

## WATCH IT

I shared this one years ago in, *Games (& other stuff) for Group, Book 2* (1998). Since the book has recently gone out of print I want to get this activity back out there because it's one of my favorite ice-breakers (and it's a great warm-up as well!).

## Ice-Breaker/Warm-Up

### Activity Objective

Two groups, standing in one single circle together, pass along a number of objects around the circle while telling their neighbors to "Watch It".

## FACILITATED OBJECTIVES:

Explore behaviors related to "active" participation, paying attention, and being safe. Explore concepts of multi-tasking (or switch tasking), and focus.

## NEEDS & NUMBERS:

You'll need two sets of objects. Each set consists of three safe objects that can be handed off from one player to another. A safe object is something that will not damage any body parts if it is dropped on one (e.g., tennis balls, dodge balls, stuffed animals – rocks are not considered safe for this activity). Each set of objects must be the same, like three tennis balls or three stuffed animals (not real animals stuffed – just wanted to be clear). And, the two sets of three must be different from one another. If one set is three tennis balls the other must be something else, like three stuffed animals.

Two set of three objects plays well with 10 to 16 participants. If you have up to 24 participants (the maximum number I would use this one with), add one or two more object to each set. Also, Watch It plays best with an even numbers. So, if you have an odd-numbered group you get to jump in and play!

## TIME:

15 to 20 minutes.

## PROCEDURE:

You can play Watch It standing in a circle or sitting in a circle of chairs. Sitting on the floor leaves less room for the "duck" (not the animal, but the motion), so I don't ever choose this option. However you set up your circle, be sure everyone is pretty close together – participants will need to be able to reach over a neighbors head in order to transfer objects to the next person in their group.

As I mentioned above, you'll want an even number of players. So jump into the circle if your group adds up to an odd number. Choose a participant (maybe the person who just had, or will soon have, a birthday) to start the activity, let's say it's Pat. Hand Pat a set of three objects (let's say it's tennis balls). Pat will put two of the tennis balls at her feet and keep one in her hand.

To play Pat will transfer the tennis ball she is holding, using a hand-off and not a toss, to the player two over from her right. Before she does this however, she will need to inform the person directly to her right of her intentions. Pat will turn slightly to her right in order to see her neighbor and state, with GUSTO, "Watch It!" (without yelling directly into her neighbors ear – this can be a safety issue and very annoying to the neighbor). The neighbor then obliges by ducking down a bit, either by bending at the knees (like a squat) or bending at the waist (like a bow). THEN Pat will reach over her neighbors ducking configuration, with the tennis ball in hand, so that Steve (two over from Pat) can take the object from her. The transfer is not an airborne toss or throw, it is a handoff.

What Pat just did is considered, "Proper Transfer Procedure" or PTP in Watch It. Stating with (GUSTO), "Watch It," waiting for the duck (the motion not the animal), THEN transferring the object. If PTP is not followed certain safety issues could ensue. (See Facilitation below for information related to PTP safety.)

Now that Steve has the tennis ball he follows the same proper transfer procedure continuing to his right – "Watch It," the duck, then the transfer (to the person two down from him). This continues all the way around until Pat regains possession of the tennis ball. That was PTP practice for Pat's "team".

The participant standing to Pat's right is Barry, let's give him three stuffed (toy) animals. He keeps one in his hand and places the other two at his feet. Barry's team plays to the left. So, he turns to Pat and follows proper transfer procedure. He asks Pat (with GUSTO) to "Watch It!" After Pat ducks Barry hands off the stuffed animal to the person two down from his left (the person to the left of Pat). This person, and every other person to the left, follows PTP until Barry gains possession of the stuffed animal again. That was practice for Barry's team.

As the practice for each team takes place you want to keep reminding the group of proper transfer procedure. You could even spend some time discussing why it's an important part of the activity. If you feel another round of practice is in order then go for it. Once the practice is over dive into the full Rounds.

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Before starting Round 1, let your group know that this is not a race. It's all about accomplishing the task as smoothly and safely as possible. Any drops that occur are picked up by anyone on the team using that object (remember, Pat's team has the tennis balls and Barry's team has the stuffed animals) and continued in the direction it needs to go (tennis balls to the right, stuffed animals to the left).

Here's how it works. Pat and Barry both have one of their objects in their hand. Pat starts with PTP to the right. After Barry is done ducking he starts PTP to the left. Now, as Pat is ducking she also picks up one of the other two tennis balls at her feet. When she is done ducking she stands up and follows PTP again to the right. Now when Barry ducks again he picks up his second stuffed animal and begins PTP when he's done ducking, and finally the third object is picked up and added to the mix after another duck and PTP. All the object continue around the circle until they return to Pat and Barry. After they regain each object they place them at their feet.

As you can imagine there is going to be lots of voices stating "Watch It," maybe some drops, and lots of "turn-taking" (some participants will have to hold onto an object during a duck and then take their turn to transfer after standing back up again). It's all part of the problem-solving FUN.

After this first round ask the group, "How did you do?" Since there were really no set parameters about quality, it will be up to the group to decide how they did. Take some time to explore their answers. If they don't think they did very well you can have them make another attempt at Round 1. Before you start be sure to find out how they plan to improve during this attempt – what will they want to improve upon. Once the group has decided that they did a good job with passing the objects around one time, move onto Round 2.

For Round 2 you are going to ask the teams to keep the proper transfer procedure going with all of their objects for three minutes. Like in Round 1, if an object drops anyone from the team that is using the dropped object can pick it up and transfer it down the line. After three minutes you are going to tell the participants who started out the objects (e.g., Pat and Barry) to place the objects at their feet once they regain possession of them.

After Round 2 ask the group how they did. What did they do well? What could they improve upon? Do they want another attempt to improve the process of the task? If so, what do they want to change in order to feel more successful? If they don't want another attempt, are they satisfied with their outcome (did they feel good about their attempt), or do they just want to move on and get away from this activity? And, why do they just want to move on after one attempt?

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There is a lot you can explore with your group after each attempt. But, be mindful not to drag it out too much or they might just want to move on so you won't ask them any more questions. It can happen. Once your "attempt" inquiries are over hopefully the group is still willing to explore some of the questions included below.

## **SAFETY:**

If you keep the objects in play safe ones, this one is pretty safe. However, with that said, there will be some loud talking and some squatting going on. So, be sure to emphasize to your group not to yell directly into someone's ear – be mindful of the spacing between players. And, if anyone in the group is working through some knee problems just ask them to bend at the waist and not at the knees.

## **FACILITATION:**

Whether I get to actively play or observe from outside the circle, there is little facilitation needed during the activity – it's meant to be somewhat chaotic, so I let this happen.

One thing I will do during the activity is remind the participants, using safety cues, not to yell too loud into someone's ear (e.g., "Avoid yelling" or "Careful of the ears."), and be mindful when transferring (PTP) the objects – we don't want any unnecessary object connections to the head. I might say something like, "Use proper transfer procedure" (note above) or "Wait until the person ducks."

When I do find that one or more of the participants are becoming a bit overzealous I will stop the activity and talk about group safety. I will review the procedures of the activity, find out what participants are noticing, and then reestablish the boundaries again before continuing. If the zealousness continues, we'll stop, review and process, and move on to another activity that might be a little more structured in order to better establish group norms around safety.

I'll be more intentional with my facilitated objectives during the review and processing session after the activity.

## **OBSERVATIONS/QUESTIONS:**

- What would you say it means to actively participate in something? Based on how you've defined active participation, would you say you were really active (really into the activity), or somewhat active (not really into the activity), or somewhere in between? What influenced you to participate in the activity the way you did? What influences you to participate in other activities in your life? What do you really get into? What prevents you from getting into other types of activities?

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- Paying attention was an important aspect of this last activity. What were some of the things that distracted you from paying attention? What strategies do you have for paying attention? What can make it hard for you to pay attention to someone else talking? How do you know when someone is paying attention to you – what are you seeing and hearing (or not hearing)? Share some stories about a time when paying attention would have been a good idea. In other words, you didn't pay attention and something bad happened.
- How did you keep each other safe during the activity? If you ever felt unsafe during the activity what did you do about it? What are some things we can do to keep each other safe during the rest of the program? Taking risks can be a good thing – we can learn a lot from taking risks. What kinds of risks should we probably stay away from during the rest of the program? What risks have you taken in the past that turned out to be good experiences for you? What risks have you taken in the past that turned out to be bad experiences for you? What is your advice when it comes to taking risks?
- Who can tell me what multi-tasking is all about? (In recent literature you will find some people claiming that multitasking is not possible. The claim is that when we're doing one or more things at one time we are "switch tasking" – moving back and forth between tasks. Each "switch" takes up valuable time as we adjust to the new task thus making us less productive. Just a thought.) In what ways were you multitasking during the activity? How did this go for you? How many of you found the multitasking to be easy during the activity? How many of you found it difficult to multitask? If it was easy for you, what strategies do you have to manage multitasking? If you found multitasking difficult, what emotions did you have to contend with?
- Maintaining focus during the activity was probably a good way to work through the multitasking parts of the experience. What are some tips you have for the group to help us keep our focus on what's important as we work together? If it was challenging for you to maintain focus, what could we do to help you in the future? In what types of situations do you think it's important to maintain focus? If we were to try this activity again, aiming for the best quality experience we could have, what are the main areas of focus we would need to content with?

### **VARIATIONS:**

- You can also play Watch It to practice with names. During the proper transfer procedure add name-calling in the mix (not bad names, but given names). It goes like this. "Watch It Alex!" (Alex ducks.) "Here you go Mark." Then reach over the ducker to hand off the object to Mark.

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- If you are a noodler and have noodles handy, use noodles to transfer down the line. With noodles I play down by the legs. You'll have two sets of three noodles. Each set will be a different color. Following proper transfer procedure a player says "Watch It" to the person next to him/her then swings (swats nicely) the noodle across the front of the lower legs of the player two down from them (yes, the noodle might also whack the legs of your neighbors, but that's part of the fun, right). This player grabs the end of the noodle near his/her legs and continues the process down the line. You can make it REALLY crazy by using noodles at the legs and objects overhead. Really! Loads of fun.

## **PHYSICAL EDUCATION GRADE LEVEL OUTCOMES:**

([www.shapeamerica.org/standards/pe/](http://www.shapeamerica.org/standards/pe/))

- Middle School: S4.M1 – Exhibits responsible social behaviors; S4.M5 – Cooperates and problem-solves with a small group of classmates.
- High School: S4.H2 – Exhibits proper respect for others.

## **21<sup>st</sup> CENTURY LEARNING:**

([www.p21.org](http://www.p21.org))

- Creativity and Innovation: View failure as an opportunity to learn.
- Critical Thinking and Problem Solving: Analyze how parts of a whole interact with each other to produce overall outcomes.
- Communication and Collaboration: Demonstrate the ability to work effectively and respectfully with diverse teams.
- Flexibility and Adaptability: Incorporate feedback effectively.
- Initiative and Self-Direction: Reflect critically on past experiences in order to inform future progress.
- Productivity and Accountability: Multi-task.
- Leadership and Responsibility: Act responsibly with the interest of the larger community in mind.

## **ADDITIONAL IDEAS:**