



Województwo
Śląskie

WOM Rybnik

EU
POLAND25.EU

EVERY BACKYARD



HAS ITS CHARM

27 Children's Games from across the European Union

GAME HEADING



Game token with visual representation

Original name in the country of origin

Game Name
Country & Flag



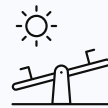
How to play

Game instructions and suggested modifications for younger children

Best locations:



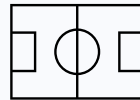
park, forest, meadow, garden



playground, preschool garden

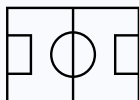


activity rooms, classrooms



sports field, gym

Location



Skills and objectives

Social, cognitive, and personal competencies developed through play

Required props

Game kit



THE CHARM OF EUROPEAN BACKYARDS



With great pleasure we share 'Every Backyard Has Its Charm' with teachers and pupils. This collection showcases 27 backyard games that have brought joy to children throughout the European Union, spanning generations from the past to the present day.

We proudly present it as one of the international educational initiatives undertaken as part of the Polish Presidency of the European Union Council, held in the first half of 2025. The inclusive nature of this work, which emphasizes the social dimension of education, aligns perfectly with the key issues addressed throughout Poland during this period under the Presidency's motto: 'Security, Europe!'

This publication, initiated by a team of consultants from the Regional Teacher Training Center (RODN i IP WOM) in Rybnik, is the result of collaboration between preschool and early childhood education teachers implementing interdisciplinary educational projects within the eTwinning Program. For twenty years, through this program, children and students at all educational levels have been playing and learning together with peers from 46 partner countries in Europe and worldwide, including all 27 EU member states.

The unity and cooperation of teachers across Europe find their reflection in a shared space where children experience the games played in backyards across the continent. This is the cultural legacy of a European childhood. It deserves to be explored, to keep the joy alive, and to preserve the memory of those who played before us.

Selecting 27 traditional backyard games proved to be quite a challenge and led us to a fascinating conclusion. Games proposed by teachers as unique and popular in their own country turned out to have counterparts in others. Readers of 'Every Backyard Has Its Charm' will therefore notice striking similarities between many of these games and the ones they know from their own backyards.

Games like Blind Man's Buff, Hopscotch, Dodgeball, Tag, or 'Rock, Paper, Scissors' appear in many variations under the same or surprisingly different titles. This means that children across Europe play (or used to play) the same games in almost the same way! Regardless of where the game takes place, players should be ready for a fair share of running and chasing, hunting each other down, temporary elimination, and sometimes - events with a dramatic flair (like a 'fire'). The repertoire of children's games includes circle games, dancing, and singing. To emerge as a winner in competitive activities, one must be focused and fast, accurately judge distances, build strategies, and sometimes - work together seamlessly as a team.

As you will notice, the publication includes many games with competitive elements, offering numerous opportunities to build emotional resilience (coping with frustration and managing emotions in the face of defeat). They build children's endurance and teach strategies for action and decision-making, helping them achieve both individual and team goals.

In almost every game, elements of nature accompany the children. They will encounter wolves and foxes, ducks and chicks, cows, goats, and dogs. They will dance among the charming bluebells. It is impossible not to run into characters from the world of fairy tales and various professions - witches, hunters, firefighters, and shepherds. Through the unique personification of these characters, children experience a wide range of behaviors and emotions, learning about the mechanisms of interdependence and examples of mutual human relationships.

It is worth noting that the selected repertoire primarily features games that do not require any specialized props. Items listed as 'needed' can be easily substituted with others, and many games require no equipment at all.

The suggested play areas are based on whether a game needs wide-open space or plenty of hiding places. Some activities are marked as 'not recommended for indoors' due to safety concerns. Please note that these are guidelines, not rigid rules. The final decision and responsibility for safety lie with the teacher in charge.

It is worth noting that due to the diverse definitions and classifications of games and plays in the academic literature, these terms are used interchangeably and as equals for the purposes of this study. As W. Okoń states: 'Every game is a play, but not every play is a game.' In our collection, it is sometimes impossible to tell whether we are playing a game or simply engaging in a play. Our goal is for our readers to have a wonderful time with us, while acquiring numerous cognitive, social, and personal competencies.

Times change, but children's needs remain the same. They need a supportive developmental environment - clear rules and principles that bring order to their daily lives. They need experiences through which they can learn to regulate their emotions and experience their diversity. Most invaluable are experiences within the circle of social interactions, through which they learn how to 'be' - to communicate and collaborate with others.

Through this publication, we also raise an immensely important aspect of social experience—the issue of mutual respect. We live in different parts of Europe, we speak different languages, but at our core, we are similar. Are we the same?

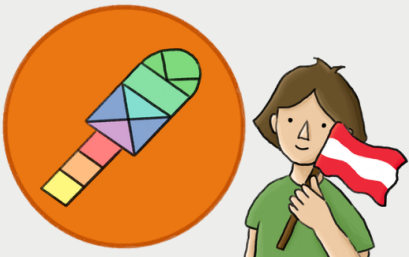
We wish children and their mentors many exciting moments with this collection of games. Pick a token, play the game, and win yourself some happiness. The kind that knows no borders.

Anna Krzyżanowska

Teacher Consultant at the Regional Teacher Training Center
(RODN i IP WOM) in Rybnik.

Preschool teacher.
eTwinning Ambassador.

LIST OF TOKENS



Austria

HEAVEN AND HELL



Belgium

WOLF AND SHADOWS TAG



Bulgaria

LITTLE STEPS



Croatia

GUESS WHO IT IS, STARLING?



Cyprus

FAR - NEAR



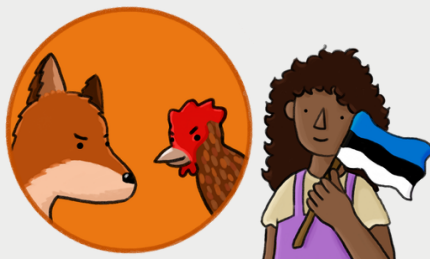
Czechia

SUGAR, COFFEE, LEMONADE



Denmark

KICK THE CAN



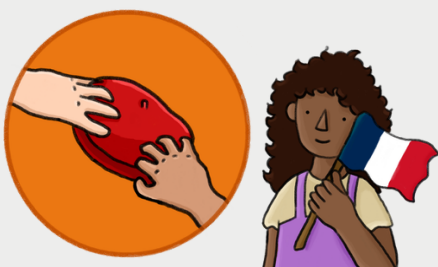
Estonia

FOX AND CHICKENS



Finland

CHURCH RAT



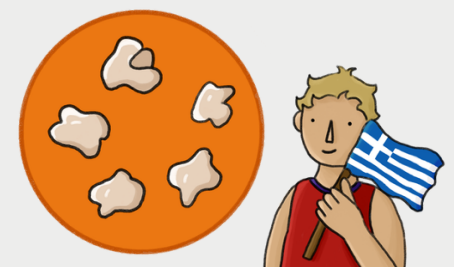
France

THE BERET



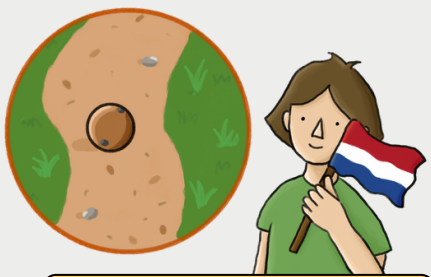
Germany

FIRE, WATER, STORM



Greece

FIVE STONES



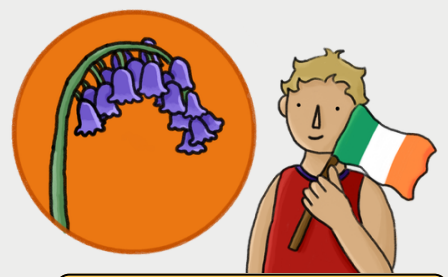
Holland

ROAD BOWLING



Hungary

ROCK, PAPER, SCISSORS
- THE BATTLE



Ireland

IN AND OUT
THE DUSTY BLUEBELLS



Italy

THE WITCH COMMANDS A COLOUR



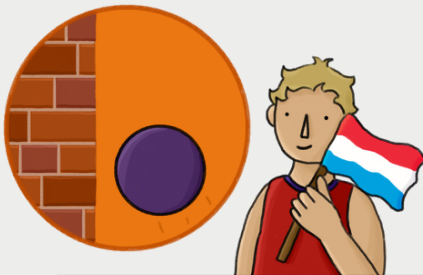
Latvia

THE HOUSE IS ON FIRE



Lithuania

SHARING THE RING



Luxembourg

BALL THROUGH THE LOOP



Malta

WOLF, WOLF,
WHAT ARE YOU DOING?



Poland

WARM OR COLD



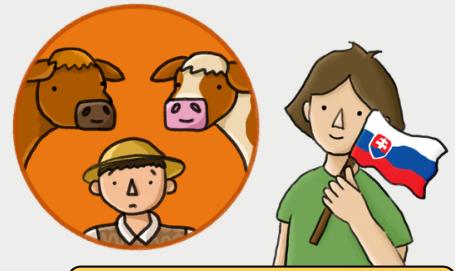
Portugal

BLIND GOAT



Romania

DUCKS AND HUNTERS



Slovakia

COWS AND THE
SHEPHERD



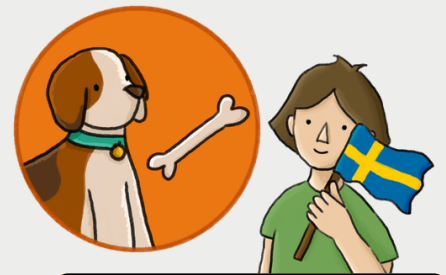
Slovenia

SELLING CRAYONS



Spain

THE DRAGON'S TAIL



Sweden

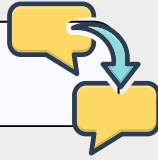
THE DOG AND THE BONE



HEAVEN AND HELL



Himmel und Hölle



Austria



How to play

A physical skill game with elements of tossing and jumping, based on the rules of hopscotch.

1. Players draw a grid of numbered squares, including the starting "Earth" field (Erde), "Hell" (Hölle), "Heaven" (Himmel), and "Post Office" fields (Post).

A minimum of two players is required.

2. The game begins by tossing a stone onto square 1; in subsequent rounds, the targets are squares 2 to 6, and finally, the "Heaven" field. The square where the stone lies must be skipped while hopping, as must the "Hell" and "Post Office" fields.

Squares 1, 2, 3, and 6 are hopped on one foot, while squares 4-5 and "Heaven" must be jumped on with both feet.

3. Upon reaching the "Heaven" field, the player must turn around and hop back, picking up the stone along the way.

4. A player's turn ends if they commit a fault (step on a line, miss the correct square with the stone, forget to jump or pick up the stone on the way back, or lose their balance). The next person then begins their turn.

5. The winner is the first person to complete all the squares and perform all the jumps correctly.

A detailed guide to the game (including the sequence of stone tosses, jump types, and skipping fields) is presented in the diagram available via the link and QR code provided below.



Source: https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Himmel_und_Hölle

Location



Required props

chalk, flat stones (tokens)
Jump diagram link:
<https://bit.ly/WOMklasy>



Skills and objectives

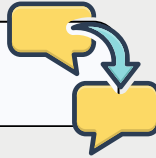
- motor planning, precision of movement, accuracy, jumping ability, coordination, balance, fitness;
- gross motor skills (large muscle group development);
- concentration and focus: (distance estimation, direction of movement, rotation around one's axis);



WOLF AND SHADOWS TAG



Schaduwtikkertje



Belgium



How to play

A sunny-day game based on the tag (chase) format.

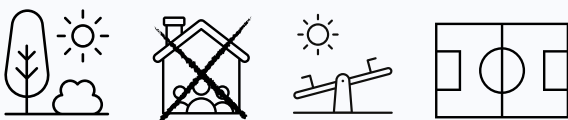
1. Choosing or drawing a player to start the game in the role of the "Wolf."
2. Participants move around the designated area, trying to avoid being caught by the Wolf. A player is caught when the Wolf steps on or touches their shadow. It is enough for the Wolf's foot or hand to make contact with the player's shadow (no physical contact with the body is required!).
3. Once a child's shadow is stepped on, they become the new Wolf.
4. The game ends at any time – either when the participants decide to stop or when the pre-set time limit is reached.

The classic variation ("Tikkertje"), where the Wolf must physically touch a player to switch roles, is an ideal alternative for cloudy days (when shadows are absent).

The "Freeze Tikkertje" option features a freezing effect. Children caught by the Wolf must freeze in place. They can be "unfrozen" when touched by another player.

The option with safe zones ("Tikkertje met veilige zones") allows players to use designated areas for a few seconds to catch their breath or protect themselves from being caught. No one can be tagged while inside these marked zones.

Location



Required props



Skills and objectives

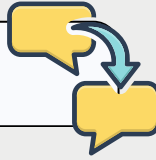
- reaction speed, reflexes;
- motor planning, motor coordination, dynamic balance;
- spatial orientation (estimating distance and position in relation to another person, direction of movement);
- emotional resilience (reacting to failure);
- cooperation and strategy building;



LITTLE STEPS



Крчка



Bulgaria



How to play

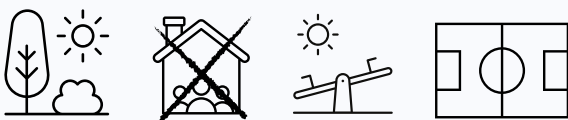
A jumping game with a competitive element.

1. The participants' task is to cover the longest possible distance through a series of jumps ("steps") without losing their balance or falling.
2. Participants mark a starting line (using chalk, a stick, or a natural element found in the play area).
3. Before starting, the group or the leader decides how many jumps each player must perform in a given round.
4. Players take turns performing a series of jumps (on both feet, on one leg, or sideways hops) while counting them out loud. The finishing point of each series should be marked (e.g., with a stone or a chalk line).
5. The winner is the person who covers the greatest distance within the set number of jumps.

In one variation, not only the starting line but also side boundaries are important (marked by a path, sidewalk, or chalk). If a player crosses these boundaries, the attempt is considered a "foul" (or "out") and is not counted toward the group's score.

A team variation involves players splitting into groups. Each player performs their jumps, and the winner of the round is decided by the total distance covered by the entire team.

Location



Required props

(optional)

some chalk to mark the start and finish lines



Skills and objectives

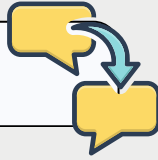
- motor planning, precision of movement, jumping ability, coordination, balance, fitness;
- gross motor skills (large muscle group development);
- concentration and focus;
- spatial awareness (distance estimation, direction of movement);
- emotional resilience (reacting to failure/setbacks);



GUESS WHO IT IS, STARLING?



Čvorak



Croatia



How to play

A tactile (touch-based) singing game for group integration

1. Participants form a circle, holding hands.
One child is chosen to be the "Starling" and stands in the center of the circle with their eyes blindfolded.
2. Holding hands, the children move in one direction around the circle while singing a song. Once the song is finished, everyone stops. The person in the center walks toward a chosen peer to identify them through touch.
3. If the child in the center correctly identifies the participant, they switch places.
The person who was guessed enters the center and puts on the blindfold, while the "Starling" joins the circle.
4. The game ends at any time.

English adaptation of the lyrics to the song "Čvorak"

author of the adaptation:
A. Krzyżanowska

Starling, Starling, come and listen.

| C | Am7 |

Chick is chirping in my ear.

| C | Am7 |

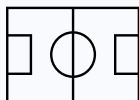
Guess by touching who it is

| F | G7 | C | Am |

to find out where the nest is.

| F | G7 | Am7 | C |

Location



Required props

blindfold (optional)

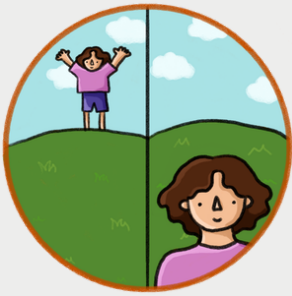
Link to the song:

<https://bit.ly/WOMszpak>



Skills and objectives

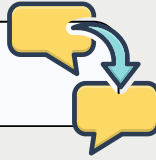
- group cooperation and integration;
- communication and group singing;
- sensory stimulation
(identification through touch);
- spatial awareness
(direction of movement);
- motor planning (body control, coordination, synchronization);



FAR - NEAR



Μακριά - Κοντά



Cyprus



How to play

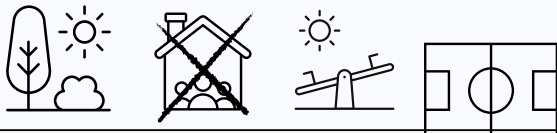
A spatial movement game based on responding to commands.

1. Participants (4-12 children) line up at the starting line.
2. One person, acting as the leader, stands about a dozen meters away from the line.
3. When the leader calls out "Near!", the children move toward them by walking or running.
4. When the leader calls out "Far!", the children move backward, away from the leader.
5. The leader tries to spot players who move at the wrong time or fail to react correctly to the commands. Such players are "caught" and eliminated until the next round.
6. The game ends when the leader catches a specific number of players or when the time allotted for the round expires.

The team variation of this game involves competition between two or more teams of several players. Children assigned to a specific team try to reach the leader while responding to the "Far - Near" commands. The team wins the round when one of its players reaches the leader or when the highest number of its players remains in the game after the set time limit for the round expires.



Location



Required props



Skills and objectives

- reaction speed and reflexes;
- motor planning, coordination, and dynamic balance;
- spatial awareness (distance estimation and positioning relative to others);
- auditory attention and understanding commands;
- emotional resilience (reacting to failure/setbacks);



SUGAR, COFFEE, LEMONADE



Cukr, káva, limonáda



Czechia

How to play

A spatial movement game based on responding to a signal by freezing.

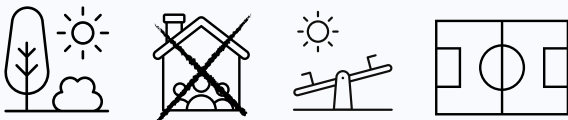
1. Participants (minimum 3, ideally 5–12 children) line up at the starting line. One person takes the role of the leader, while the others are players moving within a designated area.
2. The leader stands about a dozen meters away from the starting line. Facing away from the group, the leader says the chant: "Sugar, coffee, lemonade, tea, rum, boom!". During this time, the children run toward the leader.
3. When the leader says the word BOOM!, they immediately turn around, and all other players must freeze in place.
4. If the leader spots and points to someone moving, that person must return to the start or is eliminated from the game (depending on the agreed rules).
5. The game continues until a child reaches and touches the leader. That player wins the round and takes over the leader's role for the next round.

Option 1. To win the round, a player must touch the leader and run back to the starting line before the leader can turn around and spot them moving.

Option 2. Safety zones (e.g., circles or squares) can be marked with chalk; players standing within these zones can stop without the risk of being eliminated

Option 3. Players are divided into groups. The race is won by the group whose representative is the first to touch the leader.

Location



Required props

Skills and objectives

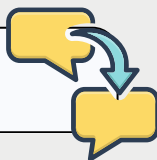
- auditory attention and concentration;
- motor planning, body awareness, static and dynamic balance;
- spatial awareness (distance estimation and positioning relative to others);
- emotional resilience (perseverance, not giving up, patience);



KICK THE CAN



Dåseskjul



Denmark



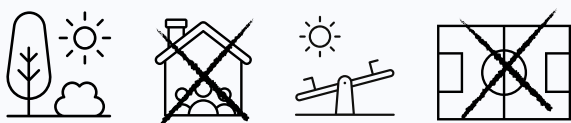
How to play

An outdoor game combining hide-and-seek and tag, featuring strategic elements.

1. Place the can in the center of the play area.
2. Choose a seeker who counts (e.g., to 10 or 20) with eyes closed.
3. Participants run and hide in the immediate surroundings.
4. After counting, the seeker tries to find the hidden players while staying relatively close to the can.
5. When the seeker spots someone, they run to the can, touch it, and call out the person's name (e.g., "I can see Jack behind the slide!").
6. Players caught this way become "prisoners" and sit near the can.
7. A player who has not yet been caught can run out of their hiding place at any time and knock over or kick the can. If they manage to do this before the seeker calls them out while standing at the can, they free everyone who was captured. Then, the can must be placed back in the center of the playing area, and the game begins again.
8. The round ends when the seeker catches all players before anyone kicks the can.
9. The person found first becomes the seeker in the next round.

Note! In one of the game variations, kicking or toppling the can frees only one chosen person. The decision of who is rescued rests with the player who managed to reach the can before the seeker.

Location



Required props

a metal can
(optional: a plastic bottle or a ball)



Skills and objectives

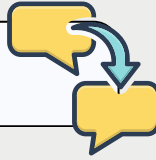
- agility, speed, and reflexes;
- spatial awareness (distance estimation and optimal movement direction);
- motor planning;
- strategic planning;
- emotional resilience (anticipation, surprise, risk-taking; quick decision-making);
- cooperation (the rescue variation);



FOX AND CHICKENS



Rebane ja kanad



Estonia



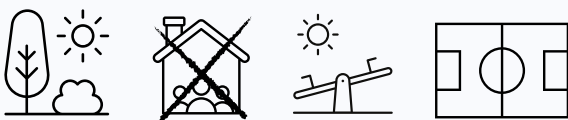
How to play

A pursuit game with a role-playing theme.

1. One person is chosen to be the fox; the others are chickens.
2. Two parallel lines are marked about 10 meters apart:
the chicken coop and the fox's den.
3. The chickens stand at the coop and ask: "What time is it?". The fox answers with a number (e.g., "five o'clock"), and the chickens take that many steps toward the fox. The dialogue is repeated a couple of times.
4. When the fox answers "Midnight!", he jumps out of his den and tries to catch the chickens. Anyone who reaches the chicken coop line is safe. Those caught become additional foxes and help with the hunt.
5. The game continues until everyone has become a fox.
The last chicken caught wins and becomes the fox in the next round.

Note! The "fox vs. chickens" theme appears in several Estonian variations, including hunting the fox with a rope trap (Rebase püüdmine).

Location



Required props



Skills and objectives

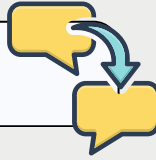
- speed and agility;
- spatial awareness (distance estimation and optimal movement direction);
- movement strategy;
- emotional resilience (anticipation, surprise, risk-taking, and quick decision-making);
- knowledge of cardinal and ordinal numbers;



CHURCH RAT



kirkonrotta



Finland



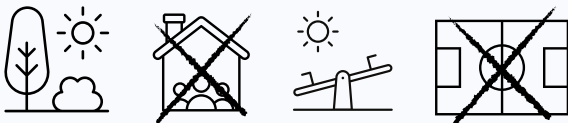
How to play

A variation of hide-and-seek featuring elements of racing and strategy.

1. Choose a seeker who counts (e.g., to 10 or 20) with eyes closed.
2. The participants ("church rats") hide near the designated home base.
3. After counting, the seeker looks for the hidden players.
4. A player is caught when the seeker returns to the base, touches it, and calls out the found person's name.
5. Players can run out from hiding at any time and save themselves by touching the base before the seeker calls their name there.
6. The round ends when all players are caught or most of them manage to reach the base.
7. The person found first or last becomes the new seeker (this rule is established at the beginning of the game).

Note! In some Finnish variations, a player touching the base also frees everyone who was previously caught! In this case, the seeker must count and start the search all over again.

Location



Required props

a base called the "church" (kirkko)
- an element of the surroundings, such as a tree, a bench, a building wall, a boulder, etc.



Skills and objectives

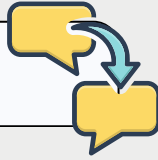
- motor planning;
- speed and reflexes;
- spatial awareness (distance estimation and optimal movement direction);
- strategic planning;
- emotional resilience (anticipation, surprise, risk-taking, and quick decision-making);
- cooperation (the rescue variation);



THE BERET



Béret



France



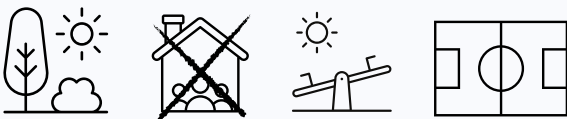
How to play

A pursuit game with elements of team competition.

1. Participants stand in two opposite rows (10-20 m apart), facing their opponents.
2. Each player is assigned a number (1, 2, 3, etc.) so that both teams have players with the same set of numbers.
3. A beret or another object is placed exactly in the middle, in the no man's land. The team members assigned a specific number will compete to intercept the beret.
4. The leader calls out a number. The player with that number runs for the beret. The player who snatches the beret and returns to their side without being touched or tagged by the opponent scores a point. If the player escaping with the beret is touched or tagged by the opponent before crossing their team's line, the opposing team scores the point.
5. The game continues until a pre-established time limit is reached.

Additional option: Instead of numbers, you can use animal names, colors, fruits/vegetables or words in other languages. For students with math skills, the leader gives a simple equation (e.g., "2 + 2 ="). The children whose number is the result (in this case, "fours") run to the centre.

Location



Required props

a beret, hat, ball, scarf,
or any object that is easy to snatch



Skills and objectives

- speed, agility, and reflexes;
- coordination and motor planning;
- spatial awareness (assessing the object's position and route optimization);
- memory and knowledge of numbers;
- numerical operations (optional);
- emotional resilience;
- team integration and cooperation;



FIRE, WATER, STORM



Feuer, Wasser, Sturm



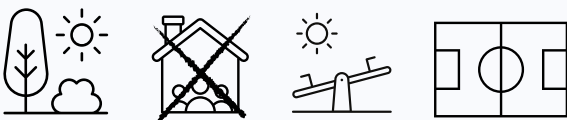
Germany

How to play

A spatial-movement game based on responding to commands.

1. Participants stand scattered around the playing area.
2. One person (a child or an adult) acts as the leader. They give various commands to the others, who immediately perform the assigned movement.
3. The person who performs their movement the slowest or incorrectly is eliminated from the round or receives a "penalty point" (according to prior agreements).
4. Basic commands and movement responses:
 - 'Fire!' - players lie down on the ground;
 - 'Water!' - players jump onto something elevated (a bench, a step, a tree stump), or if impossible - they imitate climbing;
 - 'Storm!' - players hold onto something or each other to avoid being blown away by the wind.
5. Additional Command Variants:
 - 'Ship' - Participants must line up as quickly as possible (one behind the other) to form the shape of a boat and collectively imitate a rowing motion;
 - 'Left!', 'Right!' - Players must move (jump or run) as quickly as possible in the specified direction;
 - 'Ice floe!' - Players must stand on one leg and balance their bodies to maintain stability. They can also imitate jumping from one small ice floe to another;
 - 'Shark!' - Players must gather as quickly as possible into one tight group (a school of fish) to protect each other from the shark.

Location



Required props

Skills and objectives

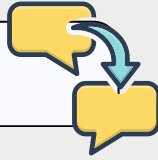
- auditory attention and following commands;
- reaction speed and reflexes;
- memory (including motor memory);
- motor coordination, balance, jumping ability, and motor planning;
- spatial orientation;
- group cooperation;
- emotional resilience (dealing with failure);



FIVE STONES



Πεντόβολα



Greece



How to play

A game of skill featuring elements of tossing and catching.

A Cretan game involves collecting stones from the ground in a specific order while simultaneously tossing and catching the lead stone, known as the "mother" or the "fifth." The winner is the person who successfully completes all levels of the game without making a mistake (e.g., dropping the tossed stone or touching another stone while picking one up).

Game Levels:

The set up: Scatter all the stones on a flat surface (floor, ground, sand).

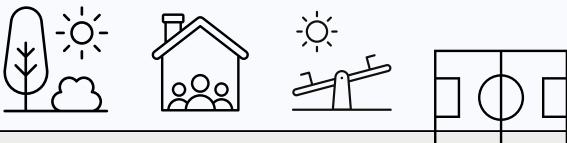
Level 1: Toss one stone. Before it lands, quickly pick up another from the ground and catch the tossed one with the same hand. Repeat until all stones are collected.

Level 2: Toss a stone and pick up two other stones from the ground at the same time. Repeat, collecting the stones in pairs.

Level 3: Toss a stone and pick up three stones at once, then the last single one.

Level 4: Toss a stone and try to pick up all four remaining stones at the same time.

Location



Required props

five stones



Skills and objectives

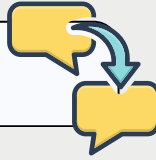
- fine motor skills;
- motor planning (eye-hand coordination, reflexes, speed);
- spatial awareness (movement direction optimization);
- sequential memory;
- emotional resilience (patience, dealing with failure, persistence);



ROAD BOWLING



Klootschieten



Holland



How to play

An outdoor game featuring elements of throwing.

1. Participants establish a starting and finishing point for the route (e.g., a bend in the path, a specific tree, or a bench).
The minimum number of players is two.
2. Each player takes turns throwing the ball, aiming to move as far as possible along the route. After a throw, the player walks to where their ball stopped and throws again from that spot. The player counts the number of throws it took to complete the entire course.
3. The other players do the same during their turns.
4. The winner is the person who completes the entire route in the fewest number of throws.

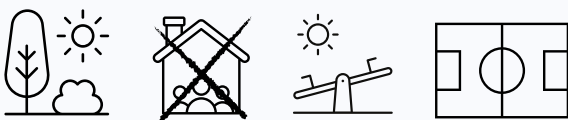
The team variation is popular and less tiring for larger groups.

Participants are divided into two or three teams.

Players take turns making one throw each for their group's total.

The winning team is the one whose members needed fewer total throws to get the ball from the starting point to the finish line.

Location



Required props

a small, fairly hard ball
(wooden, rubber, or plastic)



Skills and objectives

- motor planning (estimating distance and required throwing force);
- spatial awareness (movement direction optimization);
- working memory and counting non-material objects;
- emotional resilience (dealing with failure);
- team integration and cooperation (especially in the team variation);



"ROCK, PAPER, SCISSORS" - THE BATTLE



Kő, papír, olló csata



Hungary



How to play

A team-based version of the "Rock, Paper, Scissors" game

1. The participants are divided into two teams of equal size.
They stand in rows, facing each other, a short distance apart.
2. Each pair of children standing opposite each other simultaneously shows a gesture:
 - Rock - a fist;
 - Paper - an open hand;
 - Scissors - a "V" sign with the fingers.
3. The winning rules for each gesture remain unchanged:
rock beats scissors, scissors beat paper, and paper beats rock.
4. A player who loses a gesture battle to an opponent joins their team.
Participants can set a time limit or a specific number of rounds.
The team with the most players at the end of the game wins.

Option 1. The loser of the battle in pairs, instead of joining the opposing side, performs a specific movement task. This avoids too frequent rotation between teams.

Option 2. Instead of hand gestures, movement gestures can be introduced, e.g.:
rock = a jump in place; paper = a spin/turn; scissors = a clap.

Location



Required props



Skills and objectives

- reflexes;
- quick decision-making;
- motor coordination, fine motor skills;
- emotional resilience
(dealing with failure);
- action strategy;
- verbal and non-verbal communication;
- teamwork and group integration;



IN AND OUT THE DUSTY BLUEBELLS



In and Out the Dusty Bluebells



Ireland



How to play

A game with dancing and singing, designed for group integration.

- Participants form a circle with their arms raised, creating arches. One child, chosen as the "wanderer," weaves in and out under the arches to the rhythm of the song.
[from the line "In and out the dusty bluebells..." to "Who shall be my partner?"]/
- Next, the "wanderer" stops behind a chosen child. By tapping on their shoulders, they signal that this child now takes over the role and leads the dance between the "bluebells" from that moment on.
[from the phrase "Tippy-tippy-tap-tap..." to "You shall be my partner."]
- Together, they pass under the arches during the next verse of the song.
The pattern repeats until everyone has joined the dancers. You can add more children to the chain in each round and change the direction of movement.

„In and Out the Dusty Bluebells“



Tippy tippy tap tap on your shoulder... x3
You shall be my partner.



Location



Skills and objectives

- cooperation and group integration;
- communication and collective singing;
- concentration and auditory attention;
- spatial awareness (awareness of movement direction);
- motor planning (body control, coordination, agility, dynamic balance);

Required props

(optional)

Link to the song:

<https://bit.ly/WOMbluebells>





THE WITCH COMMANDS A COLOUR



Strega comanda colore



Italy



How to play

A movement and perception game based on the exploration of colors in the environment.

1. Choosing a player to be the witch or the wizard.
The remaining children line up facing the witch, at a short distance.
2. The Witch gives commands to the participants based on the pattern: "The Witch commands... the color!". Each time, a different color name is given.
3. The children's task is to look around their immediate surroundings and touch an object of the given color as quickly as possible. This saves them from being caught by the witch.
4. While the children are looking for the color, the witch tries to catch (a simple touch is enough) any player who:
 - has not yet found an object in the color she specified;
 - is touching an object of the wrong color;
 - is moving too slowly.
5. The player who gets caught becomes the witch in the next round.

Location



Required props



Skills and objectives

- visual and auditory perception and attention;
- concentration on the task;
- speed, perceptiveness, and agility;
- motor planning (motor coordination, dynamic balance)
- emotional resilience (perseverance, dealing with time pressure and failure);



THE HOUSE IS ON FIRE!



Māja deg!



Latvia

How to play

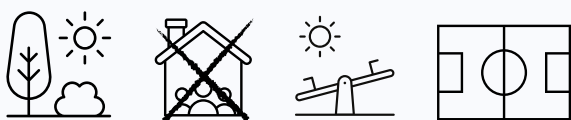
A running game with a competitive element.

1. A larger group of participants is necessary to organize the game (optimally: from a dozen to over twenty people). Players stand in a circle, facing inwards, holding hands.
2. One person (the firefighter) stays outside the circle and walks around it. At some point, they gently tap a chosen player on the back, shouting: "The house is on fire!". Then, the firefighter sprints around the circle to occupy the vacated spot of that player.
3. Meanwhile, the tagged player immediately lets go of their neighbors' hands and runs in the opposite direction to the firefighter. While circling the ring, they try to reclaim their spot. In this way, both players race against each other for the vacant space.
4. The person who reaches the vacant spot second, remains outside the circle and becomes the firefighter for the next round.

Game Variations:

- The losing player is eliminated; the game continues until only about six people remain in the circle;
- Several firefighters work at the same time; players run around the circle and try to occupy any vacant spot;
- The game uses chairs arranged in a circle;
- Walking around the circle with a song (any, but preferably songs about fire or firefighters).

Location



Required props

(optional)

Link to the Polish version of the song: <https://bit.ly/WOMpalisie>



Skills and objectives

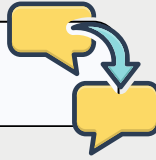
- speed and agility;
- concentration and auditory focus;
- spatial orientation (awareness of movement direction);
- motor planning (body control, coordination, dynamic balance);
- group cooperation and integration;
- communication;



SHARING THE RING



Žiedo dalijimas



Lithuania



How to play

A game that develops perceptiveness and the understanding of non-verbal communication.

1. Several participants are needed for the game.
At the beginning, the group chooses a "captain" (the ring dealer).
2. Players sit in a row or semi-circle with their hands cupped in front of them. The captain stands before the group, holding a ring (or another small object) hidden in their hands.
3. The captain moves along the row, sliding their hands into each player's cupped hands, pretending to leave the ring. Participants close their hands, trying not to reveal if they have anything. At some point, the captain secretly leaves the ring with one person. However, no one apart from them knows who received it.
4. The captain returns to the center and asks a chosen player: "Who has the ring?".
If the player guesses correctly, they become the new captain.
5. If the captain calls: "Ring, come to me!", the person holding the ring must quickly run to the captain without being caught by the others.
If the player escapes, they win and become the captain. If they are caught, the game continues with the same ring dealer.

Location



Required props

a ring, a coin, a stone, or a button
(any small object that fits entirely inside cupped hands)



Skills and objectives

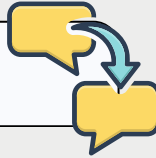
- speed and agility;
- perceptiveness and concentration;
- conscious facial expression control;
- motor planning
(coordination, dynamic balance);
- emotional resilience (handling tension and pressure, emotional self-control);
- non-verbal and verbal communication;



BALL THROUGH THE LOOP



Pepperches



Luxembourg



How to play

A skill game featuring throwing and aiming elements.

1. The optimal group size for the game is four to ten people. Players stand in a row at a distance of about 2-2.5 meters from a wall. Each participant is assigned a number.
2. Player number 1 tosses the ball underhand towards the wall. Player number 2 runs to catch the ball, while the other players scatter in different directions.
3. When player number 2 catches the ball, they shout "Stop!".
At that moment, the other participants must freeze in place.
Everyone uses their arms to form a loop (a circle) over their head.
4. The player with the ball aims to throw it through another player's loop. Based on the group's decision, the thrower may take one or two steps closer to the target.
If the throw is successful, the person forming the loop receives a penalty point.
If the thrower misses, they receive the penalty point themselves.
5. The actions repeat in the following rounds: now player no. 2 throws the ball against the wall, and player no. 3 is tasked with catching it, etc.
6. After a set period of time (or once one of the players reaches a specific number of penalty points), the person with the fewest points wins.

Younger children, who may have less throwing strength, can throw at the wall from a shorter distance. It is also recommended to use a soft ball to reduce the risk of injury.

Location



Required props

a soft ball
(access to a wall or a brick wall)



Skills and objectives

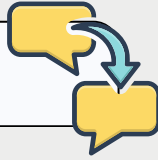
- motor planning (body control, hand-eye coordination, throwing and aiming);
- concentration, focus, and observation;
- strategy and movement planning;
- spatial awareness (awareness of movement direction);
- teamwork, synchronization, and communication;



WOLF, WOLF, WHAT ARE YOU DOING?



Lupu Lupu



Malta



How to play

A variation of the "tag" game featuring dialogue interaction and role-playing.

1. Designating a player to take on the role of the wolf (through drawing lots or selection). The remaining children will be the sheep.
2. The wolf sits on the ground and pretends to stir something in a pot. The sheep stand around the wolf at a distance of several meters.
3. The sheep take a few steps closer to the wolf and ask together: "Wolf, Wolf, what are you doing?".
4. The wolf replies that he is boiling water (stirring the pot, throwing in vegetables, seasoning the dish) or performing another activity related to preparing the wolf soup.
5. The sheep repeat the question multiple times, approaching the wolf by a few steps each time. Each time, the wolf tells them what he is doing and illustrates the action with a gesture.
6. At some point (usually when the players are close and the wolf decides his dish is ready), the wolf suddenly stands up and starts chasing the fleeing sheep.
7. The child who is caught by the wolf first takes its place in the next round and becomes the new wolf.

Location



Required props



Skills and objectives

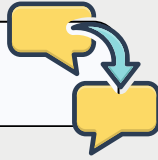
- concentration and auditory focus;
- speed and agility;
- spatial orientation (awareness of movement direction);
- motor planning (body control, coordination, dynamic balance);
- group cooperation and integration;



WARM OR COLD



Ciepło - zimno



Poland



How to play

A searching game based on verbal communication.

1. The aim of the game is to find an object hidden in the immediate surroundings based on "warm" and "cold" messages.
2. The closer the seeking player gets to the hidden object, the more intensely they receive the "warm" message (sometimes up to the expression "hot!", meaning a very close distance). When they move away from the object or do not head in its direction, they receive a "cold" message.
3. The most classic game setup occurs when one person hides an object and another person searches for it. The rest of the group observes and provides cues with the words "warm/cold" and "warmer/colder," indicating the degree of proximity to the object.
4. While the object is being hidden, the person acting as the seeker moves away or turns around so as not to see the hiding place chosen by the hider.
5. The round lasts until the seeker finds the object or until the set time is up (measured with a stopwatch or a sand timer).

Other possible game options:

- One person hides the object, the group searches.
- The group hides the object, one person searches.

Location



Required props

an object to be hidden



Skills and objectives

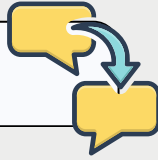
- auditory perception and attention;
- logical thinking (understanding the meaning of messages);
- concentration on the task and patience;
- spatial orientation;
- emotional resilience (dealing with frustration, perseverance);
- cooperation and group integration;



BLIND GOAT



Jogo da Cabra-Cega



Portugal



How to play

A perceptual game with role-playing, based on the rules of 'Blind Man's Buff.'

1. Selecting or drawing a player to take on the role of the goat.
2. The participants of the game stand freely within a circle.
The goat stands in the middle with their eyes closed or blindfolded.
3. At the leader's signal, the children move freely within the designated area.
They try to avoid being touched by the goat.
4. The goat tries to touch the moving people, guided by their voices or the sound of their footsteps. To help the goat with their orientation in space, players can call out (e.g., "here!" or "warm"/"cold").
5. The child who is touched takes on the role of the goat in the next round of the game.
6. The round lasts until one of the participants is caught or until the set time is up (measured with a stopwatch or a sand timer).

Supporting the goat with calls such as "warm"/"cold" helps them orient themselves in space and locate the players, which helps reduce frustration while performing the task. It should be noted that misleading calls can have the opposite effect, so it is important to balance the way the goat is signaled about the current location.

Location



Required props

a scarf to blindfold the goat,
a sand timer (optional)



Skills and objectives

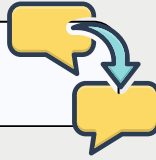
- auditory perception and attention (recognizing sounds and voices);
- concentration on the task and patience;
- speed and agility;
- spatial orientation;
- coordination and dynamic balance;
- emotional resilience (dealing with frustration, perseverance);
- cooperation and group integration;



DUCKS AND HUNTERS



Ratele și vânătorii



Romania



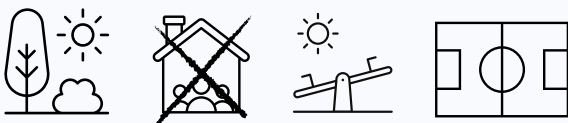
How to play

A skill-based game with a "dodgeball" theme.

1. Selecting or drawing two players to take on the role of hunters.
The remaining participants are the ducks.
2. The ducks stand in the playing field and remain within this space during the game. The hunters stand at the two ends of the field and are not allowed to enter the center. The playing field is rectangular in shape, with a size that allows the players to move freely (depending on the number of ducks).
3. The hunters throw the ball back and forth, trying to hit the ducks who move freely within the designated zone. The ducks try to avoid being hit by the ball.
A duck hit by the ball is out of the game (regardless of whether the ball hit the person directly during the throw or bounced off the ground first).
4. When only the last duck remains on the field, the hunters have the opportunity to make as many throws as the duck's age. If they manage to hit the duck, the game ends. If not, the round starts over with the same hunters and all the ducks back on the field.

There is a popular "revival / life restoration" variant. If a duck catches the thrown ball before it touches the ground, they receive an extra "life" to be used during the game. They can also immediately revive another duck that was previously eliminated. The "one life per catch" rule introduces an element of decision-making for the benefit of the team.

Location



Required props

a ball,
chalk to mark the playing field
(optional)



Skills and objectives

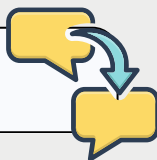
- spatial orientation;
- visual concentration;
- speed, agility, and reflexes;
- motor planning, coordination, and dynamic balance;
- emotional resilience (dealing with failure, perseverance);
- cooperation and group integration;



COWS AND THE SHEPHERD



Kravy a pastier



Slovakia



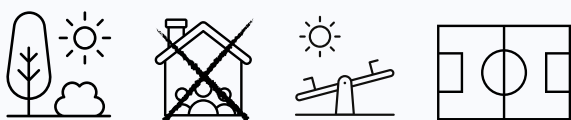
How to play

A perceptual role-playing game based on the principles of "blind man's buff."

1. Choosing a player to act as the shepherd.
The remaining children will be the cows.
2. The participants stand freely within a circle.
The shepherd stands in the middle with their eyes closed or blindfolded.
3. Upon the leader's signal, the cows move freely within the designated area, often making mooing sounds ("moooo").
4. The shepherd's task is to catch one of the cows and guess who it is.
The cow stops immediately when touched by the shepherd.
They attempt to identify the caught person (by their voice, silhouette, or clothing).
5. If the shepherd guesses whom they caught - the players swap roles.
If they don't guess correctly - they continue the search.

In one variant of the game, to make it harder for the shepherd to guess who the caught cow is, the cow may moo in a misleading way, unlike their normal voice.

Location



Required props

a scarf or blindfold (optional)
to cover the shepherd's eyes



Skills and objectives

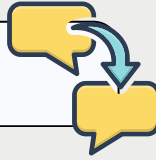
- auditory perception and attention (recognizing sounds and voices);
- concentration on the task;
- speed and agility;
- motor planning (body movement control, coordination, dynamic balance);
- cooperation and group integration;



SELLING CRAYONS



Prodajamo barvice



Slovenia



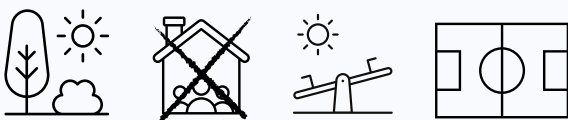
How to play

A tag-game variation featuring dialogue interaction and role-playing.

1. Choosing or drawing two players to take on the roles of the seller and the buyer.
The remaining participants play the part of the crayons.
2. At the beginning, the boundaries of the space where children can move during the game are established.
3. The children - the "crayons" - line up, either standing or sitting on the ground.
The seller assigns a crayon color to each child.
4. The seller and the buyer stand opposite the crayons at a short distance.
The buyer says: 'I want to buy a crayon,' and the seller asks: 'What color?'
5. The buyer names a chosen color. The crayon of that color immediately stands up and starts to run away. The buyer's task is to catch them, but before giving chase, they must spin around once (or twice) on the spot.
6. If the buyer manages to catch the crayon, they take them "home." This means the crayon moves to a designated spot and waits for the next round.

It is worth noting that usually, the buyer and the seller remain in their roles for several rounds. However, if the participants decide otherwise, the buyer or the seller can be changed even after each round.

Location

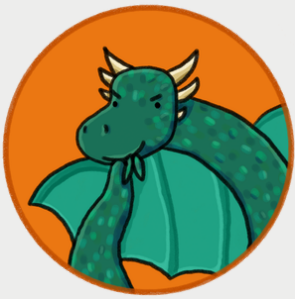


Required props



Skills and objectives

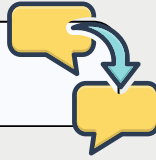
- auditory perception and attention;
- concentration on the task;
- speed and agility;
- motor planning (improving motor skills, static and dynamic balance);
- emotional resilience
(dealing with failure, not giving up, perseverance);



THE DRAGON'S TAIL



La Cola del Dragón



Spain



How to play

A team game of an offensive-defensive nature with an element of competition.

1. Form a line of 6-12 children holding each other's shoulders. The first two children are the "dragon's head," and the last one is the "tail".

The children place their hands on the shoulders of the person in front of them.

2. The dragon team must move in a single line, ensuring the chain does not break.

3. The "dragon's head" leads the line and tries to touch the person at the end (the "tail"). The tail tries to escape the head by maneuvering the dragon's entire body.

4. Once the head touches the tail, the person in that role moves to the front and becomes the new dragon's head.

5. The game continues until every child has played the role of the "tail."

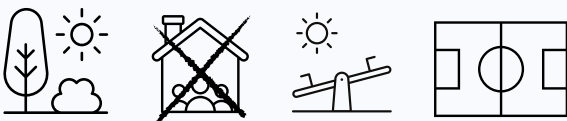
Option 1. Create two separate "dragons" (6-8 people each). Each dragon has its own head and tail. Both "dragons" stand facing each other at a certain distance. At a set signal, they begin moving within a designated area. During the game, the dragon heads attempt to catch the opponent's tail while simultaneously protecting their own.

Option 2. When playing with two dragons, it is worth introducing a scoring system.

A team scores a point if its dragon's head touches the opponent's tail.

if the team chain breaks, the opponent receives a point or the round is lost (depending on the agreed rules).

Location



Required props



Skills and objectives

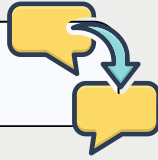
- coordination and motor planning.;
- speed, agility, and reflexes;
- spatial awareness (assessing the position of objects and route optimization);
- emotional resilience (dealing with failure);
- team integration and cooperation (especially in the two-team variation);



THE DOG AND THE BONE



Hunden och benet



Sweden



How to play

A perceptuo-motor game with an element of attention steering.

1. Choosing a player to take on the role of the dog protecting its "bone."
2. The participants of the game line up in a row at the starting line.
3. The dog sits on the ground at a distance, with its back to the others.
It places the "bone" in front of it.
4. At the leader's signal, players try to approach or run towards the dog as quietly as possible to take its "bone."
5. The dog reacts when it hears movement. It turns around and "barks" at the player who is still moving at that moment (the barking can be replaced by saying the moving player's name). That person is out of the game or returns to the start.
6. The game is won by the player who manages to get the "bone" and return with it to the starting line without being caught by the dog.

Option 1. The round ends as soon as one of the players gets the "bone," without the requirement to return with it to the starting line.

Option 2. The dog is blindfolded during the game. Identifying a player to be sent back is done by barking and pointing a hand in their direction. A person caught this way returns to the starting line.

Location



Required props

a small object (the "bone"):
a bean bag, a small ball, or a stick



Skills and objectives

- auditory perception and attention;
- concentration on the task;
- speed and agility;
- motor planning
(moving quietly, static and dynamic balance);
- emotional resilience (dealing with failure, not giving up, perseverance);



Implementaion of the "Every Backyard Has Its Charm" project at the Kindergarten No 48 with Special and Integrative Groups in Zabrze, Poland



Województwo
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At a time when it seems that more divides us than unites us, the game 'Every Backyard Has Its Charm' reminds us that this is only an illusion.

This unique and invaluable proposal presents children's games from all European Union countries, developing players' personal competences, cooperation skills, and openness to the world.

Through colorful examples and authentic descriptions of games, the project strengthens cultural awareness and teaches respect for diversity. It reminds us how comprehensively developing play on one's own playground can be, and how vital shared joy is in building human relationships.

This exceptional study, created by the Teacher Training Center (WOM) in Rybnik, will certainly inspire both children and adults to discover common and universal values. Ideal for kindergartens and schools, families, and everyone who wants to build bridges instead of walls.

Rafał Mazur, PhD

The Institute of Pedagogy at the University of Rzeszów
The Erasmus+ Programme Ambassador

The period of preschool and early school education is a time when children have their first opportunity to acquire social competences under the professional guidance of teachers. In a natural way, through play, they gain diverse experiences, learn about the world, communicate with one another, and cooperate.

The collection of children's games we have published may not only serve as a database of ideas for physical and integration activities, but also encourage teachers to discover the culture and traditions of selected EU countries together with children, while teaching tolerance towards cultural differences.

Sylwia Bloch

The Director of the RODN and IP WOM in Rybnik
The long-term coordinator of the School European Club

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