

FOR YOUTH
MINISTRY

BEST-EVER GAMES



Group
LES
CHRISTIE
THE GAME GUY

INTRODUCTION

This book is the result of over 47 years of close association with young people and games. Games are great fun, and they build community! Those are the primary reasons we play them and why they've continued to survive in an era when there are so many other forms of entertainment.

This book contains a cross section of both new games and time-honored favorites. Each of the games requires little or no equipment and has been played—either by me or someone I trust—with real kids. Whether or not you choose every game for your group, you can rest assured that they have been winners with young people.

Most of these games may be played anywhere, under any condition, and at any time. And you'll rarely need supplies or prep time! Also, the vast majority of these games will work great with all sizes, ages, and types of groups.

Scattered throughout this book are Gaming Tips, which give essential suggestions and insights on choosing, beginning, or leading a game. Here's one of the most valuable tips right up front: Read the following tip and the other tips carefully, and apply them to your unique group of students.

GAMING TIP: HOW TO ENSURE SAFETY

The best games are ones in which participants don't get hurt. Treat each young person like your own child, younger sibling, niece, or nephew. Don't put any teenager in a situation in which you wouldn't readily place a precious family member.

In your cell, keep phone numbers of important people who should be contacted in case of an emergency (including ambulance, police, supervisor, parents, and hospitals).



Most youth workers rarely consider safety issues. Many times games are planned with no thought given to potential dangers. However, a trip to the emergency room with a teenager injured during an activity will change attitudes. Safety matters; put it first.

Being safe does not equal not having much fun. A few minor changes or adjustments can turn a risky game into a safe one without reducing the level of fun.

Obviously, games that involve motorized vehicles, slippery surfaces, protruding objects, heavy physical contact, turbulent water, and hitting people with any type of projectile deserve special attention before you decide to proceed. Any game is wrong if you know someone will get hurt.

The safety-smart adult youth leader anticipates danger. Bring your great game idea to life with a simulated run, using your staff as crash test dummies. As you play, you'll be able to identify the danger points and make changes before you present the game to your group of kids.

There are a few games I don't play anymore because we know people may be injured. For instance, the game Chubby Bunny involves students filling their mouths with marshmallows (or grapes) one at a time, while repeating the phrase "chubby bunny." And the game 40-Inch Dash involves tying a piece of string to a marshmallow, putting the loose end of the string into one's mouth, and trying to eat one's way to the marshmallow without using hands. Both games have left students gasping for breath. A piece of food could be drawn into the windpipe, causing a student to choke. In addition to these examples, beware of games that involve shooting food into a person's mouth or dropping food into the mouth of a person lying on the floor. (For more unsafe or inappropriate games, see page 137.)

HERE ARE SOME SAFETY GUIDELINES FOR YOUR GAMES:

- Avoid using games that encourage any throwing of objects toward another person's face.



- Avoid mixing big and small, weak and strong teenagers in contact sports. The smaller teenagers can get hurt.
- Avoid making everyone in your group play the rougher games. The reluctant participant is often the first one injured.
- Step in and stop a situation that is getting too rowdy, rough, or uncontrolled.

For many games, all that is needed to make them safe is taking time to stop, think, and use common sense. Place spotters around the room or field so students will not fall. A helpful book on safety you may want to purchase is *Better Safe Than Sued* by Jack Crabtree.

WHY PLAY GAMES IN A YOUTH GROUP?

Let me suggest seven reasons I think games should be a valuable part of your youth group...

1. Games are universal.

I've traveled a bit, and I can tell you this: Games are a universal language. I've yet to see a country where kids don't want to play games of some sort.

2. Games are ideal come-and-see, entry-level activities.

Games pull new teenagers into your group and provide opportunities for a deeper message. Games help tear down emotional walls and get kids mingling and interacting.

3. Games stretch your students, encouraging them to take risks.

Games can help teenagers develop tolerance, persistence, and patience. Games provide a structure within which those virtues can be practiced.

4. Games improve problem-solving skills and help kids deal with life's stresses.

The life of a typical teenager is crowded and complicated. A game provides an oasis of laughter and fun. And depending on the game, there's a chance to do strategic thinking and problem solving.



5. Games build community, acceptance, and a sense of belonging.

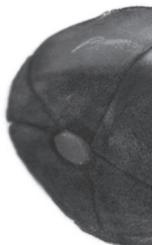
Games provide shared experiences that become shared memories. They're inclusive. And if led well, they foster acceptance.

6. Games are relevant.

Games are all over television and the Internet these days, and teenagers account for much of the popularity of media and video games. Games are relevant to your young people because games of all kinds are such a familiar part of a student's landscape.

7. Games provide good, clean, trouble-free fun.

Teenagers are hungry for wholesome activities in a positive environment. Life is tough enough; kids need to have fun, play, and laugh together. Games can provide all that and more.



“A” WAS AN APPLE PIE

Supplies: none

Have teenagers sit in a circle and in turn add a verb beginning with the next letter of the alphabet. For instance, the leader says, “A was an apple pie. A ate it.” In rotation the other players add things like “B bought it,” “C cooked it,” “D dunked it,” and so on, through something like “Z zoomed it.”

ACTING ADVERBS

Supplies: none

This game involves some simple acting.

Choose one player to be the Guesser. Ask the player to leave the room, and when he or she is safely out of range, have the other players choose an adverb such as “humorously,” “gracefully,” or “furiously.” They’re not to reveal the adverb to the Guesser.

Call the Guesser back into the room and ask him or her to discover the word by asking players to do different things in the manner of the adverb. For example, the Guesser may ask various players to eat, walk, dance, read, or jump—each in accordance with the chosen adverb.

If the Guesser can’t identify the word after asking everybody to do something, reveal the adverb and choose another Guesser for the next round.

Here’s a twist to simplify and speed up this game: Allow the Guesser to guess a synonym rather than the exact adverb. For example, if the adverb is “furiously,” and the Guesser guesses “angrily,” count the response as a correct answer.

GAMING TIP:

How to Select a Game (Part One)

The best game leaders know their group's culture and interests. Just because you heard something was a big hit on the other side of the country, doesn't necessarily mean it'll succeed in your setting.

Here are some questions to determine which game will suit your group best:

- How many people are expected?
- What equipment or supplies are required?
- What is the age range of your teenagers?
- What is their physical ability?
- Where will the game take place?
- What time of day will you play?
- How much space will you need and have available to use?
- How much time will you have?
- What is the weather expected to be like?



ALL ACROSS

Supplies: none

This is a classic game where “It” stands between two goal lines or tape marks about 30 feet apart and calls “All across!” All the players cross from one line to the other, and “It” tags them as they run across. Now the players are on the other side of the field and must run back to their original side, passing “It” and those who have been tagged by “It.” The game continues until everybody has been tagged and is in the middle of the field or area.

All who are caught assist until everyone is in the middle together.

Game Twist: Have only guys or only girls stand in a row on a line. The “capture” (instead of tagging) is made by lifting the person off the ground until “1-2-3” is counted. Or play “Gorilla and the Trees,” where “It” is the gorilla and can move all around the field. Those tagged become trees and can only move one step in any direction, using their arms like branches to tag those who run back and forth.

ALL RUN

Supplies: ball (any kind)

“It” stands with the ball, and the other players gather close. “It” tosses the ball high into the air, and the other players flee in any direction. “It” catches the ball and tosses it at the runners. A runner hit by the ball trades places with “It.” If the ball does not make contact with anyone, “It” tosses the ball up again.

Game Twist: “It” catches the ball and calls “halt.” The runners must then stand still. Players must not move their feet at any time, but they can move their bodies. Or form a circle and have kids number off. One person stands in the center of the circle, throws the ball into the air, and calls out a number. Whoever has that number runs for the ball as everyone else tries to run as far away as they can. The person running for the ball reaches it, yells out “halt,” and everyone else stops running. The person with the ball then takes three steps toward anyone and tosses the ball at him or her.

THIS AMAZING BOOK IS FILLED WITH CLASSIC FUN!

THE GAME GUY is geared up and ready to give you tons of great games—including some brand-new ones—that are easy to pull off and field-tested with teenagers in many settings.

HERE'S WHAT YOU'LL GET:

- * classic games with new twists
- * indoor and outdoor games
- * games that teach
- * games that build community in your group

THE BOOK INCLUDES:

IDEAS ON HOW TO:

- * lead games
- * select games
- * save games gone bad

YOU ALSO GET:

- * supply lists
- * tips and bonus ideas
- * notes on group sizes

PLUS, this legendary games expert exposes some of the worst games ever played, and shares his philosophy of fun when working with teenagers.

"Les Christie knows games. He's been creating them, teaching them and playing them for 40 years. I can't think of anyone more qualified to write this book. You can rest assured this resource was created by the best!"—Laurie Polich, youth speaker and author

"Les Christie reminds us that the 'fun factor' is still a great way to break the ice, build community, and tear down walls of division within youth ministry. Les Christie, over the years, has shown a great gift for compiling and creating various ways to use games as a springboard to teaching gospel truths. This is a must-have in a youth minister's library."

—Efrem Smith, author of *Raising Up Young Heroes*

"This is a great book of games...that actually work. Some great classics and many that I've never seen that my students really enjoyed. I appreciate that Les has provided some gaming tips so my volunteers can lead with confidence. The majority of the games in the book require little or no preparation, few props, and almost no cash...which is great for any youth worker. You can play them immediately. Thanks for this great game book!"—Doug Fields, author of *Purpose-Driven Youth Ministry*

YOU'LL BE EQUIPPED TO LEAD YOUNG PEOPLE WITH THE BEST COLLECTION OF GAMES-EVER!



DR. LES CHRISTIE has been working with teenagers and college students for 50 years—including 22 years at one church. He has chaired the youth ministry department at William Jessup University in California since 1993. He has led popular seminars in every state but Alaska and in 19 foreign countries. He is the author/co-author of 23 books. He and his wife, Gretchen, have two grown, married sons and three grandchildren.



simply youth ministry
helping youth workers with what matters most

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