

YOUTH GROUP GAMES



# LARGE GROUP

*GAMES*

J. ROGER DAVIS

YM360



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BY J. ROGER DAVIS  
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Youth Group Games: Large Group Games  
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# INTRODUCTION

In the decades that I've been involved in youth ministry, I have encountered people who think that recreation activities or playing games have little value. I believe this is because they haven't seen games used well as a part of a good ministry strategy. Over the years, I have seen games with a purpose help empower successful youth ministry events and be an incredible asset to weekly programming. However, this takes having a strategy. If you are not careful in your planning, games can quickly become just about competition or killing time. While competition can be a useful tool, the time spent on fields, inside gyms, or on stages should never turn into discovering the best athlete or highlighting the most popular students. Use them wisely, and games will serve your students, leaders, and small groups well and help foster a spirit of community and connection within your group.

You have taken a significant step in your planning and preparing by putting this resource in your hands. Remember to embrace the many different aspects of games in your planning, from traditional tournaments and group building games to water days or large groups games and all-play games to good old-fashioned face-offs. This book is just one in our line of games resources that can serve you and your students.

Each game you will find within the pages of this resource has been curated from years of experience leading camps, weekly gatherings, and special events. Every game has been field-tested by our summer teams. Testing is essential with it comes to games. There is little worse than when something is beautiful in your mind, perfect on paper, but a huge flop when your students start playing it. Rest assured, the games in this resource have been designed and used for hours with students at camps and events with great success. I am grateful for the creative minds and energetic leaders that I have served with over the years. Great people help make great games, and these are some of our favorites.

Each of the games found within this resource is tagged with specific categories so you can decide what fits your needs. Each game entry features simple instructions, along with various supplies you may need. I believe this is true with all games: often, the secret to success is how you adapt it to fit your unique group of students. Changing a rule or varying the supplies might result in a home run with your group. Don't become so rigid in getting the game right that you forget the games must have a purpose. It is also important to remember that games should be fun, especially youth group games!

There are two final notes before we move on. First, be aware that you may need to make appropriate adjustments or accommodations to the games if you have anyone with physical limitations so all students can participate. This is true of any game or activity you facilitate with people. The more you can create an inclusive experience, the better return you will get. Second, prioritize safety in all your games. Once people get in motion, things can go wrong quickly. Think ahead and make sure the playing area is safe and the rules are clear. It is good to remember that rules are not designed to limit fun but to serve to protect those participating. When a game is safe, everyone participating can enjoy it.

Cheering you on!





## A WORD ABOUT LARGE GROUP GAMES

Large group games can help foster energy and activity when used well. I have also found they can become one of the most competitive experiences because they put groups in direct competition. Again, competition is not bad when used strategically, but I would not focus on it from an individual perspective. Recognize teams more than individuals when playing games like these. When large group games are used well, they can help foster a real “team mindset.” They can be played in multiple playing areas, but their design is to be facilitated with larger groups on a field or in a gym space.

Within the pages of this book, I am sharing 25 of my favorite large group games with you to help you have an exciting next event. Here are some thoughts to keep in mind as you plan and prepare:

- Large group games can sometimes highlight athletes more than other game activities. So be careful not to pick games that all lean in that direction.
- These games take a bit more space. It is best to either have your playing area pre-set before students arrive or have a solid plan on managing transitions between games.
- If you have plenty of space, set your games up as stations and have your groups rotate between stations (this works well with larger groups that are split into smaller groups or bible study groups). Or you can just have your group go from one station to the next until you have completed all the games. Make sure it is clear what direction groups are rotating.
- If you have limited space, do one of these management tips. Have at least two games set up when students arrive. Once students have completed the first game,

have them move to the second and have some other leaders set up the other playing area that was just finished. After your group finishes the second game, they rotate back to the first playing area where your next game is set up. Continue this back and forth until your games are complete. The other option is if you have very limited space and can only do one game at a time, link together common games to keep things moving along. For instance, if your game uses dodgeballs or needs a lot of the same equipment, you can rotate through them quicker than having to get all new equipment out.

- One thing that is key with large group games is not overplaying them. When overplaying happens typically, you begin seeing a lot more standing around and disengagement by some. I like to keep games shorter and moving along, so students leave a game wanting more rather than being glad to be done with that.
- Remember to work water breaks in, or if using stations, you can drop water stations into your rotation. This works well to keep things moving along and helps to eliminate overcrowding at your water supply.

Here are 25 simple large group game ideas to make your recreation the best ever!



# DON'T KNOCK IT

## CATEGORY

Competition, high energy, teamwork

## INSTRUCTIONS

At least two teams will be playing head-to-head against each other. Each team has a designated cone color. Cones should be scattered throughout the playing area rather than on just one side. Have a group of five players maximum (for each team) for that round start inside the playing area. When the whistle or signal blows, the group in the playing area will knock over the opponent's cones (with their hands, no feet or legs allowed), and at the same time, their team is setting up as many of their own cones back up as possible. Be aware that the other team is also doing the same thing. Cones will be continuously knocked over and put back up. It is important to stress that players cannot have any physical contact with the other team. After 60 seconds, the whistle will blow, and whichever team has the most of their remaining color standing will get the point. The playing area that the cones are set up in should be no larger than a half-court basketball court.

Determine how many points you want to play to, with each round equaling one point for a win. You will want to make sure there are enough rounds for everyone to play at least once and find that students want to get back in for another round. We suggest the first to three or five points wins, or you can play it like bowling frames or baseball innings, picking a total number of rounds. If you do this as the longer game, make sure your total rounds are an odd number.

## SUPPLIES

50–80 colored cones (only two colors), dome markers to mark the playing area

## TIPS

If you want to play bigger, you can double your players in the playing area to 10, increase your playing area, and add to your total cone count. If you have a large group and a larger playing area, you can increase the num-

ber of players and increase the playing area size. If you can have cones that are more than two colors, you can add teams for each color cone you have. Cones need to be smaller and easier to knock over. If you do not have cones, you can play with plastic cups on a flat service.



# SNATCHED

## CATEGORY

Elimination, high energy

## INSTRUCTIONS

Divide your group into two teams that will be playing against each other. Each team will have a designated color of flag football belt. You'll need to decide an equal number of players in the playing field at a time per round based on how many flags you have. Play the best of three or five games, depending on time. Teams start on their side of the playing area with their flags on their waist. When the whistle or signal blows, the game begins, and they work to snatch the other team's flag while protecting their own. Once their flag is off, they are out for the round. Players must stay in the playing areas, or they are ruled out. The team with the last flag standing wins the round. Again, it is best to begin the round on their side of the playing area, but once the signal to start is given, teams will need to move around to snatch their opponents' flags.

## SUPPLIES

Cones for play area, flags for each team member

## TIPS

Watch out for "flag guarding," which is people holding onto their flags without letting people easily pull them. Make sure you add water and rest breaks because there will be lots of running. You can also shrink the playing area over time to lessen the space people can run, which will shorten your game if it stalls.

# BUZZARDS AND EAGLES

## CATEGORY

High energy, elimination

## INSTRUCTIONS

Create a playing area that is no smaller in size than a basketball court. If you have a larger group, you can scale the playing area accordingly. Groups are given names like "Buzzards," "Eagles," "Turkeys," etc. Have fun and add other birds. Each group will be placed at an equal distance from the "central nest." The game's object is for each group to transport as many eggs to their safe place from the "central nest" as possible. Each group will be given a portable nest (plungers) to transport the eggs. Every group member will have two "feather strips" (flag football flags.) You can use flag football clip flags that you can purchase online or through a sporting goods store or make streamers/bandanas tucked in pants. If a participant's feather is plucked by an opposing group while transporting the eggs, the eggs must be immediately returned to the central nest. Participants can stay in the game until their second feather is plucked. Once they have lost both feathers, those participants are out of the game until the next round. Whoever has the most eggs at the end of the time wins. You have options on eggs or this game. You can use the fake eggs used at Easter, or if you have the option and want to make it a messy game, you can use real eggs. Just be aware of your environment's realities as most eggs will end up broken, and some may end up on the players.

## SUPPLIES

Eggs (real or fake eggs), laundry baskets or collection cans, plungers, flags (flag football flags or bandannas)

## TIPS

This game is made even better by encouraging students to make as many bird noises as possible. Encourage safety here as people will be running full speed with plungers. You'll also need some referees to ensure that students return the eggs to the central nest if their flag is pulled.

## Youth Group Games: Large Group Games

Game Master and Youth Minister are two titles that often go hand in hand. Whether you have the experience or not, approaching games for your events and retreats can often become an overwhelming task. Creativity can become stifled as other tasks, and to-dos overwhelm your plate. Youth Group Games was designed by J. Roger Davis, who has decades of games experience. These books are designed to help you have easy and effective games ready for the next time you put on a big event.

Large Group Games is one of five books within the Youth Group Games line, and it focuses on the large group recreation experience. Coming up with games for your entire group or field recreation spaces can be a daunting task. Through years of creating summer camps and working with youth ministries, J. Roger Davis has compiled 25 games that have become must-plays over the years. Large Group Games is the perfect book to help your next recreation experience become a highlight of your retreat or event!

**“Large Group Games” is part of YM360’s youth group games line of resources and is ideal for:**

- *Any large group setting*
- *Camp or retreat settings*
- *Mid-week youth service*



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