



Parachute Games



Woodlands Junior School
2008



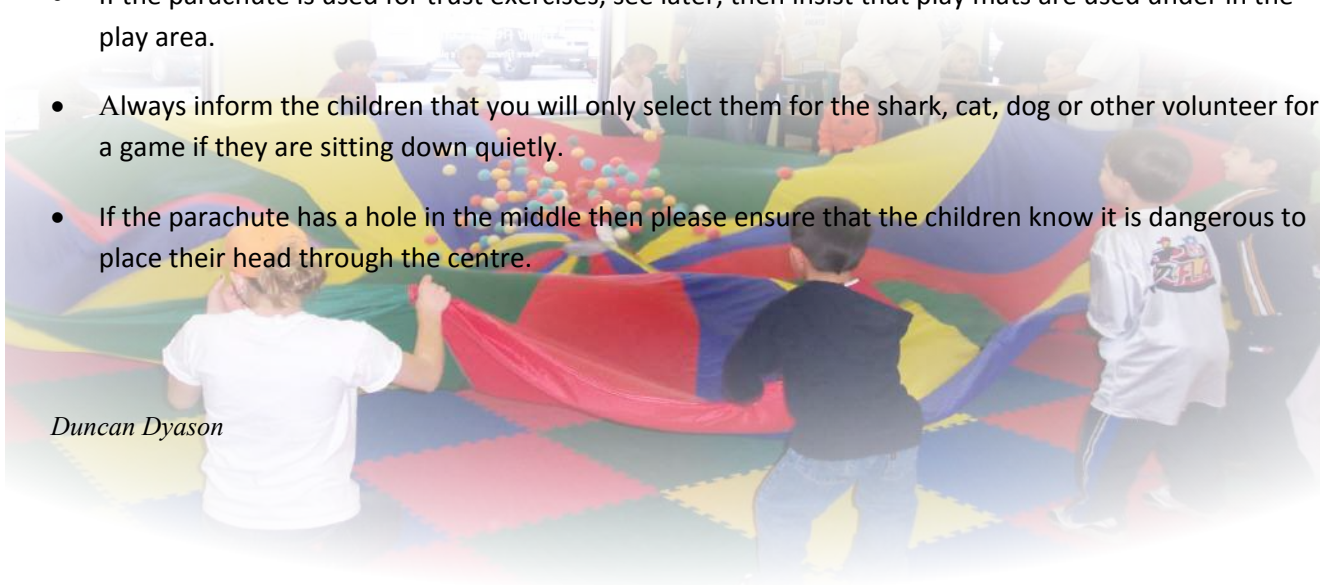
Parachute games are great fun and encourage cooperative and non-cooperative play. The games are usually quite physically active and so great care needs to be taken before the games start to explain some basic rules to the children in order that you and they get the maximum fun out of the activity. These games are useful in helping develop team play, motor skills, light physical fitness and can be used as an aid to many aspects of school life.

AGES: Parachute games are for all age children and adults; however you will need to evaluate each game against the age of the children, taking into consideration the level of risk and the complexity of instructions needed for some games.

NUMBERS: Obviously the larger the parachute the more children can participate, for example a 5m parachute will be large enough for about 20 children. A 7m parachute is ideal for the average class or year group at Woodside.

RULES & SAFETY: The nature of parachute games means that children are running around, using their arms to pull the chute, pulling other children, crawling around and possibly climbing on other children. This all sounds like a disaster waiting to happen, however parachute games are generally very safe but you may find that, from time to time, an accident will happen. If you begin each session explaining some basic rules for the parachute games then the risk of injury will be reduced.

- Ask the children to remove their shoes before approaching the parachute.
- Encourage the children to space themselves around the parachute so that there are no large gaps. If there are large gaps then the children can hold onto the parachute and roll it in on itself – making a smaller parachute.
- Ensure the children hold the parachute with both hands with the thumb and fingers on top.
- The children should take care of those either side as elbows can cause injury.
- Don't allow the children to remove their hands from the parachute in order to hit balls. It is preferable to ask them to hit the ball whilst holding onto the parachute with both hands.
- There are games that can result in the children wanting to kick under the parachute. Ask them not to do this, unless specifically requested, as risk of injury is high to anyone under the parachute.
- If the parachute is used for trust exercises, see later, then insist that play mats are used under in the play area.
- Always inform the children that you will only select them for the shark, cat, dog or other volunteer for a game if they are sitting down quietly.
- If the parachute has a hole in the middle then please ensure that the children know it is dangerous to place their head through the centre.



The Games



MUSHROOM

This is a simple exercise to get the children used to the parachute. All the children are asked to bend down and take hold of the parachute. When the leader calls 'up' the children lift the parachute up as high as they can – making a mushroom shape. Pulling the parachute down creates a refreshing wind and enables you to repeat the exercise again. Another version of this exercise is to ask the children to lift the parachute high in the air and then walk in towards the centre.

CROSSING

This is a good warm-up game whereby the children have to run underneath from one side of the parachute to the other whilst all the other children lift it up to make a mushroom shape and then pull it down in order to trap those running underneath.

I have used the following to encourage different groups of children to run underneath but you can easily make up your own.

- All those who like watching EastEnders
- All those who are boys/girls
- All those wearing red
- All those called....
- All those wearing a tie
- All those who have long hair
- All those who like Marmite



TURTLE

Imagine that the parachute is the shell of a turtle. The children are asked to go underneath the parachute and hold the edge in front of them, keeping their backs to the middle of the parachute. Explain to the children that they have to work together and if not the turtle will not move as one. (You will be outside of the parachute at this stage and the children will be underneath) Ask the children to move in one direction, making sure the parachute does not lose its shape. You could also try putting obstacles in the way to climb over or move around.

SHARKS

This game is also called ALLIGATOR SWAMP and has two versions but both require the children to sit around the parachute with their feet hidden underneath the parachute.

The first version begins with one child being selected to go underneath the parachute whilst everyone else pulls the parachute to their chests and begins to make waves. The person under the parachute goes around and grabs the legs of someone and gently pulls them under with them. They then change places and the new shark or alligator seeks out another victim.

The second version is, in my opinion, much more fun. One shark and two lifesavers are selected. The shark goes under the parachute with everyone making waves with the parachute and the two lifeguards circle the outside of the parachute in order to help those being dragged in by the shark. Once a shark pulls a child under the parachute then that child joins the shark and the two sharks seek out more victims.

POPCORN

You can use beanbags for this game but small coloured balls work best and are fun to watch. I like to use small plastic balls and select three different colours, but you could use two different colours if you like. Children can then be divided into two teams on either side of the parachute or boys against girls and one colour will obviously represent each team. I have used three different coloured balls and say that the red ones are for the boys, the blue for the girls and the purple for those who don't know if they are a boy or a girl!



All the children stand around the parachute holding it tight and then making large waves. Throw the balls onto the parachute and watch them fly off in all directions. The team that bounces off their colour balls first wins.

WASHING MACHINE

Great care needs to be taken in this game as children can get knocked over!

Select 4-5 children to sit in the middle of the parachute with their backs together. When the children are seated you will need to ask them to put their arms high in the air so that the parachute doesn't get caught around their necks. It also means that when the parachute is pulled they are more likely to fall over.



All the other children are then asked to stand up and hold the parachute. Slowly, the children walk clockwise around the children sitting down and at the same time holding onto the parachute. I normally encourage the children to shout out something like 'wash, wash, wash, wash' as they walk. The parachute will then begin to tangle around the children in the middle and at a given point you will need to shout 'pull' and all the children pull the parachute outwards which should result in those in the middle falling over.

WALKING ON AIR - trust exercise

Now I realise not everyone will want to try this one but it has never gone wrong - honest! This might be one of those games you will want to use the play mats with.

If the parachute is in good condition and is made for play then it should stand the walking on air test. This is where a child, preferably a small child, is invited to walk on the parachute while everyone else stands around the parachute and gradually pulls it tight until the child is a few centimetres off the floor and walking on the parachute. The game is good for trust building but must be done with caution.

You may have seen parachute games where people have been asked to lie down on the parachute whilst everyone else pulls it tight and bounces the person up and down. This is dangerous and should not be attempted.

CAT & MOUSE

A popular chasing game that involves one child be selected to be the mouse and the other to be the cat. I usually use a whistle and say that when I blow the first whistle the cat goes underneath the parachute and crawls around the outer rim, while all the other children kneel down and make waves. On my second whistle the cat goes on top on its hands and knees and tries to catch the mouse. If the mouse makes it around the outer rim of the parachute and back to its place without being caught by the cat then it becomes the winner. The children kneeling around the parachute making waves must help the mouse not the cat.



CAT, MOUSE & DOG

This game is played with two parachutes, one placed on top of the other. It is basically the same game as cat and mouse but this time a dog is added to catch the cat while the cat tries to catch the mouse. The mouse goes underneath the first parachute, the cat between the parachutes and the dog on top. Trust me, it's hilarious!

EAGLE & FISH

One child is selected to be the eagle and sit in the middle of the parachute; this will become the eagle's perch. Now the eagle is a vicious bird of prey and feeds upon fish, mice and other small creatures like children (OK you can leave the children bit out). Four fish (children, not actual fish) are selected from different locations around the parachute. The remaining children have to sit or kneel around the parachute and make waves. At some point the fish can go underneath the parachute and try to poke the eagle before it sees them. The game is four against one but the eagle can pounce upon the fish but needs to know that it can't swim in the sea and must stay on its perch. Fish pounced on by the eagle must then leave the sea. The fish can meet up underneath and plan to attack all at once or one by one.

SOCK SHUFFLE

This game could also be done with shoes, preferable at the beginning of the session before their shoes are taken off. Have all the children stand up and hold the parachute to their waste. Walk around the parachute and number off the children 1-5, or other numbers as you desire. All those who are number 5 have to toss one of their socks underneath the parachute. Then, when the whistle is blown, the children make a mushroom shape and all those with one sock underneath must rush in, collect it, put it on and then try to get back to their place. The last one out with their socks on is given a forfeit or asked to run around the outside and back to their place.

VOLLEYBALL

You will need a large soft ball for this game. The children are divided into two teams as in popcorn and make waves with the parachute. The ball is thrown into the middle and each team must try and send the ball flying off their opponent's side in order to win a point. You could also use a soft toy animal instead of the ball to add more fun. After the first couple of tries I would then select one child for each team to go underneath the parachute and help their team by hitting the ball over the heads of their opponents.

UNDER THE CHUTE

This is a good exercise to end the session, but please make sure no children are left outside the parachute as the temptation to hit the children who are underneath the parachute is rather high! I would ask the children to pull the parachute tight, bend down with it so that it rests on the floor. Then ask them to lift it high to make a mushroom and when they pull it down to pull the parachute behind them and sit down on it. You should now have all the children inside the parachute making a tent.



I would then play a game whereby one child is chosen to stand as a tent post in the centre but not with their head poking through the middle of the parachute. A soft ball is then thrown into the centre and, without using their hands; the children have to kick the soft ball against the tent post ten times. It is not that easy to do but when ten hits have been recorded then I would use the time for light discussion, joke telling, etc.

MORE INFORMATION

There are many websites with parachute games and many companies now manufacturing parachutes. I would suggest you keep adding games to your pack and ask the children to design their own games. Parachute canopies can be obtained from the following companies:

Bee-Tee Products Ltd, Cemetery Lane, Carlton, Wakefield, West Yorkshire WF3 3QT

SeamStress Ltd, 23 Banbury Road, Byfield, Northants, NN11 6XJ. 01327 263933.

www.playchutes.com.

This company makes each parachute to your colour and size specifications.

The best parachute games book is 'Meynell Games on Parachute Play, 2001, and can be obtained from Meynell Games Publications, 98 Cavendish Place, Eastbourne, BN21 3TZ. Tel: 01323 738380.

THANKS

Thanks to Woodlands Junior School, Tonbridge, Kent and Street Kids Direct for the use of their photos.

