

PRIMARY PHYSICAL EDUCATION



Playground Games & the Games Strand:



The games strand fosters the child’s natural tendency to play through informal play activities. It enhances the development of basic skills, and many opportunities are provided for social interaction. As skills develop in accordance with the stage of development of the child, the desire to apply them in informal activities in competition with others increases. Playground games, co-operative games and games traditional to the school or locality should be considered when planning a programme for the school. *Physical Education Curriculum pg. 5*

Playground games are a wonderful opportunity for pupils to develop fundamental movement skills. Many of the games outlined below can be varied to incorporate the fundamental movement skill chosen to be embedded into the PE lesson. Some of the games named below are similar to the activities presented in the resource Move Well, Move Often.

Refer to the key messages section at the end of this handout for more information on how to use the Move Well, Move Often resource as part of your PE programme.



This resource looks to provide teachers with a bank of playground games to use during the PE lesson and in turn pupils can play these games during break times. Playing playground games during break time encourages fun, enjoyment, extra physical activity time and opportunities for socialisation for pupils throughout the school.

This resource details a number of playground games that require no equipment, minimal equipment and traditional games.

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Playground Games (without equipment)

1. Beans

Invite pupil to jog slowly around the playing space in any direction. On the various commands listed below, they should carry out the appropriate action:

- *jumping bean* – jump around the space
- *broad bean* – walk around the space taking large strides
- *baked bean* – lay down on their backs
- *jelly bean* – wobble like jelly
- *frozen bean* – stand still
- *chilli bean* – shiver and shake
- *back to back bean* – find a partner and stand back to back
- *full of beans* – dance around full of energy
- *tinned beans* – get into small groups.



2. Captain's Command (MWMO Book 3 pg. 13)

Mark out a designated playing space using yard or hall lines. The teacher calls out commands and the pupils are invited to respond with the following actions:

- *bow*: pupils run to the front of the area and perform a static balance
- *stern*: run to the back and perform a static balance
- *port*: run to the left and perform a static balance
- *starboard*: run to the right and perform a static balance
- *climb the rigging*: action of climbing the rigging
- *scrub the deck*: down on one knee and scrub the floor
- *captain's coming*: stand to attention and salute.



3. Run on the Spot

Invite pupils to find a space within a designated playing area. The emphasis of the game is on short bursts of vigorous activity. Invite one pupil to act as the caller. The remaining pupils are invited to jog on the spot until the caller changes the activity. These activities should only last about 15 seconds. The variations could include fast jogging, high knees, heel flicks, swinging arms, jumping, star jumps, skipping on the spot, clapping hands and crazy dancing.

4. Move Like an Animal (MWMO, Book 1 pg. 27)

Invite pupils to move around the allocated area as a designated animal, for example a bunny hop, seal slide, snake slither, emu run, kangaroo jump or crab crawl. Invite pupils to choose their own animal movement to move around the area.



5. Laughing Tag (MWMO, Book 1, Pg. 87)

Mark out a designated playing area. Invite three pupils to act as 'taggers'. All remaining pupils find a space within the playing area. On a signal, pupils are invited to move around the playing area without being tagged. If pupils are tagged, the tagger and the tagged pupil stop and face

each other. The tagger tries to make the tagged pupil smile or laugh. If the tagger is unsuccessful, the tagged pupil runs free. If the tagger is successful, the pupil becomes a tagger.

6. Follow the Leader Balance (MWMO, Book 1, Pg. 118)

Invite pupils to move around a designated area using one of the fundamental movement skills such as skipping, side stepping or running. While a nominated leader moves around the area, the remaining pupils follow and copy the leaders' actions. The leader stops to perform different balances, for example one foot balances, two feet balances and knee balances. Once the leader has performed a balance they move to the back so that all pupils have a turn.



7. Frog in the Pond

Invite pupils to form a circle with one pupil acting as the 'frog' who hops in the middle of the circle of pupils. The frog hops while the pupils skip, side step, jump or hop in a clockwise direction around the frog. They chant '*frog in the sea can't catch me*' until the frog decides to chase a pupil in the circle. The first caught becomes the frog. Pupils are 'safe' once they reach a given boundary. Make sure markers are far enough apart to give the frog a chance to catch someone.



8. Run Around and Balance

Invite pupils to run around in a designated playing area trying to avoid contact with other pupils. They should begin slowly and gradually experiment with changing direction and changing speed. When a whistle is blown, pupils are invited to form a circle of a given number and balance on one foot while linking hands or arms. Pupils without a group should perform a static balance. Once the balances are held for 5 seconds, continue the game.

9. The Remote Control (MWMO, Book 1, Pg. 12)

Invite pupils to respond to different instructions from the remote control (the teacher) by completing the following actions:

- *play*: walk around the room
- *pause*: freeze on the spot while holding a balance
- *rewind*: walk backwards
- *fast forward*: run around the room
- *record*: make funny faces at classmates
- *change channel*: new type of movement (hop, skip, side step, etc)
- *volume up*: jump
- *volume down*: crouch



10. Jungle Run

Pupils are invited to run through the 'jungle' and run into different obstacles and animals that they need to get away from. The teacher gives appropriate commands, and the pupils must carry out a suitable action:

- *jump over logs*
- *duck under branches*
- *high knees through quicksand*
- *run from the tiger*
- *tiptoe past the snake*
- *talk to the monkeys (ooh, ooh, aah, aah)*
- *hop on the lily pads*
- *balance on the rock in the river*



11. I See

Invite pupils to find a space within the playing area, facing the teacher. The teacher begins by saying "I see." The pupils answer in chorus by saying "What do you see?" The teacher responds with a sentence indicating what the pupils are invited to do, for example, "I see all pupils moving in any direction without touching anyone". Pupils respond to this signal until the teacher changes the 'I see' sentence.

12. Follow the call

Invite all pupils to follow you, the teacher, or a nominated pupil by walking around the perimeter of the playing area. Ensure pupils keep a distance between themselves and the player in front of them.

On a given command from the leader, pupils are invited to perform certain actions. Sample commands and actions may include:

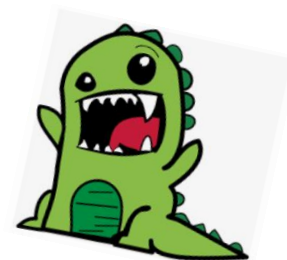
- *Turn*: turn quickly and walk in the opposite direction
- *Jump*: jump from two feet to two feet
- *Touch*: touch ground with both hands bending at the knee
- *Bellies*: lie on bellies and walk again
- *Back*: lie on backs and walk again
- *Skip*: skip forwards in a straight line
- *Jog*: jog



13. As if.....

Pupils are invited to perform the following actions for 30 seconds:

- *Jog as if a big scary dinosaur is chasing you.*
- *Jump on the spot as if you are popping popcorn*
- *March and play the drums as if you are in a marching band*
- *Reach up as if you are catching bubbles in the air*
- *Walk as if you are a giant giraffe*
- *Shake your body as if you are a wet dog*



Playground Games (that require minimal equipment)

1. Rabbit in the Burrow (hula hoops/spot markers)

(MWMO Book 1 pg. 42)

Invite pupils to place their hoop/spot marker (their burrow) on the playing field away from anyone else's. On the signal 'Run rabbits!' the pupils run around the playing area. When they hear the call 'Quick in the burrow!' the pupils must get into any burrow as fast as they can. Each time a new game starts remove a hoop from the playing area. Each time this happens another pupil will be left without a burrow. Any pupil without a burrow runs around the outside of the playing area and then joins the group again for the next game.



2. Builders and Bulldozers (cones)

(MWMO Book 1, Pg. 31)

Arrange pupils in two even teams. One team are the 'Builders' (flexi cones are put on their narrow ends to look like a dish) and the other team are 'Bulldozers' (flexi cones on their wide end to look like a dome). The aim of the game is for the dishes to turn all the domes into dishes, whilst the domes team turn all the dishes into domes. Each pupil is given a cone and they put the cone in a marked area whichever way up indicates their team. Once all the cones are in the playing area the pupils move to the outside of the area and wait for a signal or whistle. They then have three minutes to change the cones to their team's way. They are not allowed to protect cones, move them or stand on cones to stop them being changed. At the end of a designated amount of time the whistle is blown again and all pupils move back to the edge of the playing area and observe the cones. The process can then be repeated.



3. Hopping Chain (cones/spot markers)

Arrange pupils into groups of four or five and invite them to line up behind the starting line. On the signal 'Go', pupil one hops around a marker and returns to collect pupil two. These pupils link arms and hop around the marker and return to collect pupil three who joins the chain. Continue until all team members are on the chain and hop around the marker together. If the chain is broken, pupils must stop until it is joined up again. The pupils who are waiting in the line should hop on the spot. Change the locomotor skill and play again.

4. Rats & Rabbits (cones/spot markers)

Arrange pupils in two straight lines down the length of the hall, back to back. The group on one side are called the rabbits and group on the other side are called the rats. When the teacher calls 'rabbits' the rabbits must run 5 metres to a cone at their side of the hall and the rats must chase them to try and catch them before they reach the cone. When the teacher calls 'rats' the rats must run 5 metres to a cone at their side of the hall and the rabbits must chase them to try and catch them before they reach the cone.



5. Gauntlet (cones/spot markers, coloured bibs)

Assign the two end sections of the hall/court as 'safe' areas and the central area as the 'Gauntlet'. The game leader, who is known as the 'Gladiator', stands in the central area. All the other pupils stand in one of the safe areas. The pupils shout "Gladiator, may we run the gauntlet?" and the Gladiator replies "not unless you've got the colour..." All pupils wearing clothing/bibs with the chosen colour may cross freely to the other side. The remaining pupils must then try to cross and the Gladiator should try to tag them. All pupils that are tagged must join the middle and help the Gladiator. The game continues until one pupil remains. This last pupil tagged becomes the new Gladiator for the next game. Encourage the use of different conditions, for example, 'has a birthday in June', 'has the letter S in their first name', 'has an older brother/sister', etc.

6. Time Bomb (small soft ball)

(MWMO, Book 3, Pg. 44)

A timer is set to go off in three minutes. One of the pupils carries a small ball which represents the 'time bomb'. This pupil aims to chase and tag one of the other pupils who must then take over the 'time bomb'. Everyone tries to get rid of the 'time bomb' as quickly as possible. When the timer goes off, the player carrying the 'time bomb' runs around the outside of the playing area and then joins the next game.



7. Jewel Thief (tennis ball/beanbag, spot markers)

(MWMO Book 1, Pg. 119)

Mark out a playing area with two end lines. One pupil takes the role of the 'security guard' and stands at one end of the playing field. All other pupils stand at the other end. The guard's back is towards the group and the jewel (tennis ball/beanbag) lies between the security guard and the other pupils (the thieves). Once the group starts sneaking up, the guard can turn at any time. When this happens everyone must freeze. Anyone who is seen moving by the guard must move back 5 giant paces. The jewel is considered stolen if one pupil gets the treasure and runs back to the start without being caught.



8. Shadow Move (skipping ropes/cones)

Mark out a designated area and place obstacles like skipping ropes and cones within the area. Arrange pupils in pairs and assign each pupil within the pair the number one or two. Pupil one is the leader and pupil two must shadow the movements of pupil one. These movements could include any of the locomotor skills performed high or low, for distance or over different obstacles. Reverse the roles of the pupils and repeat the game.

9. Hoop Island (hula hoops, spot markers)

Mark out a playing area using spot markers and scatter hoops randomly around the area. All pupils start in a hoop except three pupils who are nominated as 'taggers'. The taggers chase the pupils as they move from hoop to hoop. Pupils can stay in a hoop for a short time before moving on. Any pupil who is tagged becomes a tagger.

10. Catch Up (soft foam balls)

Arrange pupils in a circle in groups of 8-10. Two leaders stand in the centre of the circle back to back, with a ball each. The leaders throw their ball to a pupil in the circle and on return throw it to the next pupil on the right as quickly as possible. The aim of the game is for one ball to catch up to and go passed the other.

11. Cat and Mouse Dribble (basketballs/bouncy balls, spot markers)



Mark out a designated playing area using spot markers. Arrange pupils in pairs, one pupil as the 'mouse' and the other pupil as the 'cat'. Invite all pupils to line up around the playing area with a ball. When the teacher calls out cat or mouse, that pupil dribbles the ball into the playing area. On a whistle the other animal runs into the area, finds their partner and tries to take possession of the ball. Repeat the sequence so that all students have a turn as both the attacker and the defender.

12. Cats in the Corner (soft foam ball; spot markers)

Mark off a square playing area using spot markers. One pupil is the ball thrower who is invited to stand in the centre of the square. There are safe zones at each of the corners where all the pupils (cats) will be. When the thrower calls 'cats in the corner', the cats have to run from one corner to another without getting hit by the ball. They can run in any direction, including diagonally, as long as they do not get hit. Any pupil hit by the ball becomes a thrower who gets an extra ball to throw.

13. Litterbug (skipping ropes; pieces of paper/beanbags) (MWMO, Book 1, Pg. 158)

Arrange pupils in two groups. Place skipping ropes in between the two groups and give each pupil a beanbag/piece of paper to scrunch up into a ball. The aim of the game for each team is to have fewer paper balls/beanbags in their area at the end of the allocated time. On a given signal teams throw the paper balls out of their area and into the other teams area. Pupils keep throwing until they are told to stop. Play the game again but this time pupils can only use one hand to pick up and throw the ball.



14. Sun and Snowballs (tags/bibs) (MWMO Book 1 pg. 91)

Invite two pupils to be 'the Frost' and give them blue bibs. Invite two pupils to be 'the Sun' and give them yellow bibs. The Frost must chase the other pupils and touch them so they freeze. Pupils can only become defrosted when they are touched by 'the Sun'.

15. Three Blind Mice (tags/bibs)

Pupils are arranged into teams of six. Each team gets the opportunity to play the role of 'farmers wife' while all other pupils are the 'mice'. Each mouse has a tag or bib tucked into their waist. When the teacher calls 'off with their tails' the farmers' wife chase the mice and gather as many tags/bibs as they can in one minute. The team that collects the most bibs wins.

Traditional Playground Games

1. Prison Wall (beanbags optional)

- Two parallel lines are drawn across the middle of the designated area about one metre apart and this area is known as the Prison Wall.
- One pupil stands between the lines and may not go beyond them.
- The other pupils have to run across the lines without being tagged. (Alternatively you can get the prison guard to throw beanbags at the other pupils providing they are encouraged to throw from the waist down)
- If they are tagged they must join the prison guards on the wall.

2. Farmer, farmer, May we cross your Golden River?

- One pupil is named as the farmer and stands in the middle of the designated area of the playground while the others stand about 10 metres away. The remaining pupils call out “farmer, farmer, May we cross your golden river?”
- The farmer replies by choosing a colour and saying “you may not cross my river unless you are wearing something BLUE”.
- The pupils who are visibly wearing this colour (even if it is only part of a garment) can cross the river in safety.
- Those pupils who are not wearing the colour have to run across the gap without being caught by the farmer.
- If a pupil is caught, they must help the farmer.
- The last pupil to be caught becomes the farmer in the next game.



3. 40/40 (tip the can) (A base)

- Similar to hide and seek except the seeker has a base to which the players must return from their hiding places without being seen by the seeker.
- The seekers role is to spot the pupils and touch the base, stating 40/40 I see before that pupil reaches the base.
- Once a pupil has been caught they must sit out until all pupils have been caught.
- The first to be caught is the seeker in the next game.



4. The Hunted

- In this game all pupils seek one pupil in particular. Everyone covers their eyes and counts to a particular number while one pupil goes off to hide, aiming to find an especially difficult place.
- The pupil who is hiding is able to change their hiding place throughout the duration of the game. Care must be taken not to be seen, as being seen means being caught.
- Whoever catches this pupil can hide in the next game.

5. **Snatch the Bacon** (a soft object (beanbag, jumper, etc))
 - Team A lines up side by side opposite team B who line up in the same way. Teams facing one another should be 20m apart.
 - A soft object is placed in between the two teams.
 - A captain is selected on each team and these will start the game.
 - The captain from team A shouts GO and the two captains run towards the middle and try to retrieve the object and return to their side again. Whoever returns to their side with the object and without being caught gets to go again and can choose who they would like to run against the next time.

6. **Team Game (even number of players + 1 caller)**
 - Invite one pupil to be the caller. Arrange all remaining pupils in two even teams.
 - Team A lines up opposite team B sitting on the ground with approximately 1 to 2 metres between pupils.
 - Each opposing pair gets a number from 1 to ? (depending upon the number of pupils).
 - The caller picks a number and the pair with that number must get up and run right round their team and go back to their sitting position before their opposing number

7. **What's the Time Mr Wolf? (MWMO Book 1 pg. 131)**
 - One pupil is chosen to be Mr Wolf. The other pupils stand in a line on the opposite end of the playground about 10-12 metres away from Mr Wolf. This line is referred to as 'home'.



- Mr Wolf stands with his back to them. The pupils chant 'What's the time Mr Wolf?'
- Mr Wolf replies (for example), '3 o'clock'. The pupils advance the same number of steps, that is, 3 steps for 3 o'clock.
- The game continues until Mr Wolf thinks the pupils are close enough to catch and after being asked the time again he replies, 'Dinner time,' then turns and chases the pupils.
- The first pupil tagged becomes Mr Wolf. If Mr Wolf does not catch anyone, he/she has to be Mr Wolf again.
- If a pupil reaches Mr Wolf before dinnertime, they tap Mr Wolf on the shoulder and run for home. If the pupil gets home then he/she is safe. If they are tagged then they become Mr Wolf.

8. **Grandmother's Footsteps** (spot markers/cones)
 - Pupils stand at a 'home' base in a line marked out using spot markers or cones.
 - Grandmother stands with their back to them about ten metres away.
 - The pupils creep forward, but whenever Grandmother whirls round they must stop advancing and freeze.
 - If any pupil is seen moving, they are sent back to the starting line again.
 - The pupil who is the first to touch Grandmother becomes the next Grandmother.



9. **Fishes in the Sea** (Spot Markers)

- The pupils stand in a circle marked out using spot markers.
- They are alternately named Cod, Haddock, Plaice and Salmon.
- One pupil is chosen to be the Fisherman.
- This pupil is the caller and stands in the middle of the circle.
- When a fish name is called, all the pupils in that category move around the outside of the circle in a clockwise direction until they reach their places again.
- They are instructed on how to move with various directions.
- The last pupil back to their place becomes the Fisherman.

10. **Duck, Duck, Goose** (Spot Markers) (MWMO, Book 1, Pg. 102)

- Mark out a circle using spot markers. The pupils sit in a large circle facing inwards.
- One pupil is chosen to be the 'tapper' and walks around the outside of the circle.
- As they walk around, they touch each pupil gently on the head whilst saying, 'Duck, duck, duck.'
- At some stage they will tap a pupil and say, 'Goose,' instead.
- The goose then jumps up and chases the tapper around the circle.
- The tapper in turn tries to get all the way back to the goose's spot, 'home', without getting caught.
- If the tapper gets home safely, the goose becomes the new tapper and the game starts again.
- If the goose catches the tapper, the game starts again with the tapper being on again.



11. **Captain's Coming**

- Invite all pupils to gather in the centre of the playground or hall.
- A leader is chosen who calls out various commands.
- The commands need to be explained to each pupil before the game can begin.
- A game of Captain's Coming can have any number of various commands; the more there are, the more that needs to be memorised, and the harder it is to play.
- The group competes with each other to complete the commands.
- If there is an obvious pupil or, if applicable, a group of pupils who are last to start a command, they are then out.
- The game continues until there is only one pupil left – the winner.



12. **Simon Says:**

Invite one pupil to take the role of the leader "Simon" who calls out an action such as "Simon says sit down" and all the participants must do the action.

Some actions may include:

- *Sit Down*
- *Stand up*

- *Lie on your back/tummy*
- *Hop on one leg*
- *Jump up and down*
- *Jumping Jacks x 5*
- *Jog on the Spot*

When the leader calls out an action they must use the phrase “Simon says.....” if Simon calls an action without using this phrase it’s an invalid action and anyone that does the action moves to jail where they complete an active penalty, e.g. 5 or 10 jumping jacks.

13. The Keeper of the Treasure (something to represent the treasure)

- Invite one pupil to act as the keeper of the treasure and another pupil to act as the leader. Choose a suitable treasure (a bean bag ideally).
- The remaining pupils form a circle and create a gap in the circle large enough to represent a door for the pupils to run through.
- The keeper of the treasure is invited to sit in the middle of the circle with their eyes closed while the treasure is placed behind their back.
- The leader then silently selects a robber by pointing to a pupil.
- The robber then tiptoes as quietly as possible up to the keeper and steals the treasure from behind the keeper’s back.
- Once the keeper realises the robber has the treasure they leap to their feet and chase the robber, in a clockwise direction, around the circle, with the intent of catching them.
- The aim of the game is either for the keeper to catch the robber or for the robber to get back to the keeper’s home base in the centre of the circle.
- While the pupils wait for the robber to steal the treasure they chant, ‘The robber is coming, the robber is coming, the robber is coming,’ and then as the robber picks up the treasure and runs out of the door they shout, ‘The robber has the treasure!’
- If the keeper catches the robber then this pupil is the keeper again and a new robber is chosen.
- If the robber gets back to the home base in the centre then this pupil is safe and becomes the keeper and a new robber is chosen.



14. Queenio (A ball/beanbag)



- Invite a pupil to be ‘Queenio’. Queenio stands with a ball/bean bag in their hand and their back to the other pupils who stand about 6-10 metres away.
- Queenio then throws a ball over their shoulder and the aim is that one of the other pupils catches it or picks it up.
- Whoever catches the ball hides it behind their back.
- All pupils, except Queenio, put their hands behind their backs so that Queenio doesn’t know who has the ball.

- When Queenio turns, the pupils chant, ‘Queenio, Queenio, who’s got the ballio?’ Queenio has to guess who has the ball.
- If the guess is correct, this pupil remains as Queenio; if wrong, the pupil who has been successful in concealing the ball takes their place.

Variations: When Queenio turns round to guess who has the ball, it is best not to guess immediately as to who has the ball. Instead they should ask one pupil and then another to stretch out a hand, turn around, do a star jump and so on. This is considered to be part of the play. The pupil needs to show the empty hand if they don’t have the ball. The pupils often pretend they have the ball even if they haven’t! Queenio can then guess who they think has the ball.

15. Drop the letter (a piece of cloth, spot markers)

- Invite one pupil to take the role of the post person. Invite all remaining pupils to sit on their own spot marker in a circle.
- The post person walks around the outside of the circle holding a piece of cloth (the letter) and everyone says: “I sent a letter to my friend and on the way I dropped it, one of you has picked it up and put it in your pocket”.
- The post person drops the letter behind one of the pupils in the circle and then says: It wasn’t you ... it wasn’t you ... it wasn’t you, etc., and eventually, It was YOU! indicating the pupil.
- Then the post person runs clockwise around the circle.
- The pupil with the letter must pick it up and run after the post person who has dropped it.
- Both pupils are trying to reach the empty space first.
- The pupil who arrives last is the post person for the next game.
- Alternate the post person when necessary.



Key Messages to share with my Staff:

- Embed **one** skill into **one** strand over a four/six week block.
- Focus on one, max two teaching points per PE lesson.
- Move Well, Move Often website: www.scoilnet.ie/pdst/physlit
- For sample PE Lesson Plans see PSSI website: www.pssi.pdst.ie
- Collaborate with External Coaches in using the Move Well, Move Often resource and consider embedding a suitable skill during the PE classes where applicable.
- Consider using Take Home Messages/PE homework after your PE lessons.
For ideas see: www.scoilnet.ie/pdst/physlit/beyond/
- Examine the methods of Assessment and choose one that is suitable for your class www.scoilnet.ie/pdst/physlit/assessment/
- To apply for a PDST PE Advisor to support your school in PE, visit www.pdst.ie/schoolsupport and enter the following:
Password: SchoolSupport2019 **Username:** School Roll Number



Notes: