

## No Prop Activities for Purposeful Engagement

AEE Rocky Mountain Region, 2026 workshop by Chris Cavert

Thank you for joining the adventure! Please email me if you have questions.

**Moving in Space** (Adapted from, *No Props: Great Games with No Equipment*, Fill the Space, by Mark Collard)

Purpose: To teach 'speed' of movement the participants will be using during the activities.

Talking Point: "When there is clearer understanding of expectations there is less confusion and more willingness to participate and engage in what's happening."

Process:

This is an activity to experientially practice different 'speeds' you will be using for different activities. Students practice and learn the expectations of each speed. Practice each speed for 30 to 45 seconds (or longer if you are after some good cardio).

Establish clear boundaries for the activity. NOTE: Larger boundary areas (e.g., half of a basketball court) are easier (less chance of collision) than smaller spaces (e.g. coning off half or half court). Ask everyone to start inside the boundary area in a 'Free Range' formation (see Chicken Circles above).

Everyone has the same two objectives: Move to open spaces inside the boundary area and avoid bumping into anyone else. Practice the first four Levels and talk about Level 5 (when appropriate, and there is ample room, practice Level 5).

- Level 1 Speed - normal walk, not in a hurry.
- Level 2 Speed - 'Mall' walk, slightly fast than Level 1
- Level 3 Speed - 'Speed Walking' requires at least one foot to be always touching the ground (you might need to demonstrate this one).
- Level 4 Speed - a moderate jog (both feet will be off the ground at certain times during the jog).
- Level 5 Speed - running (but not all-out sprinting)

The idea is then to indicate the required speed before future activities.

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### Chicken Circles

Purpose: Prepare participants for different formations used in program activities: Chicken Soup, Chicken Wings, Flying Chickens, and Free-Range Chickens - then we experience 'quick movement' into formations practice.

"Engagement is not always about 'talking' - participation *is* engaging with the group."

Process:

Youth Version

- Chicken Soup – shoulders touching (or close to it).
- Chicken Wings – hands on hips, elbows out, elbows touching.
- Flying Chickens – both arms straight out to the sides, touch fingertips at each hand.
- Free Range – not a circle, scattered around the area with enough space to move arms freely without touching anyone else.

Adult Version (from Sam Sikes, in his book, *Raptor and Other Teambuilding Activities*.)

- Wagon Wheel – same as Chicken Soup
- Elbow Room – same as Chicken Wings
- T-Bar Ranch – same as Flying Chickens (Chris added this one to Sam's adult version.)
- Free Range – same as Free Range

After all actions are taught and practiced, play a 'quick-change' game (a nice warm-up when needed): Ask the group to get into the formation you call as quickly as possible. Start by providing more than enough time to get into the formations. Then start calling formations with less time to move. This raises the energy level to some fun chaos.

### Have You Ever (with Challenge with Choice)

Needs & Numbers: One game spot for each person. (Some of the game spots we used were made from cupboard liner – it comes in rolls, 12-inches wide. Cut them 12-inches long and you have light weight portable spots that will last a long time. This one plays well with 12 to 30 people.

Process: Have everyone pick up a game spot. Ask the group to circle up and then have everyone stand on their spot.

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Throughout the activity introduce the concept of Challenge with Choice. Before playing explain that the game is full of choices. If you can say Yes to a 'Have you ever...' question, you can move to a new open spot or stay where you are.

Round 1: Everyone has a spot. The facilitator will ask the first few 'Have you ever...' questions and then invite the group to ask questions (Rated G). After a question is asked, and players move, the facilitator will state, "Please raise your hand if you moved." This allows the players to see others who made the same choice – discovering commonalities. This Round can last up to 9 or 10 questions.

Round 2: The facilitator moves their spot to the middle of the circle and stands on it. From this center position, the facilitator explains that the game will be played the same, with one change. The player left standing on the center spot is obligated to ask a 'Have you ever...' question or choose to ask someone from the group to take their place – ask for help. Explain that choice is still part of the process – players are not required to move, even if they can answer 'Yes' to a question. After each question and movement, the facilitator asks the movers to raise a hand to identify commonalities. Be sure to remind the participants to take care of themselves and others during movements. In this Round it is common for players to move a little faster than the first round so they can get an outside spot and avoid the center. Play 7 or 8 questions asked by the participants (Rated G).

After the second Round, ask the participants what kinds of choices they made during the activity. Reiterate that their program is full of choices. Some will be easier than others, but they are all meant to help promote growth and learning.

Why: Experience the concept of Challenge with Choice using an activity. And visually observe people who share commonalities.

### **Handshakes w/memory game – [find/create 6 new ones]**

Purpose: Connect with others in the group, engaging in short conversations. Focusing on and remembering the people each person talked with.

- Fist Bump (What are you looking forward to this year?)
- Alaskan Salmon Handshake (What are some of the challenges you are ready for this year?)
- Caterpillar Butterfly
- Colorado Rodeo
- Wisconsin Dairy Farmer (Share some things that will pull you out of your comfort zone this year?)
- Down Under

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Lots of Handshakes Video (copy & paste if needed):

<https://www.fundoing.com/blog/handshakes-part-1-learning-part-2-playing-videos>

### **Harmony Claps** (from The Brain Power Classroom by Dave Beal)

Purpose: Focus the brain to get it ready for new information. Personal and partner challenge. Accepting mistakes.

Process:

Have participant face you as you demonstrate the actions – have them do the action with you. Start out slow and then add some speed. There are eight actions, each action involves one clap and calling a number 1 to 8.

- Clap in front of your forehead, saying “1”
- Clap behind your head, saying “2”
- Clap in front of your abdomen, saying “3”
- Clap behind your lower back, saying “4”
- Clap under your right knee, saying “5”
- Clap in front of your abdomen, saying “6”
- Clap under your left knee, saying “7”
- Clap in front of your abdomen, saying “8” (Then go back to “1”)

Practice with the group until there is some level of mastery from most participants.

Extension: Pair up players and have them stand face-to-face, with a little room between them. Have pairs go through the Harmony (8) Claps together starting at a slow pace, then speeding up over time. If a mistake is made, pairs go back to a slower pace then speed up again.

### **Wow, Wow** (from The Brain Power Classroom by Dave Beal)

Purpose:

Engage the brain to focus attention before providing new information.

Working with another person on a difficult challenge and accepting mistakes.

Improving through practice.

Process:

- Creatively pair up participants and ask them to face each other.
- Have students clap once in front of their chest and then once against their partner’s palms saying, “Wow.”
- Next, they clap once in front of their chest and then twice against their partner’s palms saying, “Wow, Wow,” with each clap.

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- Again, they clap once in front of their chest and then three times against their partner's palms saying, "Wow, Wow, Wow."
- Now, they clap once in front of their chest and then twice against their partners palms saying, "Wow, Wow."
- Finally, they clap once in front of their chest and once on their partner's palms saying, "Wow."
- Pair continues to follow the 1-2-3-2-1-2-3-2-1 pattern of clapping.
- Challenge: See how long they can maintain the rhythm.
- For a challenge, have them increase their speed with each set.

Variation: Use another sound/word, like Good or Nice.

### **Aga Zumba Zumba**

Purpose: Social risk-taking. Learning through practice. Fun and laughter.

<https://www.fundoing.com/blog/aga-zumba-zumba-action-song-video>

### **Verbal Number Exchange**

Purpose: Focusing in the moment. There will be situations we don't know the reasons for the problem, but working together we can solve the problem.

<https://www.fundoing.com/blog/verbal-number-exchange-no-props>

### **Grouplets RPS**

Purpose: Exploring the question, "How do we play the game?"

<https://www.fundoing.com/blog/grouplets-rps>

### **Human Square**

Purpose: Working on communication skills. Building trust within the group.

<https://www.fundoing.com/blog/human-square-practicing-communication-behaviors>

### **Claps Challenge**

Purpose: Sequentially solving a challenge. Experiencing failure and success – what do we do with these experiences?

<https://www.fundoing.com/blog/claps-challenge-from-robb>