**Ping Pong (and other net games) Activities and Ideas**

**Serving:** I teach my middle school students the “Hammer and Nail” technique as an entry level basic serve. I re-teach or re-demo using a student and ask the class why this is this not a great serve (*because your opponent will smash it*). Then I demo the fundamental “open palm, forehand, low to the net serve” for all to practice and hopefully master during our unit. If time or talent dictates, I introduce “cut/slice” serves later in the unit.

**Volleying:** My second lesson is volleying back and forth across the net with a partner (with the ball bouncing once and only once per side). THIS IS A COOPERATIVE LEARNING ACTIVITY. I tell them the story of how I taught my three children at an early age using this activity – I started each child around the age of 5 or 6. I also tell them that my daughter and I still hold the family record of 256 consecutive volleys (when she was 8 or 9 years old).

10/20/30 etc. Club: Print off a sheet for each table and have students sign their names once reaching the 10/20/30 or higher plateaus.

**King (Queen, Ruler) of the Court:** After teaching the serve, serve and return, and volleying, I introduce King of the Court with 3 players per game. This is a game of one on one for “one point” with the third player waiting to play. I insist that the “challenger” serve to the reigning king – if the King is an accomplished player, he/she could dominate with serve. To avoid domination otherwise, I rotate Kings among the tables which also creates new challenges.

**Variations:** Students can wear pedometers so that the 3rd player is moving while waiting to play – either around the table, or to a line or wall and back. Another variation would be to have the 3rd player walk the table until the point is over. Wherever the 3rd player is when the point is over, the King must walk/run the table at least 1 to 1 ½ laps.

**Serve and Go with Pedometers:** This can be set up as King of the Court or as “2 on 2”. First player serves and rotates, with paddle in hand, behind next player. TO INCREASE SUCCESS, I WOULD START WITH A COOPERATION CHALLENGE AS IN VOLLEYING ABOVE – TRY TO GET 5/6/10 IN A ROW AS A TEAM. If successful, then let students play “serve and go” to P-I-N-G before trying to score on the opposing team.

**(Real) Game Variations:**

1. **Up/Down Time Limit Games:** I use a 3-4 minute time limit game with each student serving 2 serves in service order (Team A, player 1; Team B, player 1; Team A, player 2; Team B, player 2). At the conclusion of time, I signal for the class to stop. If a table has a winner, all sit or squat. If there are tied games, we all watch “sudden death” games – with 10-12 tables I usually have 1-3 “overtime”
games. I can use these games to question the class regarding rules, strategy, sportsmanship, etc. AT THE CONCLUSION OF ALL GAMES, TEAMS ROTATE. Winning teams move up one table to the next highest ranked table while losing teams move down one table to the next lowest ranked table. You as the teacher set up your tables prior to class with rankings in mind. Many times I do not tell them until the first match begins, which table is Number 1 and which table is the “bottom of the basement”. **Object: Move up the table rankings as high as you can before the end of class or hold the high tables as long as possible.** If a team loses on the lowest table, they remain until winning.

2. Horse Races/College Bowl/ NCAAs/Super Bowl: (adapted from Dr. Susan Nye) Set up a visual “lane”/gate graphic on a gym wall, dry erase board, etc. with enough game pieces (horses, footballs, basketballs) so that each pair of students have a designated “game piece” such as Horse #1 or a football with Notre Dame written on it. Create at least 10 or more lanes for teams to move their “game piece”. Tournament Play begins by teams challenging one another to a game – I usually play until one team scores 7 points. I figure that in most cases each student will have at least one opportunity to serve at least 2 serves as in “up/down” above. **Playing Action:** When a game is completed, **all players** report to the “lane” scoreboard. The winning team moves its game piece 2 spaces and the losing team moves 1 space. The first team to cross the finish line is the winner or in the quarterfinals, semifinals, national championship – whatever. **Suggestion:** Players must leave all equipment on table for other teams to use. While waiting for new opponents to finish and move their game piece, I require that all 4 players who have agreed to play “hook elbows” and move to an available table. I have found that this keeps players from holding a table or accepting a challenge and failing to move their game piece from the previous game. Another reason to hook elbows at the lane scoreboard is that one partner may challenge Team G while the other challenges Team C leading to confusion. USING COLLEGE TEAMS OR PRO TEAMS NEAR PLAYOFF TIME APPEARS TO INCREASE ENTHUSIASM.

3. Pile It On!: This can be set up as one on one or doubles. Teams challenge each other as in #2 above and play to 7 points. **EQUIPMENT AND LOSING TEAM STAYS AT TABLE.** The winning team reports to the teacher to receive “personal trophies” for winning – winners wear a pinnie and continue to earn pinnies for each additional win. (When I run out of pinnies, I use anything available – soccer shin guards, wristbands, etc.) STUDENTS LOVE THIS ACTIVITY. They display their spoils proudly. Many students will be wearing 10 or more pinnies by the end of class. It also shows me the players or teams who may be struggling with this unit.

4. Handicap Variation: Place an item (toy, piece of gravel, etc.) in the middle of the table – especially on the “strong” team’s side, to assist the challenging team. The ball upon striking the object is almost impossible to return. THIS ALSO HELPS NOVICE PLAYERS AIM FOR THE MIDDLE OF THE TABLE.