

YOUTH GROUP GAMES



MESSY

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YM360

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BY J. ROGER DAVIS

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Youth Group Games: Messy 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 MESSY GAMES

There's something freeing about making a mess. And these games will make a big one quick. Because of that, it's important for you to factor a bit more preparation time and cleanup into your planning and programming. Wise leaders will take the proper steps to ensure the clean-up is as quick as possible *before* everything starts flying.

I don't love messy games just to be gross, but when you add various elements to your games, it can often create a memorable moment you will laugh about for years. As you play these games, make sure they're all-inclusive rather than making it feel like someone is being made fun of. There is little worse in your ministry than students feeling like outsiders. As you are planning and preparing, here are some thoughts to keep in mind.

- Messy games, by design, cause a mess, so plan for a quick clean-up. Trash bags make great bibs, and a ground covering if indoors is a must. A plastic paint tarp or drop cloths also make pick-up easier because you can quickly roll up your playing area.
 - Be safe. If you have any game involving raw eggs, meat, fish, or other uncooked food products, have participants wash their hands and clean up as soon as they're done playing. Have a stack of towels if playing indoors, or have everyone bring a towel and provide a wash station. Also, make sure you know your students' allergies.
 - If there is a lot of movement outside, it can increase the risk of accidents if not properly managed. Ensure you have surveyed the playing area and that there are no potential hazards.
- You'll need to watch your time with messy games. Since they take a little longer with clean-up and transition, you want to avoid playing too long if it's a part of your mid-week programming.
 - It would be wise to ensure that students and leaders are prepared for what the night or event may have. You don't want someone upset because they showed up wearing the wrong thing.
 - Encourage your adults to participate as much as possible. When they participate in the game and have fun, they'll earn a lot of street cred, and students will be more engaged throughout the whole night. Whenever you do games with the grades represented, you can add another team of adults if they are not playing with the grades.
 - Make sure you have someone taking plenty of pictures and videos. Messy games will create some great images for the screen and future promotion.
 - Messy games are also great for promotion weeks or nights. Make them a big thing each year as a part of an annual promotion or a fun element to use with the entire family involved. You might be surprised by the conversations and connections you have with parents if you schedule a messy game night and invite them to come.

Here are 25 great messy game ideas for you to select to make your next event the best ever!

WIGGLY GIGGLY

CATEGORY

Stage, outdoor

INSTRUCTIONS

It's hard not to love Oreos, but when your feet are stuck in them, you might not want to dig in. In Wiggly Giggly, you'll pair up participants into teams of two, or you can make them larger and adapt the game accordingly. Crush Oreos or similar-style cookies into large buckets and add gummy worms. You'll want the bucket to be large enough for someone to get their foot into it, but make sure they can't easily see the gummy worm. One player will have to put their foot into the bucket, moving it around until they find a worm. Once they find a worm with their toes, they need to pull it out and pass it to their partner's foot, who takes the worm and moves it between their toes to a bowl or plate. This game is best as a timed game rather than someone never being able to find a worm and it taking too long. You can give players 4–5 mins to get as many worms as possible onto their plates. Games that go on too long run the risk of killing the energy in the room. The winners are the teammates who have the most worms on their plate.

SUPPLIES

Oreos or similar cookies, buckets, bowls/plates, gummy worms

TIPS

If you want to add a twist, have someone else on their team that must eat the gummy worms after they get it on their plate.

EGG IN THE MIDDLE

CATEGORY

Outdoor

INSTRUCTIONS

You don't want egg on your face or your back in this fast-paced head-to-head game. First, set up your playing area with two sides equal in distance from the middle point. Then have your students pair up and number them off by pair. You will then split the pairs, with one member of each pair making Team A and the other member of each pair making Team B. It's essential that players remember the number they were given with their pair because they will be going head-to-head with their original partner.

Next, have teams go to their side of the playing area. It doesn't matter if they stay in their numerical order, but they must remember their number. Next, you will place one uncracked raw egg in the center of the playing area. Whoever facilitates the game will then call out a number, and those two players will run to the center. Whichever player gets to the egg first can throw it at the other player while they try to run back to their side for safety, but players cannot cross the middle line. If you want to mix the game up, you can place two eggs in the middle and call out two numbers at once. In that situation, a player can only grab and throw one egg.

SUPPLIES

Raw eggs, a clearly marked playing area
(See page 41 for diagram.)

TIPS

As with any game where students may be lowering their heads, make sure you are aware of safety and encourage your students to be careful.

GRANDE CHOCOLATE MILK

CATEGORY

Outdoor, indoor

INSTRUCTIONS

In this game, you'll make the largest cup of hot chocolate you have likely ever made! You will need at least a 5-gallon bucket, but preferably something larger, like a 44-gallon trash can. Your goal is to fill the container as close to the top as possible with chocolate milk. Inside the liquid, you will need to put the largest marshmallows you can find. Put more marshmallows in than game participants. Divide your group into two teams, then treat it like a relay with two teams competing against each other. You can have them all run to the same liquid container if it is large enough, or you can create two containers so each team has its own. Players will run to the container one at a time, and when they get to the container, they'll bob for marshmallows, with each player getting their mouth into the container to retrieve a marshmallow. They cannot use their hands at any time. Once they have retrieved a marshmallow, they will leave it in their mouth and run back to the next person on their team. Once they're tagged, the next person will run to the container and bob for marshmallows. This continues until everyone on the team has retrieved a marshmallow.

SUPPLIES

Large container for liquid, chocolate milk, large marshmallows

TIPS

If you don't want to make Grande Chocolate Milk a relay game, you can make it an up-front game with plenty of protective covering to make sure you can easily clean up after the game. For a Christmas version, you could change the game by making your bucket full of eggnog, and have students go for large candy canes.

Youth Group Games: Messy 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.

Messy Games is one of seven books within the Youth Group Games line, and it focuses on a variety of messy games. Messy games may be a little gross sometimes, but they can create memorable moments that you'll laugh about for years! Utilizing his decades of experience, J. Roger Davis shares his expertise on 25 must-play messy games he has used over the years!

"Messy 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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