



UNIT TWELVE

Initiative Tasks



"The task ahead of us
is never as great as the
power behind us."

Author Unknown



SINKING SAND

MAIN SKILL:

- Initiative Tasks

Other Skills:

- Communication
- Team Building

Purpose:

- To work together as a group to accomplish a task to the best of the group's ability.

Benefits:

- A closeness is developed within a group.
- Trust is formed between participants.
- Relationships reach a higher level.
- Members work together to find a creative way to solve a problem.

Materials:

- t-shirt, cloth or plastic big enough to be folded many times

Instructions:

Safety:

The area around the island should be free from sticks, rocks, or other hazards.

Scenario:

Your tropical paradise is slowly sinking into the ocean. Your community has no way of escaping and the waters are rising. Your only hope of survival is to adjust everyone to the size of the island.

- 1) Everyone at one time must stand on the cloth for ten seconds. Once everyone has their feet either over top of, or on the cloth, with no one touching the bare ground the cloth is folded in half and the group attempts to fit everyone on again.
- 2) This is done again and again as the island continually gets smaller.

Time:

Ten seconds on each square of cloth until the group cannot succeed in the task.



TRUST LIFT

MAIN SKILL:

- Initiative Tasks

Other Skills:

- Communication
- Team Building

Purpose:

- To learn to trust others.

Benefits:

- A closeness is developed within a group.
- Trust is formed between participants.
- Relationships reach a higher level.

Materials:

- no materials required

Instructions:

Safety:

Spotting is very important in any trust activity.

- 1) Choose one participant that will be the one that the group will lift.
- 2) This person lies down on the floor with their hands by their sides.
- 3) The rest of the participants gather around the body to be lifted. On a signal, the body will be lifted up a couple of feet.
- 4) The first few times your group tries this activity have the delegates make use of their whole hand. Have them slide their hands under the "lift" participant and on a signal - lift.
- 5) After a few practice runs, use a two-finger lift, and so on.



TWO PERSON TRUST FALL

MAIN SKILL:

- Initiative Tasks

Other Skills:

- Communication
- Team Building

Purpose:

- To learn to trust others.

Benefits:

- A closeness is developed within a group.
- Trust is formed between participants.
- Relationships reach a higher level.

Materials:

- no materials required

Instructions:

Safety

Spotting is very important in any trust activity.

- 1) Use one of the pairing up activities from the TEAMING UP section in the FUN PACK to have participants form groups of two. These pairs should be relatively the same size.
- 2) One of the pairs becomes the catcher and the other will become the "faller". After each activity the people should switch roles.
- 3) Fall Backwards - the catcher stands directly behind the "faller" and stands in a bracing stance. The catcher will then say when they are ready and then the "faller" will fall. The catcher will catch the "faller".
- 4) Fall Forwards - same as above except the "faller" will go towards the catcher.
- 5) Alternate Direction - The "faller" will switch directions in a pendulum like motion. The catcher must move from front to back, keeping the "faller" from falling. The "faller" should go at a speed that the catcher is comfortable with.



ELECTRIC FENCE

MAIN SKILL:

- Initiative Tasks

Other Skills:

- Problem Solving
- Teamwork

Purpose:

- To get the entire group over an electric fence without anyone touching it.
- This will challenge the group to work together.

Benefits:

- This is an active activity that can be done anywhere.
- Any group size although if the group is too large (over 20), there will be a lot of people standing around doing nothing.

Materials:

- rope
- trees
- chairs
- blindfolds

Scenario:

Your group is being chased by a band of ferocious outer space pygmies. They have set up this electric fence trap to catch you.

Instructions:

- 1) You will need a rope tied between two trees or other objects at approximately belly button height of the average height of the group members. If you make the rope too high, it can become dangerous but if you make it too low, it will be too easy.
- 2) Your group is on one side of the electric fence.
- 3) You must get your whole group over to the other side of the electric fence using only the resources you have on you.
- 4) You cannot use any other equipment.
- 5) No part of your body, clothing or equipment may touch the rope. If it does, that person is returned back to the original side and must attempt the crossing again.
- 6) Although you may step or stand underneath the electric fence, no person or equipment may totally penetrate it, so you cannot send anyone or anything under the electric fence.
- 7) It is important to note that the trees the rope is tied to are also electrified and so touching them will also cause you to be blindfolded.
- 8) The area is pressure sensitive on both sides of the electric fence. Any jumps or hard landings will also trigger the alarm so you must carefully take off from this side and carefully set people down on the other side. This means no jumping or diving.



Variations:

- Everyone must be in contact with the entire group through at least one other person. In other words, everyone must be touching someone else and everyone must be connected at all times.
- Any part of the body that touches the rope becomes useless and is welded to the body with a blindfold.
- Any person that comes into contact with the electric fence is blindfolded and returned to the original side.
- If you have a large number of people, a good variation would be to build more than one fence. You could even box the entire group in with four fences and their objective becomes getting out of the box.

Note: As with some of the other tasks, there are some safety concerns with this one that you have to watch for. One of the most common approaches people will use to solve this task is to have some people go on their hands and knees and be used as a stairway so that others with some support can climb over top. You have to make sure that the kneeling person is on their hands and knees in a 90 degree formation so that their arms and legs form a locked and sturdy support. It is also important that the person stepping does not step on the middle of this person's back that is not directly supported below by legs or arms. It is probably best to step on the kneeling person's tailbone that will be supported by the legs and is the strongest point. You will also want to make sure that the person stepping is not too much larger than the person they are stepping on. You cannot allow anyone to be carelessly just thrown over for obvious reasons. Don't be surprised if they want to try this approach with some of their smaller members.





LAP SIT

MAIN SKILL:

- Initiative Tasks

Other Skills:

- Communication
- Creating a Positive Environment
- Team Building

Purpose:

- To develop group communication.

Benefits:

- Requires no materials.
- A physical challenge good for most fitness levels.
- A lot of fun.

Materials:

- no materials required

Instructions:

- 1) Use the TEAMING UP section of the FUN PACK to divide into groups of ten or more.
- 2) Stand in a circle shoulder-to-shoulder, facing inward.
- 3) Now everyone takes a quarter turn to their left and takes one step toward the center.
- 4) The circle should be really tight now.
- 5) Make sure the right toe is touching the heel of the person in front of you.
- 6) Adjust the circle accordingly.
- 7) Communication is the key to this activity.
- 8) Have everyone sit down at the same time.
- 9) Go slow.
- 10) You should have a tight circle of everyone sitting on the lap of the person behind them.
- 11) If you get really good you can try walking in a circle, while still in this sitting position. Say "1, 2, 3, right.... 1,2,3, left...."



MUSICAL CIRCLES

MAIN SKILL:

- Initiative Tasks

Other Skills:

- Games That Build Leaders
- Problem Solving

Purpose:

- To fit everyone into the available circles, ultimately teaching the group to work together to solve problems.

Benefits:

- Will help the group and individual members learn problem solving skills.
- Active activity that can be done anywhere.
- Can be used for any size of group.
- Teaches creative thinking and teamwork.

Materials:

- one rope per person

Instructions:

- 1) The task is similar to musical chairs with some creative problem solving and teamwork components added in.
- 2) To start the task, give each participant a rope and ask them to tie it into a circle.
- 3) Do not identify anything about the size of circle.
- 4) Ask them to place the circle on the floor and ask them to stand in it with no part of their body touching anything outside of the circle.
- 5) When you give the command "Walk", they must walk around the circles and when you say "Circle", they must find a circle to stand in.
- 6) After a couple times, you start taking circles away and explain that for the group to be successful, they have to have everyone safely in a circle when you say "Circle". This will require that they share circle space with each other. The challenge is to see how far you can go.
- 7) You keep taking circles away from the group until they cannot share any longer.
- 8) You can keep coming back to this game and having them try and best their record.

Note: The group can have as much time as they need to get everyone safely into the available circles. If you explain this one properly and in the right sequence, you can end up with some people making small circles at the beginning, which is just fine and adds to the challenge.





Variation:

Allow the group to move or retie the circles. Don't let them know that they can do this but don't stop it if someone figures it out. Once someone figures out that you can tie ropes together to make larger circles you will know your group is starting figure out the key to success in these challenges is creative thinking.



UP CHUCK

MAIN SKILL:

- Initiative Tasks

Other Skills:

- Communication
- Problem solving
- Team Building

Purpose:

- To successfully complete a challenge as a group.

Benefits:

- Active activity that can be done outside or inside (large room with high ceiling).
- Works on working together.
- Works with any size group although if there is more than 20 or 30 people, it will be pretty difficult for the group to be successful.

Materials:

- one ball or soft object that can be thrown and caught per person

Instructions:

- 1) Every person in the group has a ball.
- 2) The objective is for everyone to throw their ball up in the air and catch a different ball without a single ball hitting the ground.
- 3) Standing in a circle or cluster or however the group wants to arrange themselves, they must toss their ball up to a height of at least ten feet and then attempt to catch a ball that they did not throw.
- 4) The number of balls that hit the ground is that group's negative score.
- 5) The goal is to get that score to zero.
- 6) Allow the group to work together to make this work. It will be difficult and the group might need lots of time or multiple sessions to accomplish it.

Variations:

Have the group start with only one ball thrown and caught. Each time they successfully catch a ball, another is added for the next round until finally they drop one and then the whole thing starts over.

Once the group has accomplished this task, give some of them or all of them two balls and that is of course how many they have to catch.



TOXIC WASTE DUMP

MAIN SKILL:

- Initiative Tasks

Other Skills:

- Problem Solving
- Team Building

Purpose:

- To find a way to safely transfer toxic popcorn from an unsafe container to a safe container, using only the materials provided to you.

Benefits:

- This initiative task can be fairly simple to complete with a little creativity and a lot of teamwork.

Materials:

- One piece of rope (each approximately 7 feet long) for each person
- A bicycle tire tube for the group
- One five gallon pail
- One large coffee can
- Popcorn

Instructions:

Scenario:

A can of highly toxic popcorn has contaminated a circle approximately 10 feet in diameter. The toxic area extends to the ceiling. If the poisonous popcorn is not transferred to a safe container for decontamination, the toxic popcorn will contaminate and destroy the population of the entire city. The popcorn is estimated to have a safe life of exactly 30 minutes before it explodes. Obviously, there is insufficient time to contact authorities and evacuate the city. Therefore, the lives of thousands of people are in your hands.

- 1) Inside the circle you will find two cans. One (unsafe) container is about half full of the toxic popcorn. The other (safe) container is available for decontamination.
- 2) No participant may cross the plane of the circle with any part of the body. If this occurs, the person must be taken to the hospital immediately (removed from play) and may not participate in any form from then on. The group is responsible for the safety of all its members.
- 3) No participant may sacrifice himself or herself to aid in the transfer of popcorn.
- 4) No spills are allowed, or the popcorn will explode.
- 5) Participants may only use the materials provided. However, they can be used in any way desired.
- 6) The popcorn will not spread its toxicity to the safe can, the ropes, the tube, or the instruction giver. The participants have no protection inside the imaginary cylinder created by the ten foot diameter rope circle.
- 7) The safe container may move anywhere in or outside of the circle. The unsafe container must stay inside the circle, and must not be moved more than one foot



from its center.

- 8) Remember, the popcorn must be transferred within thirty minutes, or there will be a tremendous disaster.

Hint: One solution is to try lifting the coffee can of toxic waste into the safe container (five gallon pail). Use the bicycle tire tube to cinch around the toxic can of popcorn.





REACH FOR THE SKY

MAIN SKILL:

- Initiative Tasks

Other Skills:

- Communication
- Problem Solving
- Team Building

Purpose:

- To place a piece of sticky note as high as possible.

Benefits:

- The group must identify the challenge.
- The group works as a team to solve a problem.
- Active activity that can be done outside or inside (large room with high ceiling).
- Any number of people although if you have more than fifteen or twenty you might want to break them up into two groups.

Materials:

- Sticky note paper for each group or paper with a piece of tape attached

Scenario:

- The group is lost in the woods and needs to set up an antenna or signal flag as high as possible.

Instructions:

- 1) The group must try and place a piece of paper with tape on the wall as high as possible without climbing the wall or using a ladder, etc.
- 2) They may only use themselves to get the paper up.
- 3) It is okay to make contact with the wall for support but not okay to use any holes in the wall in order to climb it.

Note: USE EXTREME CAUTION. This can be a dangerous activity if not done properly. It needs spotting all around the participants, along with thick high jump mats placed all around them. Make sure spotters are ready to support where necessary.





RAFT CROSSING

MAIN SKILL:

- Initiative Tasks

Other Skills:

- Problem Solving
- Team Building

Purpose:

- To get everyone from the starting area to the launch area alive and well.

Benefits:

- Teaches teamwork, creative problem solving and leadership skills.
- Very active activity that can be done outside or inside (large room).
- Good for groups of any size.

Materials:

- a variety of 'transport pads' (gym mats, milk crates, pieces of wood, chairs)
- keys which could be balls, rubber chickens, bean bags etc.

Instructions:

Scenario:

The entire group is being held captive by aliens on an alien planet that is covered with lava or toxic waste. They have an opportunity to escape the evil aliens and make it back home.

- 1) The entire group starts in the corner of a large room, auditorium or gym.
- 2) They are in a safe place for the time being, but their job is to get to the opposite side where there is another safe place and a 'transport beam' or 'escape rocket' that will take them out of this volatile area.
- 3) The rest of the room is covered with a deadly substance that will kill them immediately upon contact. (i.e. lava, acid or toxic waste)
- 4) This means that if they place a hand or foot or anything on the actual floor of the room they are dead. People who die either reappear back at the starting area or are out of the game completely. This is a decision that the facilitator needs to make before explaining the rules.
- 5) The group is given transport pads that they can use to stand on to cross the evil surface and make it safely to the other side.
- 6) Give as few transport pads as possible. If they have to crowd onto two mats, so be it. The whole idea is to work together.
- 7) Gymnastic mats make good transport pads but almost anything that people can stand on can be used including upside down milk crates, pieces of fire wood, chairs, etc.
- 8) Be a 'bog monster' and steal transport pads away from the group if they are not on them. The bog monster could react to specific stimuli. Have the group try to figure out what made the bog monster interfere with their attempts.



- 9) Put a number of 'keys' around the area that the group must collect in order to turn on the transport beam.
- 10) They have to activate the keys before they will work. A good way of activating the keys is for them to have to pass through something like a basketball hoop.
- 11) give a time limit. Everyone must be on the transport beam by the time limit or they die.

Variations:

To emphasize teamwork, make the overall objective to ensure that EVERYONE makes it to the launch area. This means that if someone has died and reappears back at the starting point, the group has to send someone back for them.

Note: This is an enjoyable initiative task that groups will often request again and again. It can easily be changed and made new by holding it in different locations or using different materials.





CHAIN LINK

MAIN SKILL:

- Initiative Tasks

Other Skills:

- Games that Build Leaders
- Group Dynamics
- Problem Solving

Purpose:

- To use creativity to solve a problem.

Benefits:

- This activity encourages creativity and ingenuity in individual members.

Materials:

each person is given

- 1 - 8 1/2" x 11" piece of paper
- 1 - 2" strip of masking tape
- 1 - small paper clip

Instructions:

- 1) Put Participants into teams.
- 2) Give an equal amount of material to each person to make a link of chain.
- 3) Only the materials supplied may be used in the link, no tools, just your hands.
- 4) Each must have an opening which will allow two pieces of 1/8" nylon rope to pass through. The 1/8" nylon rope from one person's link will be tied to those of another person's link.
- 5) After each team has joined their links to create a chain, two students pull against the chain (like in a tug of war) eliminating the weakest link. This continues until only one link is left. As an individual's link is broken, they are eliminated from the contest.

The winning link from each row will be joined into a new chain and the process of elimination repeated to determine the strongest link in the group.



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