

# Spring awakens those outdoor games of our childhood

"Spring, spring is everywhere I can feel it in the air," says children's performer Bob Schneider.

Part of spring is outdoor games. Travelling back into our childhood, we can see the marbles on the driveway and hear the children chanting their favourite rhymes while, the skipping ropes hit the sidewalk, ceremoniously.

Neighbourhood games are a tradition as old as civilization. They date back as far as Plato, when the game of Hide and Seek was called "Apodidraskinda". Each generation has its own version of the games but, the goals remain the same.

Games are a test of physical agility, endurance, speed and strength. Games take many different forms from skipping, hopping, running, freezing to listening games like "What Time is it Mr. Wolf?" and "Red Light/Green Light". Games can vary from the simple game of "Tag" to the complex, like "Red Rover" and string games.

Many games find their roots as vehicles for learning, and teaching skills. When one studies various cultures and social groups around the World, games are often a sig-

## KIDS PLAY

with DIANA-LYNN JOHNSTON



nificant component of the social activities of the group.

If we examine game components like rhymes or chants we can recognize the valuable memory, and language skills that are being taught. Skipping and running games strengthen muscle development and enhance co-ordination.

Games of any kind provide opportunities for physical activity, co-operation, concentration, and good fellowship.

Are children still playing these games today? As parents we are very aware of the environment as well as preserving and recycling.

Let's hope that games are not in danger of becoming extinct or endangered. Let us also hope that this living part of our culture and our history is not being lost to the ever

popular video games and the television. Below are some game suggestions to get the spring back into your children's neighbourhood adventures.

### Going to Gramma's

**Reinforces:** memory, sequencing, and language development.

**Need:** A good memory and some willing participants.

**Activity:** Tell the children you are going to Gramma's and in your suitcase you are going to bring . . . and then you list an item you would bring in your suitcase. The next player repeats the phrase "I'm going to Gramma's and in my suitcase I am going to bring . . ." and repeats your item and then adds one of their own. Item suggestions are: pyjamas, toothbrush, pants, shirt, a teddy bear, a book etc. The games keeps going as long as all the players can remember the items in the suitcase. This is a great game to play in a check out line or in the car.

### Jacks

**Reinforces:** small muscle development, hand-eye, co-ordination, number counting,

and concentration.

**You Need:** A set of jacks and a small rubber ball. If you can't find Jacks in the stores use six evenly shaped pebbles.

**Activity:** Hold all six jacks in your throwing hand and scatter them on the flat playing surface (floor or pavement) with a single movement. Take the small ball in your throwing hand now and toss it up in the air. Immediately pick up one jack with your throwing hand, and after the ball has bounced once, catch it with your other hand. Keep doing the same thing until all the jacks have been picked up off the playing surface.

### Sock ball

**Develops:** directionality, hand-eye co-ordination.

**You Need:** a baseball size soft rubber ball and one tube sock. A great way to use those socks that loose their partners in the washing machine or dryer.

**Preparation:** The ball goes into the sock, all the way to the toe, and then the sock is tied in a simple knot above the ball.

**Activity:** Grasp the top of the sock, hold your arm out straight behind you, and swing the sock ball through an underhand arc, releasing it when you feel the ball headed in the direction you want it to go. The sock tail gives the catcher something extra to grab onto if he misses the ball part. (From: *The Quality Time Almanac*, 1986).

### Wonderwart

**Reinforces:** humour, sequencing, listening skills).

**You Need:** Funny participants.

**Activity:** Get all the players to sit in a circle side by side. The object of game is to get the person beside you laughing, smiling or grinning. To begin the game the player turns to face the person beside him and says in their silliest voice with their silliest face, "Where, oh where, is the wonderwart?" If the player beside them smiles, laughs or giggles she sits in the middle of the circle. The game keeps going until five people are in the middle of the circle or until no one is left.

### Snakes and Ladders

**Reinforces:** listening skills, motor co-ordination and auditory memory.

**Preparation:** Ask group members to find a partner, then give each pair a number. The group then sits in two lines with one partner sitting in one line and the other partner sitting in the other line. The partners should be sitting and facing each other with their legs outstretched foot to foot. Choose a number caller. The object of the game is to see who can travel down the line with speed and agility.

**Activity:** The number caller calls one of the numbers. The pair with that number jumps up and goes to the front of the line-up. They travel over the legs of the people in front of them until they reach their original sitting spot. The caller then calls out another number and the travel begins again down the line.

### You can't see me

**Reinforces:** observation and listening skills.

**Need:** On outdoor area, nature trail or park.

**Preparation:** Decide on the distance the players are allowed to hide in. Pick a person to be the "ranger".

**Activity:** The object of the game is to allow the players the opportunity to pretend they are animals, trying to hide from Man. The group scatters over an agreed upon play area in the park or down the nature trail. Each player is given time to hide. They may travel no more that 15 feet from the person who is ranger. The ranger waits about five minutes until all the players are hidden. From his counting spot he tries to find as many people as possible. When they are spotted the ranger calls their name and they then come from behind their hiding spot. (From: *Clouds On The Clothesline*, 1986).

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