

# Tag & Evasion Games

## What Are The Educational Applications?

In many elementary physical education programs, students participate in activities in which they dodge other students (tag) or objects (dodge ball). When you bring up the subject of dodge ball it appears that physical education specialists either "love it" or "hate it" as a curricular activity. In fact, dodge ball has come under increasing scrutiny in physical education programs as the activity of choice for practicing the skill of dodging. There are several justified reasons for this scrutiny of the traditional version of dodge ball:

- Elimination of students with less developed skills (in essence the students who need the most practice are removed from the game).
- Lack of connection between the technical (throwing and catching) and tactical concepts (how to successfully dodge an object/use a fake) to the actual game of dodge ball.
- Use of human targets.
- Excessive use of the game throughout the school year.
- Use of inappropriate equipment to play the game (volleyballs or soccer balls).
- Use of violent names attached to the game (i.e., killer ball, murder ball etc.).
- Subtle reinforcement of gang mentality as stronger players bombard weaker players.

When teaching games for understanding, teach concepts beyond the technical skills of the game by including concepts related to the strategies of the game. In many team games, students are required to understand when to use the skills of dodging. Dodging requires the student to demonstrate the ability to make quick changes in directions. Dodging is a skill you will find in many team sports (football, soccer, basketball etc.) and in some individual sports (fencing, wrestling, etc.). In addition, we find applications for the skill of dodging in lifetime chores (moving through a crowded mall or amusement park). It is not the skill of dodging that is the problem, but our implementation of the skill. How do we help students develop the skills to become efficient and effective dodgers? How can we continue to provide dodging learning experiences in an increasingly appropriate manner? Listed below are a few ideas for your consideration.

## How Can I Use This With My Students?

### Kangaroo Ball

*(Reinforces quick changes in direction and awareness aspects of dodging.)*

The students will be working in groups of threes. One student is the "kangaroo" (player in the middle) while the other two students are the "rollers" (players at the end of defined area). The "rollers" face each other approximately 6 or more feet apart depending on the skill level of the students. The player in the middle—"kangaroo"—will use dodging skills to avoid being touched by a foam ball rolled back and forth between the two "rollers". The "rollers" attempt to touch the kangaroo on the feet with the rolling ball. Once touched by the rolling ball, the "kangaroo" takes the place of one of the "rollers" (usually the one who rolled the ball that touched the "kangaroo"—this rule can be changed so that all players get a chance at each player position). The game then resumes with a new "kangaroo". For a variation, use the skill of bouncing a ball at the "kangaroo".

### Cooperative No Tag

*(Reinforces quick changes in direction/speed and awareness aspects of dodging.)*

This game has a variety of formats and names, i.e., Merry-Go-Round Tag, Catch the Dragon's Tail, Protect the Prince/ss. The students will be working in groups of four. Three students make a circle—the remaining

player ("tagger") is on the outside of the circle. One person in the circle is designated as "It". The object is not to let the "Tagger" tag the "It". The circle of players work together using dodging skills in order to prevent "It" from getting tagged. This game can also be played in a line formation. In the line formation game, three players form a line holding onto the waist of the person in front. The last player in the line is "It". The "Tagger" faces the front of the line and attempts to tag the "It" at the end of the line.

### I Want That Tail

*(Reinforces quick changes in directions/speed and awareness aspects of dodging.)*

Half of the students in the class are wearing a flag football belt (turned so one end of the hook & loop fabric is lined up with the spine in the back of the body) with only one flag attached (resembles a tail on the back of the student). The other half of the class is tail-less (only wearing the flag football belt with no flag attached). The object is for the tail-less to get a tail. On a "GO" signal, "tailed" players use dodging skills to avoid having the tail snatched. Any tail-less player can snatch a tail from any player with a tail. In fact, two tail-less players can work together to help one get a tail. When a tail-less player snatches a tail, he/she has a count of twenty to attach his/her tail and move into a dodging stance. Newly tailed players count out loud so the tail-less players know his/her status. The newly tail-less players attempt to regain a tail. Students may only have one tail at a time. As you can see, this game is a never-ending circle and quite an aerobic workout.

### Stuck In the Middle

Divide the playing area into three equal sections. The two end sections are designated as the "Sending Zones". Players in these two zones will send (by throwing, rolling, or bouncing) foam balls at the players in the middle section. "Sending Zone" players attempt to touch the players in the middle zone with the foam balls (high-bounce foam balls work the best). The "Sending Zone" players are free to move within their zone area to retrieve balls to put into play again. Senders must remember to use sufficient force so that the ball will travel into the opposite "Sending Zone".

The middle section is the "Dodging Zone". The "Dodging Zone" will have circle/squares (spot markers and bases work great) scattered throughout the zone that the players in this zone must stand upon. The circles/squares are known as the "Sticking Points". Players must keep at least one foot in contact with his/her "Sticking Point" while dodging the foam balls. If a "Dodging Zone" player is touched by a foam ball, he/she must trade places with the player who sent the ball that made contact. So the Sender now becomes a Dodger and the Dodger becomes a Sender. Legal touches are to the torso, arms, and legs of the Dodgers. Any touches that contact the face/head result in a time-out removal from the game for the offending Sender. If a Dodger catches a ball thrown by a Sender, he/she can choose to trade places with the Sender. A ball caught by a Dodger that is bounced or rolled cannot be used to trade places with the Sender. A ball caught by a Dodger that is bounced or rolled cannot be used to trade places and must be moved to the "Sending Zone".

This activity provides great sending and dodging practice for a variety of team sports. No player is ever eliminated, which provides all players with an opportunity to be actively engaged throughout the game.

Some thoughts about appropriate dodging games:

- Use appropriate types of balls/objects when throwing at players—basketballs, volleyballs, etc. are not appropriate.
- Use appropriate types of balls/objects for the age of the players—

playground balls are not appropriate for young children (substitute yarn balls).

- Designate an appropriate touch zone for the ball to make contact on players—touch zones that include the head and face are not appropriate.
- Avoid situations where stronger, skilled players are pitted against less-skilled players.
- Avoid situations where a number of players can all throw their balls at the same time at one player.

#### **How Do I Make This Developmentally Appropriate For My Kids?**

There are a number of ways you can change the games, thus making them more appropriate for a variety of developmental levels. Some suggestions are included with the actual game listed above. Listed below are several other ideas for meeting developmental levels.

- Increase or decrease the number of students in the role of tagger. Must there only be one tagger?
- Change the equipment used in playing the game. Usually a smaller ball makes the game more challenging and a larger ball creates an easier game.
- Increase the number of children on a team from four to six.
- Increase or decrease the length of time to play the game.
- Change the skills utilized in the games, i.e., rolling a ball vs. bouncing a ball or walking vs. running.

#### **How Do These Activities Relate to Current Educational Thinking?**

The Council on Physical Education for Children (COPEC) developed the position statement "Appropriate Practices for Elementary School Physical Education". Twenty-three components of a physical education program have been identified, and developmentally appropriate and inappropriate examples are provided as guidelines for recognizing best practices (appropriate) and counterproductive practices (inappropriate). These guidelines are useful as a decision-making tool for developing quality physical education programs. When working with the concepts of dodging, the following document guidelines are helpful.

#### **Curricula Decisions—Appropriate Practices**

The physical education curriculum has an obvious scope and sequence based on goals and objectives that are appropriate for all children (NASPE National Standards). The curriculum included a balance of skills and concepts in the areas of games, educational gymnastic, and rhythmical activities and dance. Teachers design experiences and select benchmarks to enhance the psychomotor, cognitive, and affective development of all children.

#### **Active Participation for Every Child—Appropriate Practices**

Teachers involve ALL children in activities that allow them to participate actively, both physically and mentally. Classes are designed to meet a child's need for active participation in all learning experiences.

- A philosophy of inclusion assures every child meaningful participation in physical education.
- Use of Games and Setting Rules for Games Play—Appropriate Practices
- Teachers select, design, sequence, and modify games to maximize the attainment of specific learning, skill enhancement, and enjoyment. Games should reinforce a "lesson theme".
- Teachers modify the rules, regulations, equipment, and playing space to facilitate learning by children of varying abilities or to focus learning on particular games or skill components.

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