BLOCKS…JUST BLOCKS

This idea began at a PA (Project Adventure) workshop on debriefing, and quickly took on a life of its own. Blocks are the standard 1 inch square, kids wood letter type, easily and cheaply available at Walmart, Kmart/Sears, and other children’s toy stores. The ideas listed below are organized into two categories; cooperative activities/team builders/problem solvers/initiatives/ice breakers, or debriefing ideas. These activities can also be done with pool noodle slices.

1. Partner Exploration- Partners hold 4 blocks between them, and using one finger only, try different movement patterns. Sharing of cool moves with the rest of the group is encouraged/required! Younger groups are allowed to use less than 4 blocks. Older groups may want the challenge of more blocks (try for a record).

2. Over/Under- While holding the 4 blocks as above, partners move around the room allowing other groups to pass under their “block bridge”. Once a twosome passes under yours, you and your partner must pass under a different pair’s bridge.

3. Partner Balance- How many can you stack/balance on your standing partner? Can they walk with them without dropping any?

4. Partner Twister- Using one to four blocks, have partners hold the blocks between body parts that are called out by the leader. Examples- head to hand, nose to ear, knee to knee, elbow to elbow…be creative!

5. Find Your Match- Everyone pulls a block out of the pile and tries to quickly find a partner with a letter, number, or picture that matches. The two blocks must be held together with one finger each. The advanced version has everyone grabbing two blocks and matching with a person on either side…to complete this you would have to create a circle of 4 or more.

6. Knock the Block- Partners set up a pyramid, or tower, or just a single block, in front of them. Try using a rolling block to knock your partners over.

7. Blocky Hockey- How many times can you roll a block through your partner’s spread feet…back and forth cooperatively, or competitively?

8. Blockit Off- Balance a block on your head, then stand in front of your partner and shake hands with them. Try a push or pull until one loses their block. Try it on one foot!

9. Hide It- In sets of Partners… #1 will hide two or more blocks on the opposite side of the gym floor. Partner #2 must retrieve their exact blocks. How will you distinguish which are yours?

10. Corner Balance- Challenge partners to balance a block on its corner using only other blocks for support. Using 10 blocks, how many can they balance?

11. Partner Spell- In one minute, challenge partners to spell as many words as possible, using only 20 blocks (3 letters or more in the word).

12. Ice Breaker- A Ryan McCormick original…Sets of partners hold 4 or more blocks between them with one finger only (no body contact with the partner is allowed). The goal is to use your free hand only, and chop another set of partners blocks (ice cubes) in half. Either reset with your partner, or take 2 blocks and reset with someone else who has been “chopped”.

13. Block Hunt- Simply hide blocks around the house/school/forest/large field, and let the group track them down…fun for younger participants!

14. One On My Foot Race- Challenge your partner to a race while each keeps a block balanced on their foot. If it falls off, replace it on the other foot. Too easy? Try it with one on both feet!

15. Blockhead Tag (AKA Charlie Brown Tag) - A small group begins with one block on their head. If one of them tags a non-block head person, they must get a block, put it on their head and add to the tagging group. Variations…try tag while balancing the block on the backhand, or the shoulder, or the forearm, etc.

16. If You Build It, They Will Come- What is the highest that an individual (or partners, or small groups), can build a block structure?

17. Tower Relay- 3 people with blocks, lined up behind a starting line, run relay style to build the highest tower in the time allowed.

18. Add One- With a partner, try transporting a single block around the end cone, using one finger and no body contact. Each successful trip the partners will add one block. If dropped, start over with the same number of blocks.

19. Relay Switch- In groups of 3 or 4…the first two people run around the end cone while balancing 2 or more blocks between one finger each. Upon returning, one person drops off and a new partner hooks up. How many trips in two minutes?

20. Relay Pick-Up- The first two in the line run around the end cone with a block between one finger each. Upon returning, the pair picks up the next person in line, and adds blocks between all three of them to create a circle. They run and pick up the next, until the group has added everyone in a large circle.

21. The Running Plus- Four people use 5 blocks arranged in a plus sign on the floor. They must pick the blocks up using one finger each, and race it around the cone and back. If the blocks are dropped, they must be arranged back on the floor, and picked up before continuing.

22. Stack’em- As a precursor to the next few activities, have students practice stacking 5 blocks back and forth into a pyramid, then quickly into a tower.

23. Egyptian Switch’em- Half of the group sets their 5 blocks each, up into pyramids. The other half sets their 5 blocks each, up into towers (obelisks). On go, everyone runs around and switches other’s blocks into their structure. In other words, if I start with a tower, I will look for pyramids and restack them into towers.

24. Fitness Shuttles- Each person begins with 5 blocks in a tower. On go (or lima beans, you choose the magic starting word), each person must run one block at a time, out to the finish line, and restack them into a pyramid…then reverse the process bringing them back to the starting line, and build them back into a tower.

25. Initial Contact- The group must use the fewest number of blocks needed to connect everyone. The second time through, they must join the group together, with connecting blocks forming each persons initials.

26. Big Number- Each block has one number on it…the goal in this tag game is to keep the highest number. The game begins with everyone holding one block under their chin. Everyone is it, and when a tag is executed, the tagger/tagee exchange their blocks. The goal is to tag when you have a block with 5 or less on it, and avoid a tag if you have a block with 5 or more. Stop at random time increments to see who won or lost. (Hint- Don’t show your number)
27. Group Crossword Puzzle- The group may use all of the blocks to create words (3 letters or more) that must be connected. No repeats in the crossword puzzle.
28. Group Disconnect- The group must use all of the blocks, spelling non-connected words (four letters or more), and place them around the floor randomly. These last two activities are great for group goal setting.
29. Scoot ‘n Spell- Place the blocks in a large circle in the middle of the floor, with teams of 2 or 3 around a larger circle, each team at a poly spot (or paper plate). The object of the game is to run in relay style (or use a scooter) and bring back one letter at a time, to spell a clean 4 letter word. No feet are allowed in the middle circle. Once the game is established, add the following variations.
   a. 5 or 6 letter words (use classroom vocabulary words, or full value words)
   b. Teams may not only take blocks from the middle, but may borrow (steal) blocks from other teams. No stealing from a neighbor to your immediate right or left.
   c. Help Thy Neighbor- Cooperate with your neighbor to spell words.
30. Full Value Debrief- Simply collect letters to spell one of the words in your full value contract, and lift it up with a partner. Present it to the group.
31. Be Brief Debrief- Individuals use blocks to spell one word that describes the activity, or the day, or their partner, etc.
32. Thief Debrief- Each person spells their name with the blocks, and then spells a word that describes the activity. Everyone then looks around at other’s descriptive words, and takes one that they like, from someone else, back to their name. You must explain why you chose that word.
33. Positive Debrief- Each person uses the blocks to spell …something that they liked during the day, or a positive word that they heard, or their wow moment, or their smile moment…something positive!
34. Lift the Shape- Place random block shapes flat on the floor, and see how many the group can lift using pointer fingers only (or let them make their own shapes).
35. Shape Paper- Trace block patterns on sheets of paper. Invite groups to take blocks to each paper, reproduce the pattern, and lift them up using pointer fingers only (Examples of patterns- Capital L, or T, or I, or F, or H, etc.). Can the group transport the shape to a new paper?
36. Block Head Balance Off - Try different balance poses on one foot, with a block on your head…challenge a partner to a “Block Head Balance Off”. First one to drop the block, or lose their balance, chooses the next balance pose.

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