

Outdoor Games for Large Groups

This section contains a variety of outdoor games for groups of thirty or more people. Some can be played with an almost unlimited number of people, but these are best played on a large, open field.

Keep in mind that this book contains many other games that can also be played outdoors with large groups, including some of those found in the indoor sections. So do not limit yourself to this section if you are looking for just the right game for your next outdoor activity.

Twin Softball

This is a good game for a group that is too large to play a regular softball game. Evenly divide the group into two teams. Have team members pair off and hook arms with their partner. At no time while playing are they allowed to unhook their arms or to use their hooked arms. They may however, use their free arms and hands. Use a rubber ball or a volleyball instead of a softball because it can be caught with the pair's free arms and hands.

When at bat, pairs are to grasp the bat with their free hands. After the ball is hit, the pair must run the bases with arms hooked together. Other than these exceptions, regular softball rules apply.

The Blob

Boundaries are clearly marked off and spotters are put on the corners. During the course of the game, players who step outside the boundaries become part of the blob.

One person begins as the blob. The blob tries to tag another player. If a player is tagged or is chased out-of-bounds, he or she becomes part of the blob. These two join hands and go after a third person, who, when tagged, joins hands and helps tag a fourth person. The game continues until everyone is part of the blob. The blob members must hold hands. Thus, only players on the ends can make legal tags.

For the blob to be most effective, it must work as a unit. One person should act as the "blob brain" and control the blob. No tags count if the blob becomes separated, so the blob must go after one

person at a time. Once the blob becomes large enough, it can stretch across the playing field and catch everyone by forcing them out-of-bounds.

Bedlam

This game requires four teams of equal size. Each team takes one corner of the room or the playing field. The play area can be either square or rectangular. At a signal, each team attempts to move diagonally to the opposite corner, performing an announced activity as it goes. The first team to get all its members into its new corner wins that round.

In the first round, teams can be directed to simply run to the opposite corner, but after that use more-challenging activities, such as walking backward, wheelbarrow racing, racing piggyback, rolling somersaults, hopping on one foot, skipping, or crab walking. There will be mass bedlam in the center as all four teams crisscross.

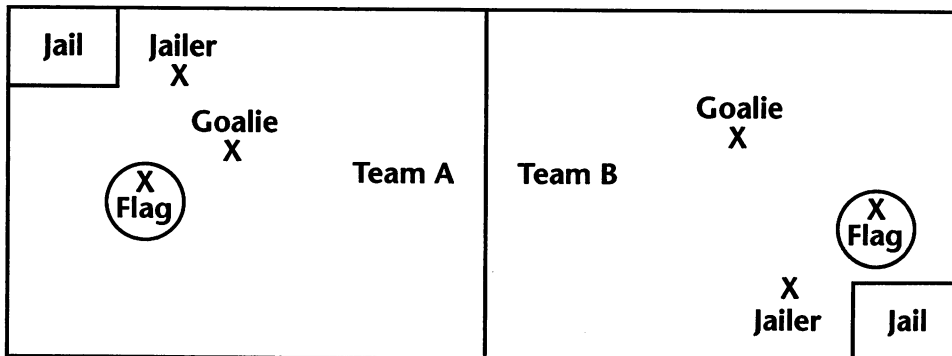
Bedlam Elimination

This game is a variation of Bedlam. Team members gather in the four corners of the playing field, as in Bedlam, but this time each person gets a flag (like those used in flag football) that they must wear in their back pocket or in the waistband of their pants. A safe area is designated and marked off for each team. The game begins with everyone standing behind that line.

On "go," everyone races diagonally across the field to the opposite corner. On the way, the players try to grab the flags out of opposing team members' pants. A team gets a point for each captured flag, and a team member who loses his or her flag is eliminated from the game. Play continues until only members of one team are left.

Capture-the-Flag

Young people still like to play this old game. The playing field needs to resemble this diagram:



Team *A* is on one side of the field, and team *B* is on the other side. The idea of the game is to capture the flag that is located in the other team's territory, without getting tagged. Once a player crosses over the line in the middle of the field, he or she can be tagged and sent to the opposing team's jail. A player can free a jailed teammate by getting to the jail without being tagged and tagging the prisoner. Both get a free walk back to safety. Each team has one goalie, who watches the flag from a distance of about ten feet, and a jailer, who guards the jail.

Capture-the-Football

This is an exciting variation of Capture-the-Flag (see previous activity). Footballs replace flags. A team wins by passing or punting the opposing team's football over the line that separates the team's territories. If players are tagged, they must remain prisoners until teammates tag them and set them free. If the football is passed over the line and the pass is incomplete, the passer and the intended receiver both must go to jail. If the pass is complete, the team wins. Other Capture-the-Flag rules can be adapted as needed.

Power Baseball

This variation of softball allows nonathletic people and athletes to play competitively. It is especially successful with fifteen or more people on a side. To avoid the possibility of easy outs, use a tennis ball and a tennis racket. Anyone can hit a good shot, and it is almost impossible to strike out. (If you think some people will hit the ball too far, have them use a racquetball racket.)

Fat Bat

This version of softball can be played out-of-doors in any kind of weather, and anybody can play. It does not require much skill.

Purchase a fat bat and a fat ball from a toy store or a department store. These items are relatively easy to find and are quite inexpensive. Regular softball rules apply, but there are no foul balls. Every hit is fair. The ball is so light that a good wind will carry it anywhere. So the nastier the weather, the better.

Human Football

This wild game can be played on any rectangular playing field, outdoors or indoors. A football field works fine. Divide your group into two teams. When a team is on offense, it begins at its twenty-yard line. The offense gets four downs to move the ball down the field and to score a touchdown. (There are no additional first downs.) A player hikes a football to the quarterback, who is then picked up and carried

by the rest of the team down the field. All of the team members must be in touch with one another as the ball is advanced, either by carrying the quarterback or by holding on to team members who are carrying him or her.

The defensive team begins each play lined up on the goal line they are defending. As soon as the offensive team hikes the ball, the defensive team locks arms and walks (no running allowed) down the field toward the offensive team, which, in turn, is moving toward the defensive team. When the defensive team reaches the offensive team, the two end members of the defense try to dislodge one of the offensive players from the rest of the team. As soon as this is accomplished, the down is over. The ball is put into play from that point.

The defensive team returns to its goal line on each play, and the offensive team repeats the same procedure. If no touchdown is scored in four tries, the defense becomes the offense and gets the ball at its twenty-yard line. Both teams must walk while the ball is in play. If the defense breaks its chain, it must reunite before proceeding down the field. If the offensive chain breaks, the down is automatically over. Score the game using any point system you wish.

Fris Ball

This game is played like softball, with the following adaptations:

- Any number of players can play.
- A Frisbee is used instead of a bat and a ball.
- Each team gets six outs instead of three.
- The Frisbee must go at least thirty feet on a fly or it is foul.
- The offensive team does not have to wait until the defensive team is ready before sending their batter to the plate. This keeps to a minimum the normal slowdown between innings.

Kooky Kick Ball

This game can be played on either a baseball diamond or an open field. Like regular kick ball (or baseball), one team is at bat and the other is in the field.

The first player kicks the ball as it is rolled to her or him by a teammate. A miss, a foul, or a ball caught in the air is an out. Each team is allowed three outs per inning. If no outs are made, the inning ends after everyone on the team has been "at bat" once. When the ball is kicked, a fielder retrieves the ball and the rest of the fielding team lines up behind her or him. The ball is passed back between the legs of all the players. The last team member in line takes the ball and tries to tag the runner.

After kicking the ball, the kicker does not run around the bases. Instead, her or his team lines up single file behind the kicker, who runs around her or his team as many times as possible. One run is scored for every complete revolution the kicker makes before she or he is tagged.

Lap Sit

This cooperative game requires that everyone do a part, or the game flops. It is best with large groups, from fifty to five hundred and even more.

Have the group form a large circle with everyone facing one direction—clockwise or counterclockwise. Make sure the spacing between each player is about the same. Usually about twelve to eighteen inches is ideal. At a signal, have the players hold their arms out to the sides and sit down in the lap of the person immediately behind them. The trick is to have everyone hold everyone else up, but if one person is out of place, the whole group will most likely fall down.

The fun of this game is trying to succeed on the first try. If the players are not successful, have them try again until they finally succeed. After they have succeeded, have the group walk while in the seated position. This *really* takes coordination on everyone's part.

Plunger Ball

Young people enjoy this variation of baseball. This game can be played indoors or outdoors. You need a large rubber or plastic ball and a toilet plunger.

Divide the group into two teams. Pick one team to go to the field and the other to bat. The player at bat pokes at the ball with the rubber end of the plunger and runs to first base, and so on. All the normal rules of baseball or softball apply.

Change the rules as you see fit. For example, it is usually best to have four or five bases positioned close together. Boundaries and positions can be adjusted spontaneously. Players can be called out by hitting them with the ball. You can have five outs per inning.

Tube Mania

This exhausting game can be lots of fun.

Mark a large square in the field and place a stack of seven to ten inner tubes in the center of the square. Divide the group into four equal teams. Have one team line up on each side of the square and number the players on each team.

The object of the game is for each team to get as many inner tubes as possible across its own line. Call one, two, three, or four numbers. The players with those numbers run to the center and start dragging the inner tubes to their line. The number or numbers called will determine the number of players tugging on the same tube. Each tube successfully pulled across a team's line scores a point for that team.

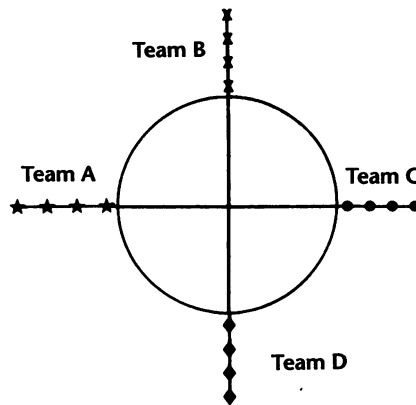
Once the players get the hang of it, add a soccer ball to the game. Each team gets a point deducted from the score if the ball is kicked over its line. Team members along the line act as goalies. Each time the ball touches the ground in a team's territory, a point is deducted.

To further complicate the game, add a cage ball (four to eight feet in diameter). The team that gets this ball across their own line gets three points. The team with the most points wins.

Tug-of-War Times Two

Divide the group into four teams for a four-way tug-of-war. Tie two ropes together in the middle so that you have four equal lengths. Draw a circle on the ground. Put the knot at dead center and have each team pick up its rope and stand outside the circle.

Explain that when one team is pulled across the circle boundary, it is eliminated. Then the three remaining teams play until another team is eliminated. Finally, two teams play to determine the winner.



For Tug-of-War Times Three, tie together three ropes and begin with six teams. It works! The primary advantage to this version is that the lighter or weaker teams can gang up on the heavier or stronger teams and eliminate them from the game early on.

Nine-Legged Race

Just for fun or to demonstrate the value of working together, play this variation of the three-legged race. It works best with large groups, and it requires lots of space. You will need a supply of sacks or ropes or belts to join teammates together.

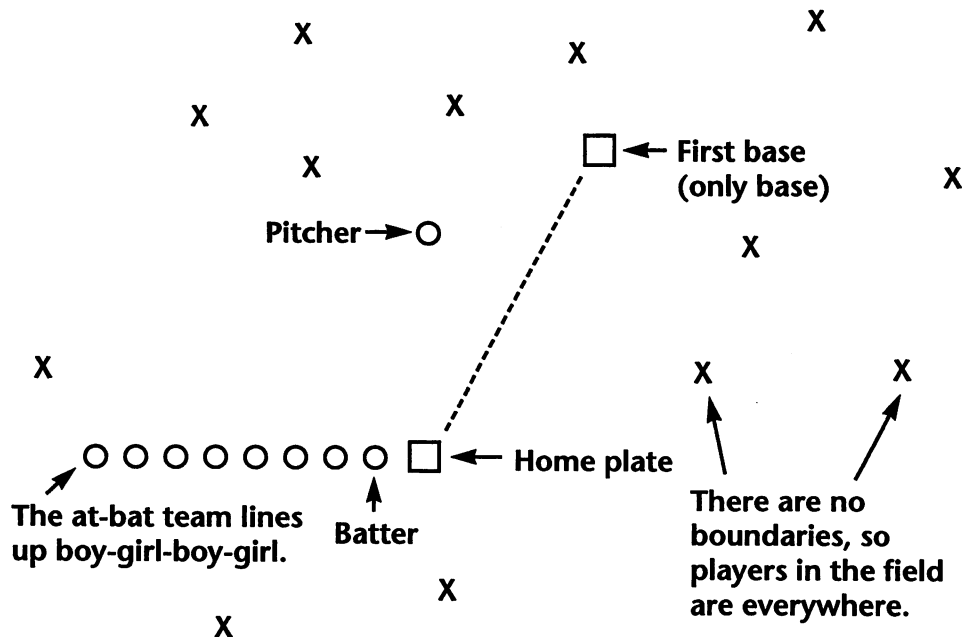
Divide the players into equal-size groups. (For this explanation, groups of eight are used.) Place five players from each team on one side of the field. Each team's remaining three players must stand opposite their teammates, across the field. From the five-player side, have two people from each team begin a traditional three-legged race. (Caution the players that even though you may not have called the game a *foot* race, the teammates cannot drop to their knees and pull themselves along with their hands.) When they reach the other side, have them add another team member, turn, and run back. At each end of their course they are to tie up with another teammate until all eight players are strung together at the ankles and running the last length. The first team across the finish line wins. (The *real* fun is

watching the teams figure out how to turn around—but do not tell them this.)

For heightened hilarity, use thin strips of plastic trash bags as ties and add this rule—if a tie breaks, the team has to stop and either retie it or replace it.

Two-Base Ball

This is one of the all-time great games for large groups. It is exciting and lots of fun to play. It is best to have teams of about twenty to twenty-five playing on a big open field.



Use only two bases—home plate and first base (place first base about one hundred feet from home plate). Play with a regular baseball or softball bat and a volleyball with some of the air let out. Explain these rules to the teams:

There are no out-of-bounds and no foul balls. The ball can be hit in any direction. In fact, when the ball is pitched, the batter can attempt to hit it behind her or him.

The team at bat lines up boy-girl-boy-girl on one side of home plate.

The only field positions are a catcher and a first-base player and general outfielders. The team at bat provides its own pitcher. The pitch should be as easy to hit as possible. If the bat touches the ball in any way, it is a fair ball. Outs are made in the following ways:

- a missed swing (a strike is an out)
- a fly ball that is caught (as in regular baseball)
- a force-out at first base (as in regular baseball)
- a runner is tagged with the ball (the runner can be hit with the ball while running to or from first base)

Once a runner reaches first base, he or she does not have to leave until it is safe to do so, even if the next batter gets a hit. Any number of players can occupy first base at the same time. No runs are scored, however, until players cross home plate. For example, several players on first base might all run to home plate at the same time and score several runs.

Each team gets three outs per inning. As soon as the team at bat has three outs, those players run out into the field. The team at bat quickly lines up and starts hitting. It does not have to wait for the fielding team to get ready.

If you have more than fifty players, get two games going at once on opposite sides of the field. Let the games overlap. It can get very confusing, but it is a lot of fun. Each game will need an umpire to keep score and rule on controversial plays.

Long Jump Relay

Divide the contestants into teams of six or eight people, mark a starting line, and have each team form a single-file line behind it.

This is how the game works: At a signal, the first person in each line does a standing broad jump straight ahead—both feet must leave the ground simultaneously. The next player in line runs to him or her, places his or her feet exactly where the first jumper's feet were, and does another standing broad jump. The third player runs up to the second and repeats the process. Each player in turn rushes forward and jumps from where the preceding player landed.

After the last player of every team has jumped, the total distance of each team is measured. The team with the farthest distance wins.

Ultimate Frisbee Football

This variation on football has a twist that is guaranteed to tire even the most rambunctious players. It lets everyone play quarterback and receiver. The only equipment that you will need is a Frisbee.

Play on a football-type field with goal lines at either end. Explain that the object is to cross the opponent's goal line with the Frisbee. Play relies on passing the Frisbee to move it downfield.

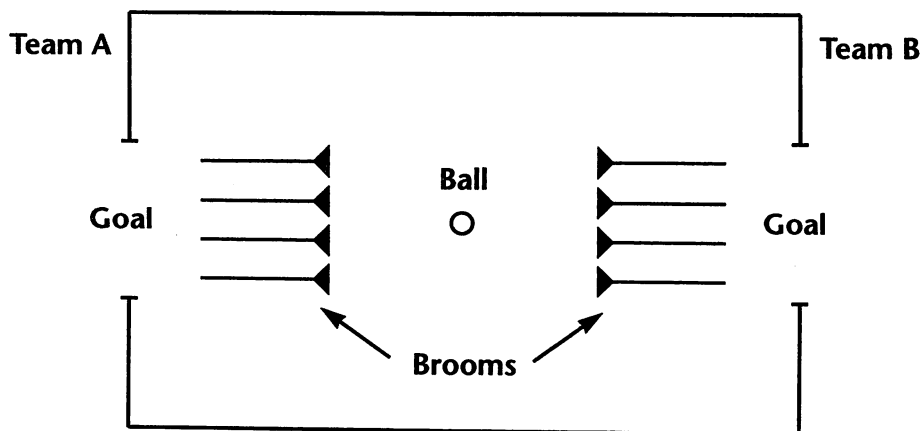
If the Frisbee holder does not throw it by the time an opponent counts to ten, the Frisbee holder must run with the Frisbee and can be legally tagged by an opposing team member. The Frisbee changes teams in the case of a tag, an interception, or an incomplete pass.

Broom Hockey

This variation on hockey can be played with as many as thirty or as few as five people per team. However, only five or six members from each team are allowed on the field at one time. If you have a team of thirty members, have them number off by sixes, creating six

sub-teams of five members each. Let all the 1s play a three-minute period, then the 2s, and so on.

In the center of the playing field, place a volleyball. And in front of each goal, line up brooms for the players (see diagram). At the sound of a whistle, the two teams should run onto the field, grab their brooms, and try to swat the volleyball through the opposing team's goal. Goalies can put the ball back into play by throwing it onto the playing field. If the ball goes out-of-bounds, a referee must throw it back in. While the ball is in play, it cannot be touched with hands or feet, only with brooms. Score one point each time the ball passes between goal markers or into the net.



Sponge Dodge

In the heat of the summer, find a beach (or an open lawn with a garden hose handy), take along a half-dozen five-gallon buckets and an equal number of sponges, and play this game to cool off.

Mark out a circle and place the buckets around the perimeter. Half fill them with water and drop a sponge in each. After the entire youth group gets in the circle, soak the first sponge and throw it at someone. That person can join you around the edge of the circle and begin throwing sponges, too. Continue the game until only one person is left inside the circle—he or she is the winner. Sponges that drop inside the circle can be retrieved by any thrower, but they must be dipped again before they are thrown.

Some variations:

- Play a couple rounds by teams. Time how long it takes for one team to eliminate members of an opposing team. The team that does so in the shortest time wins. Or set a time limit and declare the winner to be the team with the most members in the circle when the clock runs out.
- Let the game run indefinitely, with no winners or losers. Begin the game with five inside the circle. Whoever makes a hit trades places with his or her victim.