Chapter 13
GAMES

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GAMES AND PROGRAM GOALS

Games are physical and mental contests played for enjoyment. Games appeal to children universally, and they’re a great socializing tool. From artifacts left by ancient civilizations, we know even our earliest ancestors played games. People play remarkably similar games in cultures all over the world, even where they don’t seem to have contact with one another. Many of life’s most serious pursuits are represented in forms of play.

In the games portion of your colony program, Beavers can learn many values and develop many abilities.

**Physical:** speed, agility, strength  
**Mental:** deduction, memory, sequence  
**Creative:** drama, pantomime, innovation  
**Emotional:** learning to deal with joy, frustration, delight  
**Social and Spiritual:** taking turns, appreciating self and others, appreciating rules and the laws of nature, learning about fellowship and helping one another, sharing.

Games have an important role in your colony program. This chapter offers information and suggestions on a variety of games, and how to use them.

Goals

Many of the Beaver program goals come together in the program element of games. When we talk about games choices, we concentrate on activities which promote Beaver goals, and suit the Beavers’ stages of development.

Through games, Beavers can learn to:

- Express themselves  
- Develop a sense of belonging  
- Be healthy and have good feelings about themselves  
- Develop a sense of cooperation through non-competitive activities.

ABILITY

During the Beaver-age years, most children move through characteristic stages of growth.

Knowing this, you can readily see why some activities are best suited to tail groupings and others are perhaps better in lodges where you can encourage your older White Tails to take initiative by helping younger Beavers.

Remember, everyone learns differently when learning a new game or skill (think of learning to tie your shoes). Some people learn by listening, some by watching and doing, or by reading illustrations. Try to incorporate different styles of presenting an idea or skill with variety and ways to appeal to your whole colony.

Beavers change physically between the ages of five and seven. Although they are still awkward in some ways, their actions are becoming more precise. They begin to develop strength and endurance. Brown and Blue Tail groups have energy to burn but tire easily, while older Beavers tend to use less energy. All Beavers show increasing abilities to run, hop and skip.
With this age group, a leader’s job involves encouraging and supporting the children to ensure their experiences in the early years of group play are positive. We can help Beavers by bringing out the highest level of participation, interest and constructive behaviour in games.

We do them a great disservice if we force vulnerable children into activities which may bring attention to their real or imagined insecurities. If a Beaver is afraid that they may fail or be rejected in play, this may reduce the child’s feelings of self-esteem and eagerness to participate. Be encouraging, but also allow those Beavers the opportunity to first watch before taking the big leap into an unknown skill.

**COOPERATIVE GAMES**

Cooperative games are not all that different from many of the competitive games you already know. The three differences are:

- You don’t eliminate the less skillful
- You don’t play against each other
- You don’t keep score.

For instance, in cooperative musical chairs, the person left without a chair isn’t eliminated. Instead, the child simply sits on someone’s lap. At the game’s end, it’s a real test of ingenuity to figure out how to get the whole group onto that one chair!

Cooperative games seldom raise the issues of failure and rejection. Each player has a significant role because each Beaver helps the whole group succeed together; there’s no reason to eliminate, ignore or exclude players because of ability. In the older Scouting programs, children will have many chances to exercise individual abilities. In games for Beavers, the accent is on sheer fun and working together. Cooperation, acceptance and feelings of success develop strong and positive self-concepts.

Here are some examples of how you can turn traditional win-lose games into cooperative games. The old stand-by, “Three-legged Race,” needn’t be a competitive race. Call it “Siamese Twins” and do it just for fun. You can do the same with the “Wheelbarrow.” Rather than racing, set goals related to skill development. Ask your Beavers: “Can you make it all around the room without falling? Can you climb over this bench together? Can you go backwards?”

Instead of keeping score, aim for maximum participation and enjoyment. Who even wants to keep score in something like “Leap Frog”? The aim of the game is to take turns so you can keep moving.

**CHOOSING GAMES**

Choose games that are challenging but simple enough to avoid confusion. Look for activities where the emphasis is on playing with, rather than against, one another.

Develop a variety of games to suit various situations (e.g. quiet, steam-off, gathering, etc.). Adapt games to fit your evening program theme, and incorporate games suggested by the Beavers.
When you notice Beavers are getting fidgety, use steam-off games to help them relieve some of the pent-up energy they have. Quiet games allow them to focus on a task or be quiet for a period of time. They are great for winding down the evening.

Try to use a wide variety of formations (e.g. pairs, lodges, tail groups, colony) and keep everyone continuously involved.

When in doubt, choose games which exercise large muscles rather than fine motor coordination. Encourage a supportive atmosphere between leaders and Beavers, and among the Beavers themselves.

**TEACHING GAMES**

Here are some tips when you’re teaching your Beavers games.

- Gather Beavers close to explain the game.
- Arrange them in the game formation you’re using before you start to explain the game.
- Focus the group’s attention on the game, and wait for quiet before you start explaining.
- Show your own enthusiasm about the game.
- Hold interest by introducing the game in a story format.
- Keep your introduction brief and simple.
- Change to another game or activity while interest is high and before the game begins to drag.
- Insist on fair play and enforce all rules.
- Encourage leaders to participate in games and be part of games someone else is leading.
- Brief all leadership team members on the game.
- Make sure all necessary equipment is available.
- Before you do it, think the game through and try to anticipate any changes you might need to make.

To evaluate the suitability of a game you’ve played, get the leadership team together to discuss how much cooperation, participation, creativity, enjoyment and interest it generated, and whether the Beavers gave it a good rating.

**GAME IDEAS**

**Beaver**

In lodges, Beavers huddle together. A leader places a blanket or another covering over them to make each lodge into a giant Beaver. The collective Beaver tries to move in one direction. When the Beaver can walk pretty well, introduce a variety of obstacles to climb over, under and through. Everyone will have a lot of fun.
Snake
Arrange Beavers in lodge formation and set the scene with a short snake story. Beavers lie on their bellies, each grabbing the ankles of the person in front, and the snakes begin to slither about, hissing as they go. When all snakes are moving well, they begin to form one huge hissing snake. At that point, encourage Beavers to think of tricks the whole snake can try to perform without disconnecting (e.g. rolling over).

Balloon Balance
Give each Beaver an inflated balloon. Without using hands, pairs of Beavers try to hold the balloons between them and keep them in place as they move through a simple obstacle course. Then, all the Beavers in a lodge come together and, without using hands, try to hold all the balloons between them and move through the course.

Finally, although few groups reach this stage, your colony can try to hold the balloons without hands and go through the obstacle course together. What a fun challenge!

Rusty’s Apple
Give Beavers a bean bag or another object to balance on their heads. To start, the Beavers simply learn to walk around the room balancing their “apples” on the heads. When they’re good at this, they try to follow the directions of a leader who calls, “Do a tail slap; take chopping position,” and other fun activities without dropping their apples.

If a Beaver drops an apple, the child must freeze until another Beaver rescues him or her by replacing the apple. Encourage Beavers to try to help as many of their friends as possible, without losing their own apples.

Animal Sizing
Try this game in lodges or tail groups. Whisper the name or provide a picture of an animal to each person in the lodge. Choose animals which vary greatly in size. Blindfold Beavers or ask them to close their eyes, and let the group try to order themselves from the tallest animal to the smallest. They are not allowed to speak, but they may make the sounds their particular animals make. You may need to help younger Beavers with the sounds of their animals.
Back-to-Back Building
Beavers choose a partner, and pairs stand back-to-back with elbows linked. Without moving their feet, they first try to lower themselves to the floor by pressing back-to-back and bending knees. When they make it down, they try to stand up from the seated position. After Beavers have practised in pairs, have two pairs link up to try the same actions. Slowly build the number of Beavers in the groups until the entire colony is standing back-to-back and tries to sit and stand all together. Whether they succeed or not is irrelevant because attempting the challenge will be fun and add to the feeling of group togetherness.

Draw Charades
This is an enjoyable, quieter game for a colony that likes to draw. Give each group a large piece of paper and a magic marker. One person in each team pulls from a box or bag a piece of paper on which is written the name of a song, movie or rhyme. The person returns to his group and begins to draw clues to help team members guess the name of the song, movie or rhyme. When they guess, another member pulls another piece of paper and the game continues.

Touch Brown
Ask the Beavers to stand fairly close together and follow your instructions. Start the game by asking each Beaver to place his or her right hand on something brown that another Beaver is wearing. Choose a different colour for the left hand, and follow with a colour for the head, and so on. The result will be a large giggling human pretzel.

Three-part Creatures
Fold papers into three sections, crease and unfold before giving one to each group of three Beavers. The first person draws a head on the first section, extending the neck into the next section, and folds it over. Without seeing the head, the second person draws a body onto the neck, extending the leg lines over the crease into the third section, and folds over the paper. The third person completes the drawing by adding legs and feet. Unfold the communal creatures, enjoy the laughter, and be ready to pass around more paper.

The Last Lodge
Beavers in a lodge work together to draw a picture of their lodge on a large piece of cardboard. When they’re done, spread the pictures on the floor around the room. Play music and have the Beavers skip, jump, walk or run around the room until the music stops. At that point, Beavers scramble to place a toe on one of the lodges for safety. Remove a picture at each round and continue play until you have 20 Beavers and only one picture. Watch the fun as 20 toes try to find room on one lodge.

Sharp Eyes
A leader stands at the front of the room, and Beavers are instructed to look closely at him. Then ask the Beavers to close their eyes and turn around. The leader changes appearance in some small way (e.g. removes woggle or hat, turns up pant leg). When the Beavers open their eyes again, they try to guess what is different about the leader.

“What Time is It, Mr. Wolf?”
One Beaver is named Mr. Wolf, and the others line up at the opposite end of the room. Mr. Wolf faces the wall while the others walk slowly towards him asking, “What time is it, Mr. Wolf?” Mr. Wolf can call out any time he likes, but when he calls “12 o’clock,” he whips around and chases them all back towards their wall. The Beavers he tags also become wolves and join Mr. Wolf as chasers in the next round. Continue as long as everyone is having fun.
Broken Car Relay: Gathering Activity

Explain which actions signify the different broken car parts:

- Flat tire (crawl on hands and knees)
- Water in gas (two steps forward and one step back)
- Only reverse works (walk backwards)
- Dead engine (sit on floor and scoot around on your bottom)

As Beavers mill around the room doing the actions, Keeo calls out the broken car parts. Beavers can join in as they arrive at the pond.

Balloon Toss

Beavers sit in two lines facing each other with feet touching, and Keeo or a leader tosses up a balloon. When the balloon drops low enough to reach, the Beaver who is closest bats it up into the air again. Beavers try to keep feet together, and keep the balloon from touching the floor. The challenge calls for teamwork.

Sharing Games

Ask each Beaver to bring a game to a special games night where they all take turns sharing their games with one another. You may find you can only use a few games at a time, but try to work them all in.

Collective Blanketball

Somewhat like volleyball, this game is a lot more fun. Arrange the colony into two teams and give each a blanket. Teams stand on opposite sides of a net or rope and, grasping the edges of their blanket, use it to catch and throw the volleyball. One blanket starts by shooting the ball to the other blanket. Don't bother to keep score. Simply see if the Beavers can physically do the task.

Parachute

It's exciting to skip around inside a billowing parachute. Be creative.

Log Roll

Do this game on mats, a carpeted floor or thick, soft grass. Beavers must lie down side by side on their stomachs, like logs. A Beaver rider lies across their backs, and the “logs” begin to roll in one direction. The rider has a bumpy ride to the end where the child gets off, and lies down making a new log. A log from the other end of the line becomes the new rider.

Bug Tug

You can play this version of tug-of-war with two or 22 players. Mark a line on the floor. Players stand back to back, bend over and reach between their legs to grasp the wrists of their partners. Then they start tugging to see who can pull who over the line. Try it with three. Get a whole group back to back, bend over, cross arms between your legs and grab one hand of the person behind you. Start tugging and feel the energy of the group.

RESOURCES

The following resources, and more, can be found in your Scout shop.

Scouts Canada’s Fun at the Pond
JUMPSTART for Beavers
Games... From A to Z