

PARACHUTE PLAY



PRINCIPLES

Parachute games – exciting, fun and educational!

Parachute games encourage co-operative, non-competitive play and reinforce taking turns and sharing. While most gross motor activities for young children develop muscles in the lower body more than the upper torso, parachutes strengthen primarily shoulder, arm and hand muscles. They also refine perceptual motor skills and develop a sense of rhythm. Communication and language activities can be easily incorporated into most parachute games.

All can be played indoors (gym) or outdoors, unless otherwise specified. Suitable for all ages especially those between 5 and 12 years. Most games are best played using a mid to large sized parachute (i.e. 3.6m – 9m) but many can still be effective when using smaller parachutes.

WARM UP EXERCISES

- **See-Saw Pull:** From a sitting position, have the children pull the chute back and forth in a see-sawing motion.
- **Make Waves:** While gripping the parachute in a sitting or standing position, everyone moves their arms up and down to make small and large waves.
- **Chute Lift:** Ask the children to lift the parachute high over their heads and down again. Talk about the soft sounds and breezes that are created. Move the parachute faster and notice the different effects.
- **Parachute Tag:** Lift the parachute high overhead. Call one child's name and have him/her run (skip, hop, twirl or crawl) to the other side before the parachute comes down and tags her.
- **One Hand Run:** Have each child hold the parachute with one hand, extending the opposite arm out for balance. Run around in one direction, then change and run around in the other direction. A variation would be to use music as the cue for changing direction (i.e. direction can be changed every time the music stops).

BEGINNER EXERCISES

Tent Pole:

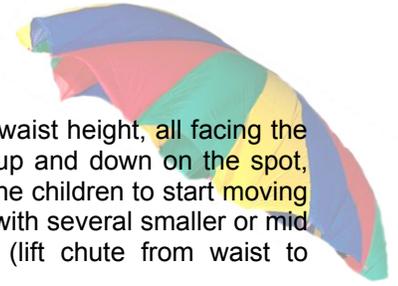
Participants spread evenly around the parachute sitting down with one person under the parachute. This person is to be the tent pole and stands in the middle, holding the centre of the chute as high as possible. The tent-pole person calls out someone's name and goes and sits down in that person's place. The person called has to rush to the middle and take up the role of the tent-pole before the chute comes down. Repeat the procedure as long as you feel like it. Be careful the participants don't collide with each other as they swap positions under the chute.

Air Vent:

This game is good for recuperation after an energetic game. Hold the chute stretched out and have about a third of the people lie on the ground under it (best with heads near the middle). The rest of the group mushroom the chute up and quickly pull it down again repeatedly. Air rushing in and out cools those underneath like a giant fan, and the sensation of watching the chute rise up and then come down on top of you is very strange.

Hopping Kangaroo:

Set up an obstacle course. Have the participant hold the chute with one hand at waist height, all facing the same direction. When ready, start the chute bouncing by having children jump up and down on the spot, trying to get a consistent up and down motion. Once the motion is achieved, get the children to start moving forward, hopping around the course. For more advance participants, have a race with several smaller or mid sized parachutes around the course. Also try hopping and arm movements (lift chute from waist to overhead) at the same time.



BALL GAMES

Most of these games can be played with balls of different kinds (e.g. tennis balls; footballs; beachballs or even a giant cage ball). Different sized balls will change the way in which the game goes, so feel free to experiment. These games suit mid size to large parachutes, with 10-25 participants

Chute Ball:

Best played with a large beach ball or ultra light volleyball. Everyone kneel down, place the parachute on the ground and pull it taught, and then put the ball in the middle. At the same time have everyone stand up and by pulling upwards and outwards, throw the ball as high in the air as possible.

Mexican Wave Roller Ball:

Everyone holds the chute taut. Place a large ball near the edge. Try to make the ball roll around the edge of the chute. To do this, someone starts the ball rolling. As it comes towards you, you lower the edge you are holding, and as it goes past you raise your edge. When all the players do this in synchronisation, it creates a kind of wave going round the edge of the chute which pushes the ball in a smooth steady circle. It can not be done without concentration and co-operation, but it is very rewarding for a group to eventually achieve the correct motion. Once you have mastered the correct motion try changing the direction or speeding up.

ABC Volleyball:

Have the children stand around the parachute holding its edges. The group must then bounce the ball once for each letter in the alphabet without dropping the ball. If the ball is dropped, begin again. This game is best played with younger children. It's great for 5 years and younger who are beginning to learn their ABC's.

ACTIVE GAMES

Wash and Dry Machine:

Half the children are the machine the other half are the washing. Put the washing into the machine (children duck under the parachute) in goes the powder (put a small soft ball under with the children to pass around)- and mix - give the parachute a good shake. The washing run around in a clockwise circle while the machine (parachute holders) run around in an anti-clockwise circle; pause (stop both groups) then start them in the reverse directions to before. After a couple of 'turns', pause, rinse (shake) then spin (both groups run in the same direction). Stop, shake and then dry by raising and lowering the chute in big movements. Repeat - reversing roles of children.

Wicked Web:

Four people hang onto the parachute, holding it overhead. Set the play area alive with the other children pretending to be bugs and seeds blowing in the wind, trying not to get eaten. The four with the chute run after the other bugs and seeds trying to eat them by dropping their head (chute) onto the food. If they succeed in covering the child with the parachute, the child is eaten and must now attach themselves to the parachute. Now they join in, to catch the other children.

Wild Animals:

Go around the circle and assign one of the four different animals, Platypus, Goanna, Wombat and Dingo to each child. Start the participants running lightly in a circular fashion holding the chute at waist height with one hand. Call out an animal name and the participants take the following action:



Platypus – chute stops, these children dive under the chute as the others lower the chute to knee height. Platypuses need to ‘swim’ under the chute to the next vacated position.

Goanna – chute stops and lowered to the floor. Goannas need to ‘scurry’ on top of the chute on all fours to the next vacated position.

Wombat – wombats let go of the chute, the chute keeps moving in a circular direction while the wombats walk in the opposite direction back to their original position.

Dingo – these participants release the chute, everyone else lifts their arms up making a howling noise and then lower it down making a growling noise. As the chute is in the air the dingos have to run under the parachute to another spot before it collapses on them.



Continue until everyone has been called at least twice.

Games particularly suited to indoor use:

Bondi Beach Shark Attack:

Everyone should sit on the floor in a circle, holding the parachute stretched out with their legs underneath it. The chute is the sea, and the children are all sitting on the beach, happily dipping their toes in the water. By shaking the edge of the chute, you will produce a realistic rippling wave effect.

Once the waves are going well, choose someone to be the shark, and tell them to wriggles under the chute on their stomach. They should move around underneath, and because of the waves, it is difficult to know where they are. The shark chooses a victim and grabs them by the feet. The victim will then let out a scream and disappear under the chute. The new person then becomes the shark.

COOL DOWN

Bag-O-Tricks:

Have children assemble around the parachute. Choose 1-5 children to sit or lie down in the middle of the chute while the remaining children grab the sides of the parachute tightly and walk slowly in a circle around the middle. Watch as the children in the middle become encased within the parachute, then pull outward to release the encased children.

CAUTIONS: The children need to walk the circle slowly so they do not harm the encased child(ren). Do not put any claustrophobic children in the middle.

Parachute Brandings:

- 3-4 blindfolds
- Soft foam rubber ball

Have all the players sit around the outside rim of the parachute. Choose three or four players to be in the middle. Blindfold all four players. When all players are blindfolded and on the parachute the game begins with them moving about (you may want to have them remove their shoes).

Toss the foam rubber ball into the centre of the parachute circle. The centre players search for the ball, the player who gets it is the brander and everyone shouts out “You’re In”. The Brander then has one minute to hit the other three players with the ball and get them out. If the brander gets the other blindfolded participants he/she wins, but if the players elude the Brander, then the surviving players win.

The children who are not in this round sit around the outside of the circle and can assist the Brander by calling out directions such as “Over here” as well as helping guide the players from straying off the parachute.

CAUTIONS: Encourage the blindfolded children to crawl around with one hand extended forward to feel for the other players. This should reduce the chance that they will bump heads with one another.

