide into teams. Send half of each team to the other end of the course. The first player of each team gets into the sack and hops or shuffles to the end. The second player joins the first in the sack, and they travel together back to the starting line.

When they reach it, they will pick up another player. Continue until all the team has been picked up, or until there are five or six players in the sack. The team finishes by crossing the finish line with all team members in the sack.

If the sack reaches full capacity and there are still team members left, the group in the sack returns to the start line and vacates the sack, allowing the next player to start over. The first team to finish wins the race.

|| CHARIOT RELAY

- **Equipment:** 2 medium-sized rugs or sleeping bags
- **Number of Players:** Four or more
- **Duration:** 15 minutes
- **Playing Area:** Indoor
- **Prep:** Mark off a starting line and create an obstacle course. Ideas for obstacles:
 - Low bridge (a board tied between two chairs)
 - A tunnel (made of cardboard boxes or of teens)
 - A toll bridge (the rider must complete an activity, such as doing a worksheet, chugging a canned drink, reciting a memory verse, etc.)
 - A line of cones to weave through
- **Messiness Factor:** Slight, minimal cleanup

Divide group into two teams and instruct the players on each team to pair up. Each pair should choose the stronger player of the pair to pull the “chariot”—the rug or sleeping bag. The other player will ride.

Line up the first pairs of each team. At the signal, pullers may begin the course. When each pair returns, they must hand off the chariot to the next pair. If a rider falls off the chariot at any time, the puller must return to where the rider dismounted and help that player on again before proceeding through the course.

The first team to finish wins.

GRUB LINE

- **Equipment:** 10 flying discs; masking tape or chalk for marking
- **Number of Players:** 20 or more; can be adjusted for smaller groups
- **Duration:** 15 minutes
- **Playing Area:** Large; indoor or outdoor
- **Prep:** Mark off a large circle—whatever size works best in your playing area. Divide the circle line into 8 equal sections. Using your tape or chalk, mark off a station in each section by drawing a three by five foot rectangle at each position. See diagram.

