

STEP 2: Individual Game Planning Sheet

Complete one sheet per game.

Game Name: _____

Purpose of the Game

- Movement
- Vocabulary review
- Teamwork
- Energy reset
- Transition activity

Age Range: _____

- Primary
- Mixed ages
- Teens

Materials Needed: _____

Keep materials minimal.

- Can this be played with zero materials? Yes / No

Setup Instructions:

- How do students stand or sit?
- How are teams divided?

How to Play (Step by Step)

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.
- 8.

Keep instructions short and clear.

- Describe how someone could demonstrate without many words.

Easy Recess Games Library

These are ready-to-use games that work almost anywhere. But they are simple. Come up with additional ones that will be good for your community!

Simon Says

Purpose: Listening skills, verb practice, energy reset

Materials: None

Best For: All ages

How to Set Up

Have students stand in an open space where they can move safely.

How to Play

1. The leader stands at the front.
2. The leader gives instructions starting with “Simon says...”
Example: “Simon says jump.”
3. Students only follow the instruction if the phrase begins with “Simon says.”
4. If the leader gives a command without saying “Simon says” and students move, they sit down or freeze for one round.

How to Make It Educational

Use verbs or vocabulary:

Jump

Clap

Turn around

Touch your head

Run in place

Sit down

How to Adjust

For shy groups: Let everyone stay in even if they make a mistake. For older students: Speed up commands or add two-step directions.

Mirror Movement

Purpose: Focus, calm reset, connection

Materials: None

Best For: All ages

How to Set Up

Students pair up and face each other.

How to Play

1. One student is the leader.
2. The leader moves slowly using arms, hands, or body movements.

3. The partner copies exactly like a mirror reflection.
4. After 30 to 60 seconds, switch roles.

Teaching Tip

Encourage slow movements. Fast movements make it chaotic.

How to Adjust

Small space: Play seated.

Older students: Add facial expressions or slow-motion challenges.

Clap Pattern Challenge

Purpose: Listening, rhythm, focus

Materials: None

Best For: Indoor spaces

How to Set Up

Students stand or sit in a circle.

How to Play

1. The leader claps a simple pattern.
Example: Clap clap pause clap.
2. Students repeat the pattern.
3. Gradually increase difficulty.

How to Make It Harder

Add stomps or snaps.

Speed up the rhythm.

Let students create patterns.

Classroom Control Tip

If students get too loud, lower your volume instead of raising it. They will follow you.

Vocabulary Relay

Purpose: Movement + English reinforcement

Materials: Flashcards, chalk, or none

Best For: Outdoor spaces

How to Set Up

Divide students into 2 to 4 teams.

Place vocabulary cards or write words across the space.

How to Play

1. First student runs to the word.
2. Says the word out loud.
3. Runs back and tags the next teammate.

4. Continue until all students have gone.

No Materials Option

Call out:

Colors

Numbers

Animals

Body parts

Students run to touch something that matches.

Adjustment

If space is small, turn it into a fast walk relay.

Four Corners

Purpose: Vocabulary review + movement

Materials: None

Best For: Indoor or outdoor

How to Set Up

Label each corner of the room 1 to 4 or assign a category:

Colors

Animals

Food

Weather

How to Play

1. Students choose a corner.
2. Leader calls out a number or category.
3. That group sits down or does 5 jumping jacks.
4. Continue until one group remains.

Educational Tip

Use this for quick review of lesson vocabulary.

Follow the Leader

Purpose: Energy release + engagement

Materials: None

Best For: Outdoor or large space

How to Set Up

Students line up behind a leader.

How to Play

1. Leader walks around the space.

2. Leader performs actions.
 - Jump
 - Hop
 - Clap
 - Spin
3. Students copy exactly.
4. Switch leaders often.

Adjustment

For calmer groups, require slow-motion movement.

Human Knot (Teens and Older Primary)

Purpose: Teamwork, communication

Materials: None

How to Set Up

Students stand in a tight circle.

How to Play

1. Everyone reaches across and grabs two different hands.
2. Without letting go, students work together to untangle into a circle.

Leader Tip

Remind students:

- Move slowly
- Communicate
- No pulling

Freeze Dance (No Music Needed)

Purpose: Energy release + listening

Materials: None

How to Play

1. Students dance or move freely.
2. Leader says "Freeze!"
3. Students must freeze immediately.
4. Anyone who moves does 3 jumping jacks and rejoins.

Variation

Instead of dancing, use:

- Animal movements
- Robot movements
- Slow-motion walking

Counting Circle

Purpose: Focus and teamwork

Materials: None

How to Play

1. Students stand in a circle.
2. They must count to 20 as a group.
3. Only one person can say each number.
4. If two people speak at the same time, start over.

Adjustment

For English practice, count in English slowly.

Emergency Zero-Material Games to Memorize

Simon Says

Mirror Movement

Clap Pattern

Follow the Leader

Counting Circle

Freeze Dance

Teach the Teacher Alignment

Before finalizing games, ask:

- Can a local teacher easily repeat this?
- Does this require special materials?
- Is it culturally appropriate?
- Does it avoid waste?
- Can it be explained visually?

If yes to all, the game is ready.

Final Preparation Checklist

Before departure:

- ✓ All games typed and printed
- ✓ Instructions simplified to one page per game
- ✓ Materials packed or confirmed locally available
- ✓ At least 2 no-material backup games ready
- ✓ All volunteers trained to lead at least one game
- ✓ Clear signal established to start and stop games

Recess Games

<p style="text-align: center;">Red Light Green Light</p> <p>Someone stands with their back to the group. If Green light is called, players inch forward to tag them until Red light is called. When Red light is called, the light caller turns around and if any players are still moving, they are out. The person to reach the light caller wins and takes their spot.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Simon Says</p> <p>The leader calls out instructions with "Simon says..." Then, they periodically give an instruction without saying "Simon says." Anyone who does the action without the "Simon says" is out.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Tag or Freeze Tag</p> <p>Freeze Tag: To begin, the players spread out within the open area, and the leader designates what movement everyone should be using (running, skipping, hopping, walking, etc.). If a player gets tagged, they immediately freeze. To 'unfreeze' a player, another player must give the frozen person a high-5. Neither player may be tagged while unfreezing someone and taggers cannot stand around waiting for them to finish. The leader should switch taggers and styles of movement.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Duck Duck Goose (younger)</p> <p>One person is "it" and walks around the circle. As they walk around, they tap people's heads and say whether they are a "duck" or a "goose". Once someone is the goose they get up and try to chase the person around the circle. The goal is to tag that person before they are able sit down in the goose's spot. If the goose is not able to do this, they become "it" for the next round and play continues.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Hot Potato</p> <p>Standing in a circle, pass the beanbag or ball around the circle, while music plays in the background. If anyone drops the ball, they can pick it up and keep playing. When the music stops, the person holding the 'hot potato' is out. Keep going until there's only one person left, who can be declared the winner. Difficulty can be changed by playing a faster song each round or passing around different shape objects like frisbees.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Heads Up 7-Up</p> <p>Seven students stand in front of the class/group. The rest of the students put their heads down. The seven then move about and each touch a student. Once touched, a student sticks his or her thumb up. When they are done, the seven say "heads up seven up!" The students who were touched stand up and get a chance to guess which of the seven touched each of them. If they guess right, they get to change places and be one of the students in the front.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Button Button, who's got the Button (younger)</p> <p>Children stand or sit in a circle with their hands in front of them - palms together. The leader (or "it") takes the button/penny/little rock and goes around the circle to every child placing their hands inside the children's hands. In one of the child's hands, they drop the button - but continue around the circle until each child has been visited. "It" or the leader starts around the circle again and asks "Button, button - who has the button?" The child guessing replies "Name" has the button! If the child is right, they become "it." If the guess is wrong the next child in the circle gets to guess. * If you have the button and it's your turn to guess you must guess another child so no one will know who has the button.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Museum Janitor</p> <p>Everyone is going to be a statue and they can't let the janitor catch them moving. The janitor will move slowly around the room or outside, pointing their flashlight (stick, pen, flashlight) at the statues. If they shine the flashlight on a student and that student moves/laughs/makes a noise/smile, they will have to go to the designated area and do 5 jumping jacks (or consequence of your choice) to get back into the game. If playing this indoors/in a classroom, encourage students to be sneaky when they're moving around. You do not want the janitor to hear you moving!</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Sardines</p> <p>The "it" player hides while the rest close their eyes and count. The players spread out and look for the hidden person. If a player finds the "it" person, they hide with them. This continues until all the players have found the "it" person and are hiding with them.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Red Rover</p> <p>Students hold hands and stand in two rows facing each other. One row will pick a player on the other side and say, "Red rover, red rover, send [name] right over." Then, that player runs over and tries to break through one of the links. If they successfully break through, they get to take a student back to their team. If they don't, they must stay on the other team.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Leap Frog</p> <p>Two lines form, with one person standing as the jumper and the rest crouched on the ground. The jumper, or "frog," races to leap over their line of teammates and reach the end first. The team whose jumper gets to the end the fastest wins.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Tunnel Tag</p> <p>When you are tagged you must stand with your legs apart. To be unfrozen and put back in the game, someone must crawl through your legs. Neither player may be tagged while unfreezing someone and taggers cannot stand around waiting for them to finish.</p>

<p style="text-align: center;">Horse for basketball – 2 players</p> <p>The first player tries to score a basket. If successful, the next player must replicate the shot or earn an "H." If the first player misses, the second player chooses where to shoot from. If the second player makes the shot, the first must match the shot or get a letter. Players move around the court and take turns shooting until someone makes a basket. The game continues until someone spells out "HORSE" and loses. For a quicker game, play "PIG".</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Freeze Dance</p> <p>Everyone dances as the music plays. When the music stops, each player must freeze immediately and hold that position until the music begins again. If a player does not freeze immediately or falls, they do 10 jumping jacks during the start of the next round and then rejoin the dance.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Four Square</p> <p>One player is in each square and the other players wait. The waiting line is at the bottom left square. Players entering the game enter that square and everyone needs to move counter-clockwise. Play begins when the server drops the ball once into their square then hits it into a different square (serves the ball). The players must keep both feet in the service box. The ball must bounce once in any square. It cannot bounce more than once. Each player needs to hit the ball with any part of their hand into an opposing player's square after it has bounced only once in their square.</p> <p>OUTS: If the ball lands on a line, or goes out of bounds before it bounces, the player who hit the ball is out. If a player hits the ball and it bounces again in their square, they are out. If a player catches or holds the ball, that player needs to return to the waiting line. If the ball bounces more than one time before it is hit into another square, the player is out. If the ball is returned before it is allowed to bounce, the player who returned the ball early needs to return to the waiting line.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Parachute The Mushroom</p> <p>Have children evenly spread out around the parachute and hold the edges. Have everyone gently tug on the parachute, holding it low between knee level and the ground. On the count of three, in unison, raise the chute up and down, getting momentum. It should fill with air, rising like a giant "mushroom." At the count of 3, everyone steps under the mushroom, sits on the edges, keeping hold of the handles. The mushroom will slowly deflate. Play a little game inside.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Roll-to-a-Friend Parachute Game</p> <p>Players hold the chute stretched tightly and place the ball on top of the parachute. Players will call out a name and roll the ball to that person. Players must work together in cooperation for each player to get the ball to their friend.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Catch</p> <p>Place a ball in the center. Flip the ball high up into the air and try to catch it.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Cookie Tag</p> <p>Explain that the students are cookies, and you are the Cookie Monster. It is almost lunchtime for you, and you may be hungry. The players must ask you, "Cookie Monster, Cookie Monster, are you hungry?" If you say "yes" they must try to run across the play area without getting tagged by you. If you say "no" they must remain where they are and ask again until you say "yes." If someone gets tagged, they become one of your helpers.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Helicopter with Jump Ropes</p> <p>Everyone stands in a circle. The leader begins slowly turning the rope in a helicopter fashion over their head and says "Helicopter, helicopter over my head, I'm thinking of a color and the color is...(insert color)." At that point, the leader begins turning the jump rope on the ground and the players with the mentioned color anywhere on their clothes or accessories take one step forward and attempt to jump over the rope, which is now low to the ground. Play stops when a player stops the rope with their feet or ankle. They are then the helicopter.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Towel Volleyball</p> <p>Break students into groups of four and give each group a towel. Each student holds an end, and they use the towel to catch the volleyball and volley it back over to their opponents. If it isn't caught that team is out and another comes in. If the ball doesn't make it over the net, that team is out. Fun with water balloons.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Name Ball</p> <p>Have students stand in a circle with one player standing in the center. They throw the ball in the air while calling a student's name. That student tries to catch the ball before it hits the ground. If they don't catch it, they sit until every player has had their name called. The last one is the winner. *move out of the way of the catcher!</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Limbo</p> <p>All contestants must attempt to go under the bar/stick. When passing under the bar, players must bend backwards. No part of their body is allowed to touch the bar, and no part other than their feet may touch the ground. They must not turn their head or neck to the side. If they touch the bar, they are out until the next round. Each round, lower the bar a little. Fun to music!</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Switch</p> <p>Need 5 Cones, Rocks or Similar</p> <p>Five players at a time. Each player occupies a corner or the middle. Play begins when the person in the middle says "Switch." All players must find a new corner/cone to occupy. No player can go to the center cone. If two players arrive at the corner at the same time a quick rock-paper-scissors is played, the winner stays, and a new player becomes the center.</p>

<p style="text-align: center;">Sharks and Minnows</p> <p>Identify who will be the shark, either a player or the leader. Everyone else will be minnows. The purpose is for the minnows to move across the field and cross a line to safety. The shark stands in the middle of the play area and says, "Fishy, fishy, come out and play." The minnows slowly walk towards the shark(s). At any time, the shark can yell, "Shark attack!" At which point, the minnows must run to the line without being tagged. If a minnow is tagged, they also become a shark. Play until there are only a couple of minnows left. When there is only one or two minnows left, they become the sharks in the next round.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Snake</p> <p>In small groups of three or more, provide one jump rope or "snake." Everyone else will begin jumping. The two snake handlers kneel or sit on the ground and hold the rope to the ground. The snake handler's job is to move the rope back and forth first slowly and low to the ground. They will then increase the speed of the rope as the jumpers improve. Jumpers take turns running up to and jumping over the rope—using a two-foot or one-foot jump. Jumpers are challenged to jump over the rope without touching it. If they touch it, they are out until the next round</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Hopscotch</p> <p>Draw a hopscotch grid on asphalt or concrete with chalk or draw lines in dirt. The youngest child goes first, with other kids lining up behind them. A rock is tossed onto the hopscotch grid. The player then hops from square to square on one foot, hopping over the square with their rock in it. At the end of the hopscotch grid, the player turns around and hops back. On their return trip back to the starting line, the player picks up their rock and again skips the square. Upon returning to the starting line, that player passes the rock to the next person in line and goes to the end of the line. The next player then takes their turn.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Hopscotch Rules:</p> <p>If a player's toss goes outside the lines of the hopscotch grid, they lose their turn. The player must hop through the game on one foot unless two squares are side by side, in which case the player can put their feet down simultaneously. If a player hops on the wrong square, they lose their turn. If a player hops outside of the hopscotch grid, they lose their turn. If a player steps on a line, they lose their turn. If a player puts both feet down inside a square, they lose their turn.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Kickball</p> <p>Play begins with the pitcher rolling the ball smoothly to home plate. The kicker must kick from behind home. If the ball is kicked and rolls out of bounds before going past first or third base, it is called a foul and the kicker must try again. Kickers must run the bases in order and may stop at any base and wait to run again at the next kick. Only one runner on a base and they must remain in order. No runner can pass the person in front of them. A run is scored for the kicking team when a baserunner touches all 4 bases, in order, without being called out at any time. A runner advances one base on an overthrow to the base player. Teams switch sides after three outs or nine runs are scored. RULES: Play begins with the pitcher rolling the ball to the person up to bat, the kicker. Play stops when the ball is thrown to the pitcher. The kicker is out if they kick a fly ball and it is caught before it touches the ground. The base runners must remain on base until after the ball is caught before they can advance to the next base. The base player must have control over the ball and a foot on the base before the baserunner reaches the base for the runner to be out. The baserunner is tagged on their body by a fielder with the ball before they touch the base. The kicker is given 6 pitches to kick before being called out. AUTOMATIC OUTS: One baserunner passes another. A baserunner intentionally interferes with a fielder who is trying to recover the ball. Three fouls by an individual kicker equal an out. For safety, there is no sliding or throwing of the ball at a player. At the end of the game, each team cheers for the other team, and have teams form lines to high five each other!</p>
Football	Baseball
Hide and Seek	Paper Airplanes
Tic Tac Toe	Hangman
Jump Rope or Jump Rope Races	Paper Airplane Races for distance/height
Rock Paper Scissors	Crab Soccer Soccer played doing the crab walk
Soccer	Volleyball
Arm Wrestling	Staring Contest
I Spy	The Floor is Lava
Hokey Pokey	Head, Shoulder, Knees and Toes
Tug of War	Relay Races Pass a stick or give the person "5"

<p style="text-align: center;">Ring around the Rosies (younger)</p> <p>"Ring around the rosie, pocket full of posies, ashes, ashes, we all fall down!" And everyone falls to the ground.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">London Bridge is Falling Down (younger)</p> <p>The two children face each other and make an arch by holding hands. The other children walk under the arch one at a time while making a circle. The children sing the nursery "London Bridge is falling down, falling down, falling down, London Bridge is falling down, my fair lady." At—"my fair lady"—the arch falls down and traps the child walking underneath. The games continue until all the children have been captured.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Follow the Leader (younger)</p> <p>Choose one child to be the leader and have all the other children to line up behind the leader. The children must copy the movements of the leader, and if they don't do the movements correctly, they get eliminated. For younger children, start with an adult or older child as the leader and keep the actions simple.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Wheelbarrow Races (older)</p> <p>It's best suited to fit kids with a bit stronger upper body strength. Split the group into pairs of two. Designate one person as the "wheelbarrow" for each team. When a person says "GO," the wheelbarrow person will go down onto their hands while their teammate grabs their ankles and lifts them off the ground. The person must now walk on their hands while their partner is holding their ankles—the first team to cross the finish line wins.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Keep Away</p> <p>Keep the player in the middle from getting the ball. They must keep tossing it to each other while the player in the middle attempts to catch the ball. Once he catches a ball, the throwing player is in the middle. With younger kids, you could take turns and put a time limit on the time in the middle.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Don't Drop the Ball</p> <p>Stand 8 steps apart, facing each other. Toss the ball and catch it without dropping it. If you do not drop the ball, take a step back. When a player drops the ball, the player goes down on one knee. Continue to toss and catch. Each time the player drops the ball, they keep going lower, down to one elbow, then the other, then down to your chin.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Bowling</p> <p>Use plastic bottles and a ball.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Chain Tag</p> <p>Start with two people who must hold hands while chasing people. Anyone they catch/tag becomes part of the chain. The game continues until no one is unchained.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Bob Ball</p> <p>One child stands alone on one side, and a line of children stand on the other side, one behind another, at least one step between each child. They will play a game of catch. The single child throws the ball to the first one in the line. That child catches the ball, throws it back, and then sits down in their spot. They keep tossing the ball like this. Each time a child in the line throws the ball back, they sit down, making the distance longer. They keep going until the single child can't throw the ball to the next standing child. *All children must pay attention so they can catch a ball that may come their way!</p>	