

Leading Games

You don't have to work with a group of young boys or teenagers too long before you discover their abundance of physical energy. If we could somehow tap that energy, we would probably never need to worry about an energy crisis again.

Games are probably what bring most boys to your Brigade group. While they aren't the focus of CSB, you can use them to enhance your ministry. Beyond their attraction, games help boys grow in several ways.

Benefits of Games

Though games make a considerable contribution to boys' physical development, it is more correct to view game activities as contributing to their development as whole persons.

Physical Development

Using different kinds of games requires using various muscle groups of the body. Personal fitness is the most obvious result of involvement in play activities.

Social Development

Social barriers are torn down during games and friendships are built in the dependence of one team member upon another. Recognition from the peer group is the reward of the boy who does his part in team activities.

Mental Development

Alertness and quick decision making are requisites for many games. Other types of activities require deep concentration before action is taken. The mind is kept active through participation in games.

Emotional Development

The give-and-take of playing games reveals which boys need to work on self-control, fair play and sensitivity to others. Rules plus the reactions and examples of others can help them.

Spiritual Development

The sense of physical well-being and satisfaction stemming from participating in games leaves a boy responsive to spiritual truths. Total fitness is required from the one who will serve his Lord, and physical fitness contributes to total fitness.

Making Games Count

At first glance, game time would seem to be the easiest and happiest portion of any meeting. It can be, if the leader is prepared.

How can you make each game count? Anybody can toss out a ball and tell the boys to have fun. But not many leaders can lead a game effectively without preparation. As you prepare to select and lead games, check the following suggestions to ensure that you are prepared.

Planning Games

When selecting a set of games, there are a number of factors to anticipate:

1. Know how many boys you expect to attend.
2. Know what the facilities are like. Will you be playing indoors or outdoors?
3. Variety, variety, variety. Maintain appreciation of favourite games by not overusing them. Play a number of different games to keep your game time interesting and fresh.
4. Consider your boys' age and development. For example, Stockaders are not fully developed physically, so they may not be able to respond quickly and accurately enough to enjoy some games.
5. Competition is good at times, but keep it low key, especially for the younger ages. Many boys struggle emotionally when they lose. Limit games for younger boys that call for coordinated team effort since most of them are still very individualistic in their play.
6. Know the game rules. Anticipate questions or problems that might develop. Master the game's strategies so you can pass them on quickly and accurately.
7. Be sure you have help in leading the games. Adult help is absolutely necessary for larger groups of boys. The older boys of a group can also assist you. It is important that each helper understands what you are going to do and how you want them to help.

Organization

1. Be sure you have the group's undivided attention before you try to explain a game. Use a line-up or team formation if that helps get the boys ready to listen. Don't try to shout above the noise level. A whistle can help, but use it sparingly or the boys learn to ignore it. A good attention-getter is for you and your helpers raise your hands as a signal for "Quiet!" Wait until the boys have calmed down before speaking. The strategy is to ignore those making noise. If some don't realize they're the only ones left out, a helper can walk over to quietly shepherd them back into the group.

6 - Skill Development

2. In team games, do your best to make the teams are physically even. Don't hesitate to separate buddies. This is a good time to get the boys acquainted with newcomers and break up cliques.
3. Be ready to adapt if something doesn't work right. You may have to shift gears quickly, so be ready.

Here are some typical situations you may meet:

- The expected equipment is not available. (Improvise if you can; be prepared with alternate games or activities.)
- Helpers don't show up. (Use some of the more mature boys in the group to help.)
- Your group is unusually small or large. (Think ahead. Have games in mind that are applicable to both sizes; large groups can sometimes be divided into small groups depending on your facilities.)
- You find unanticipated noises and confusion. (Try to go with the situation, working around it rather than trying to go through it. Move your location; request the noise be stopped if possible; wait until it stops; shift to another activity.)

Explanation or Demonstration

Once you have the group's attention, explain the game. If you are going to play a team game, choose the teams before you explain the game.

Stand where all can see you. Leave room for anything you may have to demonstrate. If you are in a smaller room with a large group, ask all the boys to sit down while you demonstrate.

Make needed corrections. If you make a mistake while demonstrating or explaining something, accept the responsibility, make the correction and move on. Boys will respond to a good sense of humour, so laughing at yourself a little is okay. Then get back to business. Stay cool and pleasant.

Allow for questions, but set a limit. Make it understood that only one person at a time can speak.

Be enthusiastic. Boys will take the cue from you. Introduce a game as if it's the greatest thing that ever hit your group to make the boys eager to try it.

Utilize proper disciplinary procedures. Some boys want attention and know how to get it. They may look for ways to antagonize you and upset the group. The best way to handle these boys is to keep cool and be firm. Purposely make them know and feel that they are displeasing the whole group, not just the leader. Don't make any that you won't carry out. Put a boy out of the room as a last resort. If one becomes a serious problem, consider asking him to not come back. This drastic measure should not be carried out until you have carefully analyzed the situation and tried

other means of dealing with the problem.

Participation

All the boys should participate. If sides aren't even, the leaders may wish to play. This is your chance to become one of the gang. Take advantage of it by gaining friendships and respect - even if you lose.

Keep the game moving. If a game catches on right, let it run a bit longer than normal. Usually, though, it's better to stop when enthusiasm is high. Stop at the set time or at a specified score.

Competition

Be wary of the competitive element in games. While competition in itself is not bad, too much can be harmful. It can create bad feelings and flared tempers. Winning isn't everything, so the leader shouldn't let it be. Don't allow those who won to get cocky or superior or to belittle those who lost.

Much depends on your own attitude and the attitude you allows the boys to develop during games. Work toward a healthy level of competition.

Leading a game is easy. Leading a game successfully is another matter. It takes insight and effort. But sensing the enthusiasm as boys have a chance to bum off some of their energy in challenging, constructive activities makes it worthwhile.

Advanced Training

Take the following CSB Advanced Leadership Training (ALT) course when it is offered in your area:

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