



CD-ROM INCLUDED

uncommon games & icebreakers

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general editor



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Caution: Please exercise due caution when using games and icebreakers that are high activity or involve food.
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introduction

Let's face it, most of us are on the lookout for fresh ways to get our youth groups interacting and having fun. This resource not only gives you some of the finest ideas in games and icebreakers known in the youth world, but it is also laid out in the easiest format that I've ever seen!

This resource is divided into easy-to-use categories with icons that tell you instantly how much time you need to prepare, how much cleanup is involved, and even what the gross factor is! We also have an index at the back that gives a brief description of each game so that you don't have to read the whole game to get a quick picture. And to make things easy on you when you're in a hurry, we've devised an index that tells you immediately how much preparation time each activity takes so that when you don't have much time, you know exactly which games or icebreakers to go to and which page they are on.

But this book is not just about fun and games. When a youth group experiences enjoyable times together, the students will be ready to study the Word and participate in the church to a greater extent. So here's to a good time, even at church!

—Jim Burns

a few essential tips

adapt

Read the material, and then ask yourself, *How can I use this with my group? What should I add? What should I take away? How can it be adapted for our group?* In other words, change it to fit your students. Change the language. Update the material. Use the right props and costumes. Adjust. Alter. Tailor-make. Custom-fit. Modify. Adapt!

use props and costumes

Budget some money for buying costuming paraphernalia—dresses, hats, boots, jackets, purses, wigs, oversized clothes, telephones, musical instruments, drums, eyeglasses, sports equipment, and so forth. Ask church members to donate discards or leftovers from garage sales. You'd be amazed at how many good skit props you can buy at thrift stores, 99¢ stores and at garage sales with little money. If you're going to do a cowboy skit, get cowboy hats, boots, holsters, vests and whatever else. Make it more real, yet outrageous. Something about putting on costumes helps students loosen up and get into the spirit of the fun.

swallow your pride

If you can't be a fool for Christ, then whose fool are you? Go ahead and put on the makeup, get hit in the face with a pie, and put mustard under your arms. Who cares! This is how walls are broken down and relationships are built. Set an example of fun for your students. Go for it!

keep a record

Have you ever wondered if you have already done a skit or played a game or given a message to the group you're meeting with today? We have tried to make recordkeeping as simple and convenient as possible. Next to each activity, message or skit you use, write the date and with which group it was used. You can also jot down notes for new ideas or suggestions for adaptations or improvements.

icons used in this book



number

This refers to the number of people who can generally participate in the game or icebreaker. This typically ranges from small groups (less than 10 people) to medium-sized groups (between 10 to 30 people) to any-sized group (more than 30 people).



prep time

This indicates the amount of setup and preparation needed for the game or icebreaker, such as the time needed for measuring, drawing, cooking, and so forth. This does not include the time required for gathering or shopping for the materials needed.



time required

This is the approximate time the activity takes, including the time allotted for giving directions and forming teams, if necessary. (Note: All times are based on semi-cooperative kids.)



playing fields

Some activities work best indoors, some work best outdoors, and some work just as well either way. If there is a special requirement for the game or icebreaker (such as a game that requires snow), it will be listed here as well.



activity levels

This indicates the physical activity level required by the participants. This will typically range from low activity (involves little movement—students generally stay in their seats) to moderate activity (some walking or movement) to high activity (lots of running, movement and noise).



cleanup

Before deciding to do a game or icebreaker, it is always a good idea to know how much cleanup will be involved at the end of the event. Cleanup ranges from none to slight (a little messy—you will need a towel and sponge) to moderate (a multi-toweler with sponges) to heavy (get out the hose and shovels!).



gross factor

This indicates the degree of yuck in the game or icebreaker. Gross factor ranges from none to slight to moderate to disgusting!

GAMES

game \gam\ *n* **1 a** : activity engaged in for diversion or amusement: PLAY. **2 a** : **(1)** A physical or mental competition conducted according to rules with the participants in direct opposition to each other. **(2)** A division of a larger contest. **(3)** Any activity undertaken or regarded as a contest involving rivalry, strategy or struggle.

Games aren't just a fun way to fill time. They have a purpose. Games can build a stronger group and help develop friendships. They put the seriousness of life on hold and give students opportunities to let off steam.

The following games have been divided into two categories. *Group Games* are games in which everyone can participate. *Volunteer Games*, on the other hand, are games in which a few students volunteer to participate while the rest of the group watches. Most of the Volunteer Games have a surprise for at least one of the suckers . . . I mean participants. These may appear to the students to be spontaneous, even though you have taken the time to prepare them. Either way, your students are going to have a great time!



Group Games

group \grüp\ *n* **1** : a number of individuals assembled together or having some unifying relationship.

1

ankle balloon bash

This game works best in a large room or gymnasium.

materials needed

String or narrow gift-wrapping ribbon
Several pairs of scissors
Lots of balloons, at least one for each person

how to play

Provide players with about a three-foot length of string and one balloon. Tell them to blow up their balloons as large as possible (without popping). Then have the players remove their shoes and tie one end of the string to the balloon and the other end to their ankles. The object of the game is to have each student try to pop the other students' balloons without having his or her own balloon popped. When a person's balloon is popped, he or she cannot pop any more balloons and must leave the playing area and sit down. The last person standing with a balloon still around his or her ankle wins.

team variation

Divide students into two teams. Have the two teams line up across from each other on opposite sides of the room. Then, at your signal, have both teams run across the room to the other side. While they are running across the room, they will try to pop as many balloons as possible. Each person whose balloon is popped is out and must sit down. The last player with an unpopped balloon wins for the team.

Another variation for team play requires making a center dividing line down the middle of the playing area. There also needs to be a designated goal on opposite sides of the room. One team will arrange itself by having its members spread out on their side of the playing area while the other team is selecting a raider. When both teams are ready, the raiding team sends its raider to run across to the other side of the playing area.



number: **15-50 people**



prep time: **1-5 minutes**



time required: **15-30 minutes**



playing field: **indoor/outdoor**



activity level: **high**



cleanup: **moderate**



gross factor: **none**

The raider will try to stomp on as many of the opposing team's balloons as he or she can, while the opposition will try to stomp on the raider's balloon. Anyone whose balloon was popped is out of the game. If the raider makes it to the designated goal on the other side of the playing area without losing his or her balloon, he or she is safe and can either stay there or walk back to his or her team without being accosted. If the raider's balloon is popped, then he or she is out of play and sits down. The first team to lose all of its balloons is the loser.

other variations

- Guys vs. girls
- Adults vs. students
- Play this in total darkness or with a strobe light on

bring the fun and build relationships

As every good youth leader knows, games aren't just a fun way to fill the time—they are also a way to bring teens together to share laughter and life. The right activity builds a stronger group with deep and lasting friendships, and in *Uncommon Games and Icebreakers*, veteran youth minister Jim Burns brings together more than 135 activities that will help you connect your students . . . and bring the fun!

These activities have been field-tested in youth groups across the country and are proven to bridge the gaps between teens, helping them to get to know one another through good, clean (sometimes messy) fun. Each activity has clear instructions as well as estimates from the pros on prep time, cleanup level and "gross" factor. Bring the fun to youth meetings, Sunday School classes, retreats, staff meetings, parent nights, camps, lock-ins and outreach programs, and watch relationships thrive.



Hit the ground running with a complete
package of proven and effective materials for
Junior High and High School ministries!

- More than 135 ways to bring the fun and build relationships
- Includes CD-ROM with reproducible instructions for every activity
- Tips on props and costumes and suggestions for adapting games to your group
- Every activity shows prep time, cleanup level, group size and gross factor
- Icons make it easy to select the ideal game for any event
- All activities are indexed by description and prep time for easy reference
- Edited by Jim Burns, one of today's leading authorities on youth



JIM BURNS, Ph.D., president of HomeWord, is the host of *HomeWord with Jim Burns*, which features daily and weekly radio programs. Since 1985, HomeWord has been assisting parents and churches worldwide through radio, resources, seminars and the Web at www.homeword.com. Jim is the author of many resources, including *Confident Parenting* book and kit, *Creating an Intimate Marriage* book and kit (also available in audio CD), *Addicted to God*, *One Life* and *Uncommon Youth Ministry*. He writes monthly columns for *Ignite Your Faith* magazine and *Simply Youth Ministry* newsletter and website. He and his wife, Cathy, and their three daughters live in Southern California.



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