

Cooperative Play Workshop 4-H Development Day



**Jennifer Spane
Recreation Program Supervisor
Coralville Parks and Recreation
(319) 626-8109
jspane@ci.coralville.ia.us**



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Cooperative Play

Cooperative Play: What is it?

People of all ages and ability levels can enjoy cooperative play games and activities. The concept behind cooperative play is simple: People play with each other rather than against one another. The games focus on cooperation rather than competition and they can be played virtually anywhere with almost no equipment. They can be a wonderful way to bring young people together. When the right games are chosen for your group, the result is always total involvement, feelings of acceptance, and lots of smiling faces.

Why is cooperative play important?

Cooperative play is an important tool to use as adult play leaders because it allows all children in your group to participate. It allows you, as facilitators, to lead the games adding in challenges or slowing down the games as needed by your participants. Cooperative play games are also games that cause the participants to exhort a lot of energy and cuts down on behavioral issues.

Who is Jen Spane?

I am a graduate of Eastern Washington University with a degree in Recreation Management. I worked for three summers as a Cooperative Play Leader in a traveling play program for Pierce County Parks and Recreation in Pierce County, Washington. I have led numerous Family Play Nights, corporate communication sessions, and Cooperative Play seminars. I currently work for Coralville Parks and Recreation as a Recreation Program Supervisor.

Facilitating Play

Top 4 Tips to Leading Games:

1. *Down Time*

When kids are not moving, they will cause disturbances and likely get into trouble. Kids will always try to create their own entertainment if structured activities are not provided for them.

2. *Be Enthusiastic*

Know your games and be confident in your games. If you show you like the games, the kids will follow along. If you look like you are not interested in the game, kids will feed off that emotion. If you goof-up while explaining a game, relax, and make the goof-up a part of the game either as a new rule or a new challenge of the game. Don't be afraid to try something new.

3. *Over Plan Your Games*

Always plan on more activities for a set amount of time than you think you will

use. You want smooth transitions from one game to the next. Smooth transitions will alleviate a lot of stress for you. You do this by always planning ahead what the next game or activity will be and evaluating the current game.

4. *Games Are Fluid, Not Black and White*

When a game is no longer fun or the kids are disinterested/bored, switch the game. You never have to complete a game. If the game is a big hit, keep playing it. If a game is too hard or one rule does not make sense, change the rules. Adapt the game to fit your group. Only you know your group and what they can do. Don't be afraid to change rules, equipment, and teams.

Other Helpful Hints

- If you change rules to a game, always change the name of your game even if you change only one rule. Example: Kickball - You have your kids run backward around the bases (3rd-1st), but still call the game Kickball. Most often, the kids will get confused and argue with you. Call the game by another name such as Backwards Kickball.
- Give active kids a special job like equipment holder or have them run the cones out to the field boundaries.
- Make clear boundaries for your field using rope, cones, chalk, or any other kind of material that you think of.

Game Modification

Game modification is one of the most important things that you as an adult play leader can do to make sure your games are for all participants and that all participants are engaged in the game they are playing.

Some simple modifications are changing the equipment, rules, teams, where you play the game, and how you move in the game.

Equipment – Modifying a game is as simple as changing the ball you use. Example: Volleyball - Let's say you have a group that has a lot of young children and a few dominant older youth. Instead of using a traditional volleyball, use a balloon. The balloon will not fly straight, it will make weird cuts in the air, and it suspends in the air a long time for the younger children to hit it. The little kids will feel successful because they are playing with the big kids and the big kids will like the challenge the balloon offers as they try and get it over the net. Other modification ideas include using hula hoops instead of Frisbees and beach balls instead of kickballs.

There is a lot of great adaptive equipment on the market. Examples of new adaptive equipment include balls with bells in them, balls with lights in them, balls that are made to hang in the air longer, and balls with special textures. The adaptive equipment is designed to help children with various developmental needs.

Rules – Start your game out easy and make it harder as you go. Create different rounds where you add a new challenge. If you are playing a game that you primarily use your right hand or foot, make the children use their left hand or foot.

Teams – It is okay to change membership on the teams mid-game.

Movement – Never have the kids just run all the time. Making them skip, hop, or dance helps their gross and fine motor skill development and adds new challenges for the whole group.

Creating Games

Creating games is easy. Just relax and let the ideas come. Creating your own games is a fun way for you and your participants to bond and work together as a group. All kids love to feel like they are a part of a decision and they love to be creative.

Steps to Creating Games:

1. Define your group. How many kids do you have? What are their likes and dislikes? What is your group dynamic?
2. Define a goal. Do you want a running game? Do you want a quiet game? Do you want a circle game? Do you want to work on communicating? Do you want to work on listening?
3. What equipment would you like to use?
4. Where would you like to play this game? (outside, inside, in a classroom)
5. Brainstorm different ways you can combine steps 1-4.
6. Put all your ideas together and try the game. If it doesn't work the first time, don't be afraid to make some changes and try it again.

Helpful Hints:

I will often times have another game such as capture the flag, kickball, or basketball in mind and change those rules to create the game that I am looking for.

Be sure to sell your game. The kids will play it if you believe in it.

Hide and Seek Tag – Place a hula hoop in the middle of the field/park. The hula hoop is base. Pick one child to be “it” and have them count to 30 inside the hoop. All other kids run away and hide. When the person who is “it” gets to 30 they say, “Ready or not here I come.” At that point, all other kids who have been hiding try and make it to base without being tagged. If you are tagged, you are “it” the next round.

Hula Golf – Divide your students into teams of two. Each team needs to have a hula hoop. The object of the game is to throw the hula hoop around your teammate to advance around the course. To start the game, have a thrower and a catcher. The thrower tries to throw the hula hoop over their partner’s body without them catching it. Once that occurs, the thrower becomes the catcher and runs out past their partner into the course. Count how many times it takes your team to get to each hole.

Doggy, Doggy, Where’s the Bone? (It’s also an inside game.) - A student plays the part of the dog. He or she sits in a chair with their back to the class. An eraser or another object is put under the chair; that is the bone. While the dog was turned around with his or her eyes closed, someone will sneak up and steal the bone and hide it somewhere on his/her person. Then everyone will sing, “Doggy, Doggy, where’s your bone? Somebody stole it from your home. Guess who it might be?” Then the dog has three changes to guess who took it. If the dog guesses right, then they get to do it again, if the dog guesses wrong, then the person who had the bone gets a turn as the dog.

Goofy Group Theater – Groups of kids work together to construct machines using their bodies and other simple props. The leader calls out the machine/object they are to make and gives the teams 2 minutes to create it. Examples: helicopter, school bus, sock making machine, toaster, or computer.

Ship to Shore – Line all your kids up on one side of the gym. Designate one wall of the gym as the “Ship” and the other side of the gym as the “Shore”. The object of the game is for the kids to follow your commands. If you say, “Ship”, the kids run toward the Ship. If you say, “Shore”, have the kids run toward the shore. Along the way give the kids various challenges like:

Hit the Deck – all jump on the floor back side up

Walk the Plank – all take three steps along an imaginary plank and jump in the water

Barnacle – all curl up in a small ball on the floor

Pirates – all cover one eye with a hand and curl a finger with the other hand for a hook

Fish Out of Water – all flop around on the floor like a fish

Crows and Cranes – Participants are divided into two equal teams and are lined up facing each other about five feet apart. The focus of the game is that crows always chase cranes. The leader of the game will point at one team and say either crows or cranes. The team that is now the crows chases the cranes to a safe area 30 feet directly beyond the starting point. For example, if Team A was chosen by the leader to be cranes, Team B would chase Team A to their safe area. If you get tagged by a crow team member, you will join that team.

Another way to play this game is to use foam dice and make one team odds and one team evens. Whatever number is rolled, odd or even, that team chases the other team to the safe area.

Ultimate Red Light Green Light – This game starts with one player designated as the traffic light and the other children stand 20 feet away from the “traffic light”. Children move toward the traffic light until the light says, “Red Light”. At that command the children must stop and freeze in place. If they move they have to go back to the start. The light may say anything they want besides “Green Light” and “Red Light” to try and trick the other children into moving or stopping. To make this game ‘Ultimate’ make the children move in different ways toward the light. For example, make them hop, dance, or walk backwards. Then have some adult leaders in the middle walking around telling jokes, making funny noises, or making funny faces to get the kids to move. If a kid moves, they go back to the start. The game ends when a player reaches the traffic light.

One-Arm Baseball – This game is played similar to kickball with four bases (1st, 2nd, 3rd, home). The hitter runs around the bases from home to 1st. The fielders can be anywhere in the gym. To pitch the ball, the catcher bounces the ball on home plate. To hit the ball the hitter takes one arm and whacks the ball the catcher has just bounced. Once the hitter has hit the ball they run to first. The base runners do not have to run to the next base if they do not want to. You can have multiple runners on a base at a time. To get runners out, the fielders must throw the ball to the catcher who will touch home plate to stop the running. Any runners who are between bases when this happens are out. Each hitter bats once per inning, then the hitters and catchers switch sides.

Wall – Pick three children to start the wall in the middle of the gym. Line all the other children against the gym wall. The children who are “it” say, “wall”. Once that happens, the children against the gym wall run toward the other side of the gym. If a child gets tagged, they become part of the wall. The wall may only move along the middle line of the gym to tag the children. The game is over when everyone becomes part of the wall.

Copy Cat – Form a circle with everyone facing inside. Pick a child to be the detective. The detective is out of the circle and hides behind a tree or outside the room. Once the detective is out of the circle, pick a child to be the leader. The leader will start an action and everyone else follows. The object is for the detective to figure out the leader. The detective has three tries to pick the leader. When the round is over, the leader becomes the detective and the detective joins the group.

What’s Different? – Form a circle with everyone facing inside. Pick a child to be “it”. The child will walk around the outside of the circle while everyone sings, “There she/he goes just a walking down the street, singing do-wha-diddy-diddy-dum-diddy-do”. After the child has walked around the circle, they will leave the room or go to a hidden area and change something about their appearance. For example, the child might roll up a pant leg or untie their shoe strings. They will then join the group where the other participants are waiting. Whoever guesses what has changed about the child’s appearance gets to be “it”.

Silent Ball – Everyone in your group sits on a chair or stands. Everyone is silent. Start the game with one person throwing a ball to another person. The object is for the thrower to get the catcher to drop the ball. If the catcher drops the ball or talks, they have to sit down on the floor. The thrower has to throw the ball a reasonable distance around the catcher. If the ball cannot be caught, then the thrower sits. All participants who are seated may talk and may try and distract the other players by talking. Game is over when one person remains.

Clean Your Room – Divide your space into 4 equal areas (rooms). You can do this by placing tape or ropes on the ground. Divide your group into 4 teams. Each team is given a stack of scratch paper and a time limit to crumple the paper into balls. The object is to get all the paper “trash” out of your room and into another room. The game is over when time has run out and one team has the majority of the mess. You can divide the trash up and play again.

Clay Creations – Divide your group into teams of two. Each team gets an equal amount of clay. The game is divided into many different rounds. Each round is timed and has a theme. Like round one, 2 minutes, create a car using your clay. At the end of each round have your teams describe their creation. Do not be afraid to mix up the teams during the game.

Dunk It – Place a bucket in the middle of the room. Using a rope make a big circle around the bucket that everyone has to stand behind. Spread tennis balls (any small bouncy type ball will work) around the room. The object is to get the balls into the bucket by bouncing them. No ball may be thrown. All balls have to bounce on the floor at least once before entering the bucket.

Group Drawing – Divide your group into teams of 3 to 4. Take the first person in each group out of the room where a piece of paper and markers are located for each team. Tell the first person what their team will be drawing. Each team member will get to add one thing to the picture. The first person will go and get the next team member and tell them one clue about the picture to be drawn. Person two will add to the drawing and go get the next team member. Each person gets one clue and has to draw what they think the picture is. When everyone is done, get the pictures and have each group share what they drew and what they thought they were drawing.

Forearm Hockey – Divide your group into two teams. Place two cones on each side of the room and use them for goals. Every player must crawl and hit the ball with their arm. A point is scored when a player successfully hits the ball and makes it in between the cones. No one may catch the ball or stand up (not even the goalie). The object of the game is to hit more balls into the goal than the other team. The players may use walls and other objects in the room to hit the ball off of.

Crab Ball – Divide your group into two teams. Place one basket on each side of the room. Every player must walk like a crab and pass the ball to their teammates with their hands. A point is scored when a crab successfully throws the ball and makes it into the

other team's basket. No player may stand up in the game. The object of the game is to make more baskets than the other team.

Mystery Box – Divide your group into smaller groups of 4 to 5. Give each group a shoebox full of fun things. Give each group a time limit, and have them create an object using only what they find in the box.

Wally Ball – Put a table or line up chairs down the middle of a room to divide it in half. Divide your group so half are on each side. Wally Ball is played very similar to volleyball but without a net and the kids can use the wall to bounce their ball back and forth. No player may pick up the ball and throw it. You must hit the ball like you would in volleyball. A point is scored when the other team drops the ball.

Scatter – Divide your group in two. Give each team 5 cones to place along the wall on their side. On top of each cone put a smaller ball. The object is for each team to protect their cones and to throw balls at the other team's cones. If the room is too small, have the kids roll the ball over. If you have a bigger room, they can throw it. Once a ball gets knocked off the cones it stays off. Each team can do whatever they can to protect their cones. Beware of the walls, any ball that is bounced off a wall and hits a cone counts. The game is over when all the balls are knocked off a team's cones.

Group Juggling – Have your group stand in a circle. Starting with one ball, catch and throw it establishing a pattern. The leader tosses the ball to someone on the other side of the circle; he or she tosses the ball to a third person and on and on until everyone in the group has caught the ball. The last person throws it to the first person and you do it again for practice. When one ball is on its way through the pattern another ball is added. Attempt to get as many balls going as possible. Note that the balls should be tossed underhand and if dropped by the catcher, the thrower should wait to toss the next ball until the catcher is ready. This game can also be played as an ice breaker and the person tossing the ball needs to call out the catcher's name. With younger groups, you may want them to sit in a circle and roll the ball(s) on the floor.

Variation – Zip, Zap, Zoe

Using the pattern you established in the Group Juggling, add a few more challenges. If the leader says, “**ZIP**”, the ball travels in the original pattern of thrower to catcher. If the leader says, “**ZAP**”, the ball travels backward around the pattern from catcher to thrower. Lastly, if the leader says, “**ZOE**” the ball will travel in the normal pattern of thrower to catcher but your participants will move around the room in a random order. You will not be standing still in your circle.

Noodle Hockey – Noodle Hockey is to be played like the real game of hockey using regular rules. The only change is that instead of using sticks you use pool noodles, the puck is replaced with a ball, and the kids play in their socks. Put two cones at each end of the room as goals. The kids may not pick up the ball or use their feet. A point is scored when one team successfully hits the ball between the cones.

Dogs and Fleas

Game Description:

This game is a tag game. The object is to get past the people in the middle.

The game starts out with the group standing on one side of the field. Pick 2 to 3 people to be "it" (the fleas). Everyone else is a dog. The fleas stand in the middle and have a "flea huddle". In this huddle they will decide how they want the dogs to move across the field; do they want the dogs to skip, crawl, or disco walk? Whatever movement the fleas decide to use, they also have to follow as they are chasing the dogs. The fleas break their huddle and they say:

Fleas, "We are the fleas!"

Dogs reply, "We are the dogs!"

Fleas reply, "We're going to get you dogs!"

And the dogs reply while shaking their finger, "Oh no, you won't, silly little fleas!"

At this point the fleas yell out the action they want everyone to do and the dogs try to get to the other side without getting tagged by the fleas.

If a dog gets tagged, he becomes a flea and meets up with the other fleas in the flea huddle on the next round. By the end of the game, almost everyone will be a flea and there will only be a few dogs. The game starts over when there are 2 to 3 dogs on the line. The leader then says, "Switch!" and all the fleas become dogs and the remaining dogs become fleas.

The game will go in a circle like this forever or until you want to stop.

Age Group:

Kindergarten to fifth grade. This is also a great game for parents and kids to play at a family night event.

Safety Concerns:

Watch-out for rolled ankles and kids pushing each other as they try to tag one another.

Equipment:

A gym or big open field. If you use a field, you will need to use cones or something similar to provide boundaries.