

# Activities That Teach



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# Activities That Teach

Activities that teach (active learning) allow participants to become physically involved in the lesson. Simply put, it's learning by doing.

People who are involved in their own learning process will understand more and remember the information for a longer period of time.

Active learning allows students to discover the lessons & principles on their own so they're more receptive to hearing and applying the information/lessons that emerged.

After the activity, the teacher leads the students in a follow-up discussion focusing on the activity that just took place.

Active learning becomes a learning experience when we reflect upon what we have done, what impact it has, and how the activity applies to our lives.

The real learning doesn't come from the activity . . . it comes from the follow-up questions and discussions.

## **Expected Outcomes from Follow-Up Questioning:**

Students develop skills of observation, analysis, and logic

Students clarify and review what they have learned

Teachers are able to hear what his/her students are thinking, feeling, and experiencing in a non-threatening environment.

The follow-up discussion is a good exercise in positive peer pressure. A teacher can preach the evils of substance abuse and not reach kids, but if a classmate says the same thing, the impact is greatly increased.

## **General Topics:**

Problem Solving

Teamwork

Values

Working Together

Decision Making

Substance Abuse

Communication

Goal Setting

Anger Management

Resistance to Peer Pressure

Diversity Awareness

Conflict Resolution

Self-Esteem

Stereotyping

Respect

Risk Taking

Values

Stress

Depression/Suicide

Relationships

## **Good Sources Available in the CADA Bookstore or on-line at CADA1.org:**

*Activities That Teach* by Tom Jackson

*More Activities That Teach* by Tom Jackson

*Still More Activities That Teach* by Tom Jackson

*Focus (36 10-Minute Lesson Plans)* by Phil Boyte, Micah Jacobson, and Ron Jones

# Activities That Teach

**Quarter Squeeze Relay:** (Understanding the importance of everyone in the group)  
Boyte, Phil, Micah Jacobson, Ron Jones. 36 Lesson Plans to Bring Learning Into Focus.  
Learning for Living, Elizabeth, CO. 1997. pg. 31.

Divide your group into two teams (two lines). Each team stands shoulder to shoulder and holds the person's hand on their left and right. Both teams stand about two feet apart with their backs toward each other (eyes are looking out in opposite directions).

One end of the line is the beginning where the person stands who flips the quarter. About eight feet away from the opposite end is a chair with a grab item on it (soda bottle, stuffed animal, hat, etc.)

Everyone shuts their eyes except for the first person in line on each team. They will watch the facilitator flip a quarter. When they see "heads," they will squeeze the hand of the person standing next to them until a current has been sent down the entire line. The last person in the line will run and grab the item on the chair. The first team to grab the item will get a point.

The two who just ran (the last person in each line), will come to the front of the line and everyone shifts one position until everyone has had a turn to be in each position.

Important: If a team accidentally sends the squeeze current when the coin lands on tails, the other team gets the point by default. This also applies if someone on the team shouts out "Stop" or "I made a mistake." **NO TALKING IS ALLOWED.** The team with the most points at the end of the activity is declared the Quarter Squeeze Champion.

## **Debriefing Questions to Quarter Squeeze Relay**

1. Who was the most important person in the line? Explain.
2. How does society decide who is more important or valuable than another?
3. When is competition good? When can it get out of line?
4. Were you tempted to cheat? If so, what did you do?
5. How prevalent is cheating in school? What is considered "cheating" to you?
6. Is winning everything? Is getting the best grades everything?
7. If the first person in the line sent the wrong current, it caused you to lose a point. In life, when are you affected by someone else's mistake or actions?
8. What happens in life when we look to a certain person too much?
9. In your zest to grab the item off the chair, you may have missed it totally because you were distracted by someone else. What are examples of things that can cause us to take our eyes off our goals?



### **Chain Gang:** (Problem Solving, Working Together)

Jackson, Tom. More Activities That Teach. Red Rock Publishing. 1995. pg. 131.

Divide your class into teams of five or six and have them sit on the floor in a circle. Place a stack of scratch paper (20-30 sheets), a roll of masking tape, and blindfolds in the center of each circle. Using torn strips of cloth, students tie their wrists together with the person sitting to their left and right. Students put on their blindfolds. I cover the eye holes in inexpensive masquerade masks with black electrician's tape.

Their goal is to work together to create the longest chain using the paper and masking tape. Depending on the class, I might tell certain students they can no longer talk, or I will allow one or more students to take off their masks for a short period of time. The chain should look like the ones kids make for Christmas trees. Allow anywhere from 8-10 minutes. Every minute call out how much time they have left. The group with the most connected links is declared the *Chain Gang* Champion (outgrowths from the main chain do not count).

### **Debriefing Questions to Chain Gang**

1. What problems did you encounter?
2. Were you able to solve the problems? If so, how?
3. Did your group choose a leader or did one naturally emerge? Explain. What role did the leader play?
4. How did calling out the time help or hinder you and your group?
5. When, in your own life, do you need to pace yourself?
6. How do group decisions differ from individual decisions?
7. What do the wrist ties represent in life?
8. What do the blindfolds represent in life?
9. What can you learn about working with others from this activity?
10. What is another question that could help us learn from this activity?



## **M & M Madness:** (Decision making and peer pressure)

Jackson, Tom. More Activities That Teach. Red Rock Publishing. 1998. pp. 221-223.



### Materials Needed:

1 quart size glass jar or some other clear container filled with M & Ms, suckers, etc.  
Every student will need a piece of paper and a pen or pencil

1. Hold up your jar and have every student write down how many items they think are in the jar. **They are not to get anyone else's opinions**—this is their own best educated guess.
2. Have the students find one partner and come up with a guess between the **two** of them. **They must agree on the number**. Have them write this number beneath their first guess.
3. Now the pairs join up and make groups of four. **All four must agree** on the number of items in the jar and write this number below the paired guess.
4. Have the groups of four join to make groups of **eight** and come up with a **final agreed upon group number**.
5. Finally, have the students go back to their seats and make **one final guesstimate** based on what they have heard and seen from the other students and based upon their own gut feeling. They should now have five numbers written on their paper—two of their own and three from the combined groups they were in.
6. Now reveal how many items were in the jar. Have each student circle the guess that was closest to the correct number.

### **Debriefing Questions to M & M Madness**

1. Which of your guesses was closest to the correct number?
2. Did you make any change in your estimated number between your first and last individual guess? Why or why not?
3. How was it decided in each group what the correct guess would be for that round?
4. How did you feel when others did not listen or take into account your thoughts?
5. How can we relate this activity to making decisions with our friends?
6. When you do not agree with a group decision, what do you normally do?
7. What are other areas in life that can be affected by peer pressure?
8. Are you willing to share a time when someone changed your mind and you regret your decision now?
9. What main point did you get from this activity . . . how can it be applied to your life?

## **Curb Capers** (Teambuilding, communication, trust, importance of planning)

I don't remember the source . . . sorry ☹.

Students line up on a long parking curb or 4' x 4' beam. Once in place, challenge them to rearrange themselves in a pre-determined order.

For example:

Shortest to tallest

Alphabetical order by first name or last name

Birthdate—January to December

The trick is that they cannot fall off or touch the ground with their hands or feet. If they do, they will be eaten alive by angry alligators that infest the surrounding swamp, and they will be eliminated from the activity.

The first time through, usually half of the class dies. Allow a debriefing session after the first attempt. Encourage students to discuss what went wrong, what new strategies they should use, etc. Have them line up on the curb/beam again, but do not tell them the new criteria until after they have lined up. Inevitably, the survival rate improves tremendously the second time around. You may even decide to give them a third attempt.

### **Debriefing Questions to Curb Capers**

1. Why did so many classmates die during your first attempt to get in order?
2. Did your suggestions or ideas fall on deaf ears? How did that make you feel?
3. How did others' actions affect you? How do we see this play out in our daily lives when considering positive and negative repercussions from others' actions?
4. What did it feel like to be excluded from the activity? Who on campus may feel excluded in some way?
5. Why were you more successful during your second attempt?
6. Where are other areas in our lives where planning is important?
7. In your life, when have you needed a helping hand? Who have you helped?
8. When have you learned from a mistake?
9. Should people be given second chances? Why or why not?
10. Some of you "died" or caused others to "die" because you were in a hurry to move on the curb/beam to complete the task—you were impatient—you did not want to wait for a safer, more positive outcome. In your daily lives, what are some examples of instant gratification (things you do not **have** to wait for or do not **want** to wait for very long). Examples: instant coffee, microwave popcorn, alcohol consumption before the legal age of 21, obtaining immediate information on the Internet, instant photo processing, sex before marriage, instant communication with family and friends through texting, cheating rather than taking the time to study or do your homework, etc. What are the benefits and consequences of instant gratification?