

Classic Ways to Put Your Heart at Play

Outdoor Games and Jump Rope Rhymes



The rules of these games can vary from place to place and family to family. With a few tweaks, they should be suitable for any group of players, no matter how old or young they are. Everyone playing should agree to the rules of the day before play begins. Have fun!

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Kick the Can

This game is best played in the hours just after dusk. The player who is “it” puts one foot atop a can on the ground and counts to 20 while the other players hide. That player’s goal is to find the other players and call them out by returning to the can and saying something like, “one two three on John, behind the big oak tree by the garage.” If John has been accurately discovered, he must come in and wait in a prison area. John can avoid being caught by racing back to the can and kicking it before the player who is “it” finishes calling him out. The player who is “it” must then continue finding other players while guarding the can against other players. Meanwhile, the other players can sneak in and kick the can, thus freeing all players in a jailbreak to run off and hide again while the “it” player retrieves the can and puts it back in the original spot. If all players are found without a jailbreak, the player caught first in the prison area is “it” in the next round.

Red Rover

All players but one, who is “it,” line up on the far side of the play area. Their goal is to cross a line defended by the player who is “it.” The player who is “it” calls, “Red Rover, Red Rover, send Jimmy on Over!” Jimmy then tries to reach the goal line without being tagged by the player who is “it.” He has until the count of ten to do so. If Jimmy fails, he joins in defending the goal line, the next player is called, and the cycle continues until all players are tagged or someone reaches the goal line safely. If all players are tagged, the first person tagged becomes “it,” otherwise, the same player is “it” again.

Another variation of Red Rover

In this game, the players form two opposing lines and attempt to “break through” the opposing team’s line. At first, two teams are chosen of equal size. They form two lines, facing each other and holding hands. One side starts by picking a person on the opposing team and saying “Red Rover, Red Rover, send Jimmy right over.” Jimmy then lets go of his teammates and begins a headlong rush for the other line. His goal is to break through the other line.

If Jimmy breaks through, he chooses one person from the opposing team to join his team in line. If he fails to break through, Jimmy becomes part of the other team. Each team alternates calling people over until one team has all the people and is declared the winner. Note: since all the players are on the winning team at the end, there really are no losers in this game.



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Get the Guy with the Ball

Known by several names, this game is played with few rules. It begins when a ball is kicked or bounced up into the air. Whoever grabs it must run from the rest of the players as they attempt to tackle the player with the ball. That player will toss away the ball at some point, usually after being tackled, whereupon the cycle repeats. A variant with scoring allows the player with the ball to get a point each time they reach one or more specific parts of the field of play, such as the end zones of a football field.

Simon Says

One player, "Simon," directs all others to do as he says. The trick is that only directives that start with "Simon says" should be followed. For example, if Simon says "Simon says jump," all players should jump. Any player who does not jump immediately is out. If Simon had said only "jump," without saying "Simon Says" first, any players who jumped are out. Play continues until only one player is left. That player becomes Simon in the next round.

Follow the Leader

A very simple game, Follow the Leader is played by each player in turn doing what the player ahead of them did, such as jumping over a small barrier or jumping up to touch a hanging tree limb. If all players succeed, the first player does something else and the cycle repeats. If they fail, they lose one of a predetermined set number of "lives." The last player to successfully complete the task then starts the next action as the new leader, followed by all the other players in turn. When a player runs out of "lives," they're out of the game. The game ends when only one player remains. Incidentally, when Follow the Leader is played by making difficult basketball shots, it's called H.O.R.S.E., each letter representing one of five "lives" each player has.

Red Light, Green Light

All players but the leader line up on the far side of the play area. The object of the game is to cross a line just in front of the leader first, but players can only move forward after the leader says "Greenlight Go." All players must stop immediately when the leader says, "Redlight Stop." Any player still moving forward at the end of "Redlight Stop," or who moves forward when not under a "Greenlight Go," must go all the way back to the beginning. The leader's role is to try to trick the other players. They can do this by saying words that sound like "Greenlight Go," such as "Greenlight Goalie," or "Greenlight Gopher." The leader can also yell, speak softly, sing or try to distract the other players. The first player to cross the line becomes the leader in the next round.

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Tag

Select a player to be “it” and run from them! The player who is “it” tries to tag another player. When they do, the new player becomes “it,” and play continues. There are many variants and optional rules:

- **NO TAG BACKS** is an optional rule which prevents a player from tagging the person who tagged them.
- In **SHADOW TAG**, players tag each other by stepping on each others’ shadows.
- In **FREEZE TAG**, the player who is “it” stays “it” until all players are tagged. When a player is tagged, they must freeze in place until the end of the game, or until freed by another untagged player.
- In **FLASHLIGHT TAG**, the game is played at night, all players have flashlights, and players are tagged with beams of light. Players attempt to make it back to a base area where they are safe. Play continues until all players are found or are safe. The first player tagged becomes “it” in the next round.
- In **AMOEBA TAG**, there are no safe zones and play continues until all are caught. When a player is tagged, they must join hands with the player who is “it” and chase down other players together. When the group holding hands grows to 4 players or more, it can split off into two groups.

Jump Rope Rhymes

Polly, put the kettle on

*Polly, put the kettle on
and have a cup of tea.
In comes (name)
and out goes me.*

Engine number 9

*Engine, engine number 9
going down the Chicago line.
See it sparkle, see it shine,
engine, engine number 9.
If the train should jump the track,
will I get my money back?
Yes, no, maybe so...*

A - my name is...

Each player takes a turn jumping to a letter in the alphabet, making up names, locations and items that start with that letter while chanting. It goes like this:

*A - my name is Alice
And my husband's name is Alexander,
We come from Arizona
Where we sell Automobiles.
B - my name is Bob
And my wife's name is Beth,
We come from Boise
Where we sell Beef
(Etc.)*

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More Jump Rope Rhymes

Mabel, Mabel

Mabel, Mabel, set the table
Do it as fast as you are able,
Don't forget the
SALT,
PEPPER,
VINEGAR,
MUSTARD,

(Keep repeating salt, pepper, vinegar, mustard while turning the rope. If the jumper misses on "pepper," then the turners begin turning fast or doing "hot peppers.")

Coffee-n-Tea

I like coffee, I like tea,
I'd like (name of next person in line)
to come in with me.

(Then the two jump together, the second person saying the rhyme. When the rhyme is done, the first person runs out, and the new person comes in and jumps with the second person.)

I asked my parents

I asked my parents for 15 cents,
to see the platypus
jump the fence.
She jumped so high,
she touched the sky,
and didn't come back
till the Fourth of July.

(Repeat with different animals)

I eat my peas

I eat my peas with honey,
I've done it all my life.
It looks a little funny,
but it keeps them on my knife.
How many peas
can I get on my knife?
1, 2, 3...



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