



Adapting Games During Social Distancing

By Wilson McCaskill

Here's a game you can adapt to give a small group of children a strong sense of relating and connecting without breaking any social distancing requirements. Many of you will have most likely played it and seen that it not only challenges the social and emotional skills of children, it also gives them a bit of a physical workout.

It's called **Snake** and it's on page 47 of [Volume 2 \(Blue manual\)](#). Kids can compete in pairs up to any size of teams that numbers will allow. They can also compete against the clock as one big team. Start by linking children together in pairs with a length of string between the players in the pairs. A metre and a half or so of string (or wool) is the best length and players hold this in the hand of their choice.

The players must hop their way through the slalom of hoops and back to the beginning without letting the string touch the ground. To make it more physically challenging the players must hop on the same leg until back to the beginning. If this is too difficult, they can swap legs for the return journey. The leader always stays the leader and cannot be overtaken by any other player during the race.

Players are only permitted to hold the ends of the string and cannot roll the string onto their hand to prevent it from touching the ground. If it touches the ground the pair (trio or team) must run back to the beginning and start again. All the other rules of **Snake** apply.

All players need to swap roles between races so that all experience every position. Try bunny hopping (two feet together) for a really tiring variation.

With more players in the team, more care must be taken not to let the string touch the ground. To make this more likely to happen just weight the centre of the string, A washer, or a lump of plasticine, or silver foil will do fine.

When students are ready, play **Snake** with the last player blindfolded and the team on silence. Start in pairs and build as you go. In this variation the students will need to walk as it takes longer to get through the slalom.



A more complex variation is to have the front player blindfolded and the other players allowed to speak. All players are hopping. Using verbal instructions, they guide the front player around the hoops. However, the challenge is to guide the front player rapidly enough to avoid someone putting both feet down due to fatigue or loss of balance.

Mix and match to ensure everyone has enjoyed the full experience of the game. Don't forget to have everyone in one team racing against the clock.

Now, with all this experience under their belts it is time to try the toilet paper challenge (assuming your school has managed to find toilet paper!).

Instead of using string to link students, you use the same length of toilet paper. However, to maximise the challenge, at one of the perforation points in the centre of the 1 metre length, you tear the toilet paper from both ends of the perforation until there is about 2cm of perforation in the centre joining one sheet to another.

This will give just enough strength to allow little pulls and tugs to convey messages. Any sudden or insensitive movement will cause the paper to break, forcing the team to start again. The leading player is sighted but cannot speak. The blindfolded player (at the end of the line) can speak but will of course get no spoken answers.

Try this in teams of three with one player leading two who are blindfolded. Let the blindfolded players speak.

Varying the distances between the hula hoops makes the game harder still.

A quick read of **Snake** will prepare you for these variations and others you or the students think up that can be played while maintaining the required distance between people.

I hope your kids enjoy connecting through **Snake**.



Adapting Other PITW Games

My recommendation would be to pass the problem of making games compliant with social distancing requirements a problem for students to solve. In doing so, I am sure that they will think of exciting and challenging variations. Social distancing has become a part of our social fabric and inviting students to find creative ways to maintain satisfying social interaction, while adhering to social distancing requirements, is likely a worthwhile exercise.

Many Play Is The Way® games can be easily adapted to fit with the requirements of social distancing. As balls, beanbags, hula hoops, buckets, etc. are frequently used there may be a need to clean these items during or between sessions. You may already be doing this kind of thing in sport, music, art, etc.

One item that may cause some concern is blindfolds. Our preferred blindfold are cheap swimming goggles with the lenses painted black on both sides. Many schools use the eye mask type of blindfolds and others use strips of material. All of these are inconvenient to repeatedly clean. The simplest way to prevent the transmission of bugs is ensure every student has their own blindfold. The simplest and most effective blindfold is of course to simply close your eyes.

However, many children find this hard to do, especially under pressure so an old footy sock works really well. There is usually one lying around somewhere in the home and they are long enough to tie on easily. Failing that, an old sheet torn into strips will supply enough blindfolds for an entire class and students can decorate them before use if they want or simply mark them with their names.

Following is a list of games that either already work to social distancing requirements or can be easily adapted to do so.

[Games from Volume 2.](#)

- Timeball.
- Snake (as above)
- Bull's Eye (players on each team must stand on marks 1.5m apart)
- Robots



- Zig Zag Ball (players stand on designated marks)
- All or Nothing (players on each team must stand on marks 1.5m apart)
- Ball countdown (players must keep one foot on a mark)
- One For All (the runner does not tag a player but intercepts the ball)
- Mexican Frogs
- Merry-Go-Round (played as throwing game not a passing game)
- Lookout
- Cat and Mouse (let the cat use a short length of pool noodle to find the mouse)

[Games from Volume 4](#)

- Big Ears
- Picture This (For the family version [CLICK HERE](#))
- Face To Face
- Around The Square (can be played as is)
- Bits And Pieces
- Battle Of The 3 Warriors
- Once Upon a Time
- Double Trouble (limit the number of players at any one time)
- Memory Games (including *Sequences* and *Categories*)
- Air Words (all variations - players stand on marks)