

Family
Literacy

Playing and Learning



Fun games for good health

Contact Information

The NWT Literacy Council is a not-for-profit organization with a mandate to support literacy development in all official languages of the Northwest Territories. For more information, please contact:

NWT Literacy Council
Box 761, 5122 – 48th Street
Yellowknife, NT X1A 2N6

Phone: 867-873-9262
Toll Free (NWT): 1-866-599-6758
Fax: 867-873-2176

Facebook: [NWT Literacy Council](#)
Twitter: [NWTLiteracy](#)
YouTube: [NWTLiteracy](#)

Email: nwtliteracy@nwtliteracy.ca
Website: www.nwt.literacy.ca

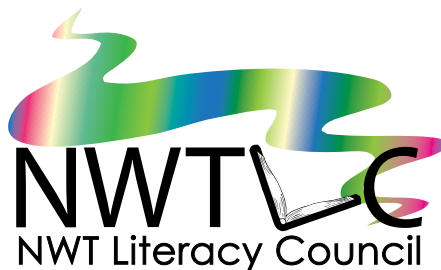


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These games are easy to play indoors or outdoors. Most require little or no equipment. These classic children's games are good for a child's mental development and thinking skills.

Suggested group sizes:

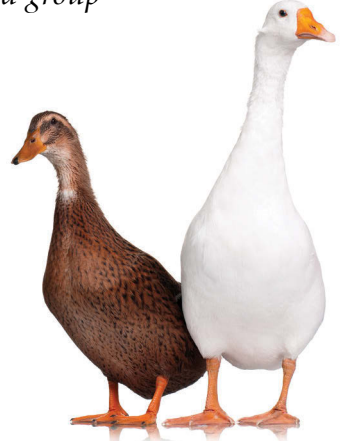
- Small: 4-6
- Medium: 7-11
- Large: 12+

Duck Duck Goose

How many people: Medium to large sized group

How to play:

- Children sit in a circle, facing inwards.
- Another child, the 'picker', walks around the outside of the circle, tapping each player's head lightly calling each one a "duck".
- Finally, the picker selects a child to call "goose".
- The child who has been selected as the goose must stand up, chase, and try to tag the picker.
- If the picker reaches the empty spot in the circle before being tagged by the goose, the goose becomes the next picker and play continues.
- If the picker gets tagged by the goose, the goose gets to return to their spot and the picker must try again.



Variations:

- When a goose is selected, the picker runs in one direction around the circle while the goose runs in the other direction. The child who gets to the empty spot first rejoins the circle, while the other child becomes the picker. Play continues.
- If the picker gets to the empty seat first, the goose is out of the game and must select the next picker. Then they sit in the middle of the circle (sometimes called the stew pot). Play continues, with more and more children joining the centre of the circle. When the stew pot gets too crowded the game restarts.

Simon Says

How many people: Small to large sized group

How to play:

- One child is selected to be 'Simon', the leader of the game.
- Everyone stands in a circle, facing Simon.
- Simon calls out "Simon says" followed by an action which the other children must do. For example, "Simon says hop on your left foot."
- If Simon calls out an action *without* saying "Simon says" first, players *do not* do the action.
- Any player who is tricked and changes their action is out of the game.
- The players who were not fooled stay in the game, and the play continues.
- If a player does not do the action even though "Simon says" was called, they are out of the game.
- The game is over once Simon has succeeded in getting all but one player out.
- The last player to go out becomes the next Simon.

Note:

- A player is tricked as soon as they switch actions without hearing "Simon says" first. They do not need to complete the action. For example, if Simon says "Touch your toes" and a child begins reaching (but does not actually touch) their toes, they are out of the game.

I Spy

This game is commonly played during car trips.

How many players: 2+

How to play:

- One person starts by choosing an object, and says “I spy with my little eye something beginning with [the letter that the object starts with]”.
 - For example, if the word is cow, the person would say “I spy with my little eye something beginning with C.”
- Other players use the hint to try and guess the object. There is no penalty for guessing many times.
- The person who guesses correctly gets a point and also gets to choose the next object to be spied.

Variations:

- Instead of saying the letter the word begins with, use a describing word, such as the object’s colour.
- To make the game less competitive, don’t count points.



Red Light, Green Light

How many players: Small to large sized group

How to play:

- Choose one child to be the 'stop light'. The other children are the 'cars'. The cars line up about 15 meters from, and facing the stop light.
- The stop light starts the game by yelling "green light".
- When the stop light says "green light", the children must run, jog, or walk towards the stop light.
- When the stop light says "red light", the children must immediately stop.
- Any children that are still moving after "red light" has been called are out or must return to the start line.
- The child who makes it to the stop light or other end of the field first is the winner, and gets to be the stop light next game.



Statues

How many players: Small to medium sized group

How to play:

- One player is chosen to be the museum 'Director'. The rest of the children are 'statues'.
- When the Director's back is turned to them, the statues may move around the room as they wish.
- When the Director is facing them, the statues, must stay completely still, no matter what their position is.
- When the statues are frozen, the Director may move them carefully and gently and change their positions. The statues must let the Director move them.
- The Director's goal is to make it difficult for the statues to stay in their positions so they wobble or move while the Director is watching.
- If a statue is caught moving, the player is out for the round.
- Play continues with the Director walking around the room and the statues staying still or moving around, depending on whether the Director is looking at them.
- The last remaining statue becomes the Director for the next round.



Captain's Coming

How many players: Medium to large sized group

How to play:

- Teach all the players (pirates) the commands.
 - Captain's coming – salute and yell "Aye aye, Captain!"
 - Bow – run to the front of the room
 - Stern – run to the back of the room
 - Port – run to the left of the room
 - Starboard – run to the right of the room
 - Submarine – lie on your back, raise one arm straight up for the periscope
 - Shark – lie on your stomach with your feet up
 - Captain's wife – curtsy
 - Scrub the decks – pretend to scrub on hands and knees
 - Climb the rigging – pretend to climb a rope ladder
 - Jellyfish – lie on your back and wiggle your arms and legs
 - Man the lifeboat – find a partner and hold both hands
 - Octopus – find 3 other pirates, stand with your backs together and wave your arms like tentacles
- The leader (captain) calls out commands that the pirates must follow.
- The pirate who completes the action last, or who does not find a partner must 'walk the plank' and is out of the game.
- The game restarts when there is one player left, who becomes the next captain.



Musical Chairs

This game needs music and chairs or cushions to sit on.

How many players: 6+

How to play:

- Make an adult or older child in charge of playing the music.
- Gather one less chair than there are players. For example, if there are 8 players, get 7 chairs.
- Arrange the chairs in a circle, facing outwards, with the children standing outside the circle.
- When the music begins to play, players walk in unison around the chairs.
- When the music stops, players must find a chair to sit on.
- The player who is left without a chair is out for the rest of the round.
- One chair is removed from the circle, so there is always one fewer chair than there are players.
- The music resumes and the cycle repeats until there is one player left in the game, who is the winner.



The Farmer in the Dell

How many players: 5+

How to play:

- Teach the players the rhyme that goes along with the game
 - Verse 1: The farmer's in the dell, The farmer's in the dell, E – I – Ah – Dee – Oh, The farmer's in the dell.
 - Verse 2: The farmer wants a wife, The farmer wants a wife, E – I – Ah – Dee – O, The farmer wants a wife.
 - Verse 3: The wife wants a child...
 - Verse 4: The child wants a nurse...
 - Verse 5: The nurse wants a dog...
- Have all the players stand in a circle.
- Choose one child to be the farmer who stands in the middle of the circle.
- Everyone joins hands in a circle and sings the first verse as they go around the farmer.
- Each new verse requires a new volunteer to join the middle, as the farmer chooses a wife, the wife chooses a child, etc.
- The game finishes at the end of Verse 5, when everyone sings "We all pat the dog", while gently patting the person who was chosen to be the dog.



Red Rover

This game is best played outdoors.

How many players: Large group, divided into 2 equal teams

How to play:

- Each team stands in a line holding hands, facing the other team to form two parallel lines a fair distance apart.
- The team that has been chosen to start secretly decides which member from the other team they want to call over.
- The team calls out in unison “Red rover, red rover, we call [name of selected player from other team] over!”
- The selected player from the opposite team must run towards the other team, and run in between two players of their choice. The goal is to break the link that those two players have formed by holding hands.
- If the player who ran over does not break the chain, they join the team that called “Red rover”.
- If the player does succeed in breaking the chain, they may choose one of the two players from the broken link to join the runner’s team.
- The two players then return to the runner’s team.
- The next team (the team with the first runner) now gets to call “Red rover”.
- Play continues until one very long chain has been formed.

What Time is It Mr. Wolf?

This game is best played outdoors.

How many players: Medium to large sized group

How to play:

- One player is chosen to be Mr. Wolf.
- Mr. Wolf stands at one end of a playing field facing away from the other players who stand at a start line.
- A call-and-response then takes place. All players (except Mr. Wolf) chant in unison “What time is it Mr. Wolf?”
- Mr. Wolf responds in one of two ways:
 1. A clock time (for example, 3 o’clock). The other players must then take that many steps, counting the number of steps out loud as they go. When they have reached the correct number (in this example, three steps), they ask the question again.
 2. When “Dinner Time” is called, Mr. Wolf will turn around to face the players and chase them back to the start line. If a player is tagged, they become Mr. Wolf for the next round. If everyone makes it back to the start line without being tagged by Mr. Wolf, play begins again with the same wolf.
- Play continues until children lose interest.



In and Out the Dusty Bluebells

This game is best played outdoors.

How many players: 8+

How to play:

- Teach all the players (dancers) the rhyme that goes along with the game
 - Verse 1: In and out the dusty bluebells, In and out the dusty bluebells, In and out the dusty bluebells, Who shall be my partner?
 - Verse 2: Tippity tappity on your shoulder, Tippity tappity on your shoulder, Tippity tappity on your shoulder, You shall be my partner.
- Have all dancers stand in a circle, holding hands.
- Dancers all raise their linked hands to make an arch between each of them.
- One dancer is chosen, and skips in and out of the arches while everyone sings the rhyme.
- On 'Who shall be my partner', the dancer stops, taps whoever is closest on the shoulder, and sings verse 2.
- This dancer joins on to the first dancer and they weave in and out again, while the first verse is repeated.
- The game continues until all the children form a chain; then they all skip around for as long as they like.



Spud

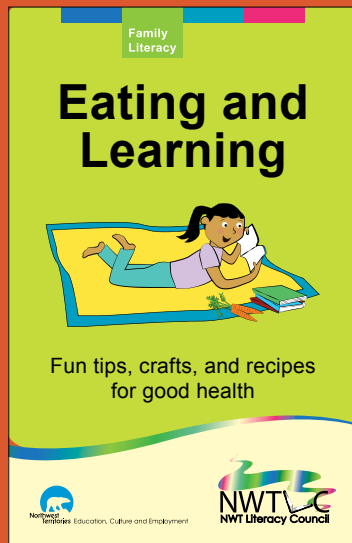
This game requires a ball to play, and is best played outdoors.

How many players: Small to medium sized group

How to play:

- Each player chooses a unique number that they will be called by for the rest of the game.
- Players stand in a circle.
- The player who has been selected to start the game throws the ball straight up in the air, and shouts a number.
- The player whose number has been called (the catcher) must catch or retrieve the ball.
- All players, including the player who threw the ball, must run away after the ball is thrown.
- When the catcher has the ball in their hands, they yell “stop”.
 - If the catcher catches the ball before it hits the ground, they may immediately throw the ball in the air and shout a new number.
- All players must stop immediately.
- The catcher is then allowed to take 3 steps towards a player, and must try to hit them with the ball.
- A targeted player can dodge the ball, but not move their feet.
- If the target is hit, they get the letter ‘S’, but if the catcher misses the target, the catcher gets the letter ‘S’.
- The player that gets a letter is the next person to throw the ball (it can be the catcher or the target).
- Play continues.
- The last player to spell ‘SPUD’ wins.





Check out our Eating and Learning booklet too!