

## Purposeful Propless Activities

UnConference 2026 Workshop by Chris Cavert

**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."

Directions:

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:

- 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.

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.

### 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

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

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

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### **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.

Directions:

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.

Directions:

- 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.
- Again, they clap once in front of their chest and then three times against their partner’s palms saying, “Wow, Wow, Wow.”

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- 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>