

# Forts, Fun and Fairplay: Building Teamwork and Communication Skills in the Winter Outdoors

## TEAM ACTIVITY CHALLENGES

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## Sled Pull Challenges

**Introduction/Description:** This activity can start off at a basic level (working together to pull snow from one side of the school yard to the other) and progress to more complex challenges that require more strategy and discussion.

### **Equipment and set up:**

- 1 sled per team tied with a rope tied at the front (can also use a bin, crate, etc.)
- Optional: 1 shovel per team.

For the suggested variations, you will need equipment to build an obstacle course (cones, hoops, etc.)

### **Activity:**

Teams must fill their sled with snow then pull it to a designated area to build a wall/shape/snowman etc. All team members start on one side of the yard opposite to where they must bring the snow. On the signal they must work together to fill the sled with snow and pull it to the other side. Once on the other side, teams can build a designated shape (the teacher can decide whether to assign the same for everyone or different) or a small wall.

### **Variations/Progressions:**

- If there is no snow available have students pull equipment inside their sleds 1 piece at a time to then build something with that equipment on the opposite side
- Have each team create a slalom course then pull a team member through it. Teams could try out courses made by the other teams. Alternatively, the teacher could set-up a course in advance.
- Set up an obstacle course using different equipment/rules and then push/pull a chosen student through it.
- Teams are given a card with a designated shape or design to recreate

### **Discussions:**

- In what ways did your team work well together?
- What was the most difficult part of the challenge for your team?
- What different roles did your team members play? (i.e. what are the different ways they contributed?)
- Was it better to fill the sled with more or a little less snow?
- How could you have made the sled pulling faster or easier?
- What was harder to build with the snow and why? (if teams completed the challenge more than once creating different things, wall, shape, etc.)



## Snow Fort building

**Introduction/Description:** Briefly discuss the different types of snow structures that can be built (e.g. open, brick, igloo, round, square). Invite students to share what they know about the cultures that igloos are associated with. Stress the importance of working together and sharing responsibilities/jobs within the team when creating a fort.

### **Equipment and set up:**

- Shovels, block makers, buckets, sleds (if available, to carry extra snow).
- Designate an area for each team to build their fort.

### **Activity:**

Instruct teams to build a simple fort. It should be tall enough that when they are bent over (or laying down) they can hide behind it.

### **Variations/Progressions:**

- Provide students with specific guidelines for their build- height requirement, windows/openings, taller in some areas, igloo (enclosed fort), a timeframe for building, etc.
- If space is limited and there are other forts already built in the yard, students can be tasked with modifying/continuing existing forts.

### **Discussions:**

- Why did you choose to build your fort the way you did? How did your team decide which type of fort to build?
- What challenges did your team face throughout the process of building the fort?
- How did you and your team overcome them?
- Did you listen to each other's ideas? As a team member, what made you feel listened to?



## Bucket Relay

**Introduction/Description:** This is a good beginner-level activity to do with groups who may be experiencing challenging team dynamics. The process of deciding the order of runners in the initial relay activity can be debriefed and reflected on before moving to other variations.



### **Equipment and Set up:**

- 1 small bucket and 1 large buckets per team (if you do not have buckets, use cones and hula hoops or milk crates)
- cones
- For set-up, designate two opposing areas – one is the starting area where teams will remain and one snow retrieval zone that students will run to.

### **Activity:**

Teams must use their small bucket to fill the larger bucket with snow in a relay-race fashion (one student at a time retrieving snow). Teachers can debrief the process teams used after this basic task before moving to the more complex progressions suggested below.

### **Variations/Progressions:**

- assign teams the task of building something with the snow they collect. Giving the constraint that teams can only use the snow they collect for each task increases the challenge level and forces teams to strategize. What they build could be their choice or specified by the teacher. Factor in the type of snow when giving a task (e.g. if the snow is powder, students can make shapes on the ground (e.g. the letter A) whereas if it is sticky, they can build a snowman or a fort, etc.).
- make the relay bigger, using all four corners of the schoolyard. Each corner will have a different task for the teams to complete. Each task still begins with a relay of bringing snow to the big bucket. Corner 1: Build a letter Corner 2: Build a number Corner 3: Build a shape Corner 4: Build a snowman (flat on the ground or upright).
- teachers can choose whether the teams must collect all of the snow first before building or allowing students to decide how they want to do it.
- For more ideas, see the pre-made challenge cards (which can be printed and laminated):

[WORDS](#)

[LETTERS, NUMBERS AND SHAPES](#)

### **Discussions:**

- In what ways did your team work together? How did you decide what order team members would retrieve snow in?
- How did you decide how to build each structure?
- Were your teammates listening to all of the ideas? Can all of the ideas be used?
- What can you improve on next time as a team?

## Snow Golf

**Introduction/Description:** Using the snow, teams will create their own golf “course” (note that this may just consist of one hole to begin with).

### **Equipment and set up:**

- one small ball per group (tennis ball, hockey ball, etc.)
- one implement for hitting the ball (hockey stick, golf putter, pool noodle, etc.)
- *optional* - snow building/shaping materials (buckets, shovels etc..)
- Set-up: assign each team an area to work in.

### **Activity:**

Teams must create a golf “course “ (or hole) that includes the following criteria:

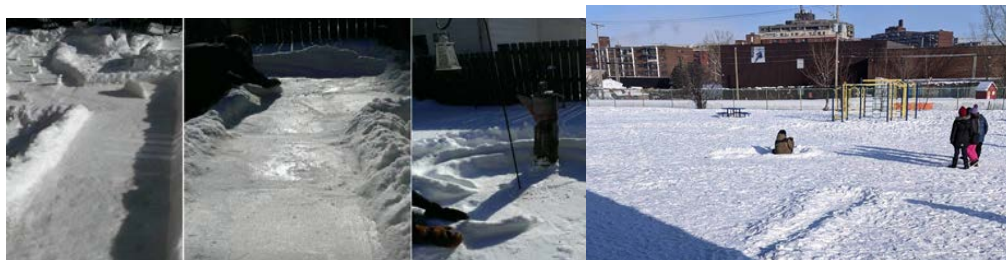
- A starting (tee-off) area
- The target hole
- A snow bumper/pathway to direct the ball from the tee-off to the target (see pictures below for example)

### **Variations/progressions:**

- Teams can be given specific lengths or be required to add obstacles (small mountains, bumps etc..)
- groups can be shown a specific design and recreate it
- Each team can create multiple holes, with different levels of difficulty (easy to more difficult)
- Once construction is complete, teams can play on each other’s courses.

### **Discussions:**

- How did your team split up the tasks? What roles did different team members have? Did everyone on the team feel like they were making a valuable contribution?
- What was the most difficult part of the challenge?
- How could you have improved the way you worked together in building your course?
- Would you change your course after seeing the others’ in the class? What impact did seeing the ideas of other groups have on you?



## Snow Wall Tug of War

**Introduction/Description:** This is the one challenge that differs in structure than the other challenges presented. In this activity, the class begins by working together then is separated into two opposing groups for the activity.

**Note on Safety:** make sure to review the safety considerations for tug of war activities with students at the beginning of class. Ask students to share what they can do to ensure their own safety as well as that of their teammates during the activity.

### **Equipment and set up:**

- one long, large tug-of-war style rope for the entire class.
- *optional* – buckets and shovels to help build the wall
- smaller ropes (for progression activities)

### **Activity:**

Have the class work together to build a snow wall. It should reach the students at about chest level at minimum. Even higher will work just as well if not better. Make sure to leave a hole in the middle of the wall for the rope to pass through. Once the wall is complete, half of the class goes on each side of the wall and a classic game of Tug-of-War ensues until one side manages to pull the other side successfully into the snow wall. In explaining the activity to students, emphasize that students can contribute to the activity in different roles (building the wall/trenches), team motivator, pulling (front/middle/back). Discuss why each role is important and as well as how it helps to have options of different roles.

### **Variations/Progressions:**

- have one rope for every two teams and do the activity in the pre-designated teams as opposed to the whole class.
- Have students play 1v1 using shorter ropes (they can build a small wall for this or can build a snowball/mound to crouch on- losing the rope or stepping off causes you to lose).

### **Discussions:**

- In what ways did your group work well together?
- Did you find it more or less challenging to work in a larger group (i.e. the whole class and/or half the class). Why do you think that was?
- What was the most difficult part of the challenge?
- Did you notice examples of people helping each other? Did your group share a lot of positive comments and encouragement? What difference do you think this made?
- What are good team/single techniques to make your opponent(s) lose their balance?
- Did the trenches help? Why or why not?



## Minefield (Snow Edition)

**Introduction/Description:** The objective of the game is for students to be blindfolded and guided through the “minefield” by a partner. There will be obstacles in their path that their partner will alert them to help them to go around. The goal is to cross the minefield without touching any of the obstacles.

### **Equipment and set up:**

- Shovels and block makers
- *optional* - variety of equipment that can be used as obstacles (balls, hoops, sticks etc.)
- *optional* – blindfolds (however students can pull their winter tuques over their eyes to act as a blindfold)
- Designate an area for each group to work in.

### **Activity:**

**Part 1:** Students work as a team to create an area (the “minefield”) that includes snow obstacles. The obstacles should be small and maneuverable (ridges, domes). Obstacles should be easy to go around or step over.

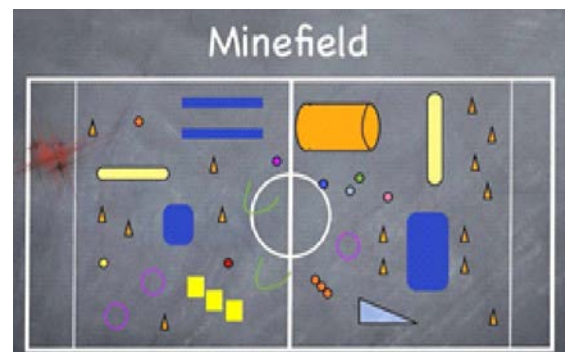
**Part 2:** Once the team has completed their minefield, they partner up with fellow team members and take turns crossing the minefield blindfolded. The goal is for students to make it to the other end of the minefield without touching any of the obstacles. If a student touches an obstacle, they return to the beginning. The person crossing blindfolded is guided by a partner who communicates directions. Students can pull their hats down over their eyes to serve as a blindfold.

### **Variations/Modifications:**

- Students can attempt to cross the minefields created by other groups.
- Equipment can be provided to teams to use as obstacles (in addition to snow)
- Rather than having students return to the beginning when they touch an obstacle, students can be given an exercise to complete and continue through the course.
- Students can complete the course on all 4s rather than standing.

### **Discussion:**

- In what ways did your team work well together to create your minefield?
- What did your team find the most challenging?
- Was there something that happened or something someone said during this activity that made you feel valued and appreciated as a team member?
- How did you and your team change your behaviour/instructions to help your team-mates?





## Castle Building

**Introduction/Description:** Students will work as part of a team to build and reinforce hula hoop castles.

### **Equipment and setup:**

- 4-6 hoops per team
- 1 ball (playground ball) per team
- Provide each team with a designated space for the activity.

### **Activity:**

Depending on the number of hoops available, teams will build hula hoop castles using either 4 or 6 hoops (see picture below for set up). The teacher can do a demonstration of how to build the castle and teams can go into their area and try to build on their own. Once teams have built their castle, challenge them to use snow to “reinforce” it and make it more stable.

### **Variations/progressions:**

- Once they have finished, teams can offer help other teams who are still building
- Teams can build multiple castles (depending on the number of hoops available)
- Teams can test the structure of their castle by standing a few feet away a rolling a ball towards it
- Challenge teams to crawl through the castle without making it fall

### **Discussions:**

- What part of the challenge was the most difficult?
- In what different ways did members of your team contribute?
- How did you show respect for the ideas of other team members?
- How did your team use the snow to stabilize the castles?
- How did your team work together to build and stabilize the castles?

6 hoop castle



4 hoop castle





## Scavenger Hunt

**Introduction/Description:** Because are generally familiar with scavenger hunts as activities, they may need extra encouragement to think about the process of this activity (see discussion questions). Allow groups some time before the activity for them to plan/strategize together.

### **Equipment and set up:**

- A variety of small items that students can hide (e.g. cones, balls, hula hoops, frisbees, etc.)

Suggestion: color coordinate equipment packages so that it is easier for the students to know which equipment belongs to each team.

### **Activity:**

Provide each team with the list of scavenger hunt items to search for. Either in the schoolyard, on a walk, or at a park nearby, have the teams work together to find the items.

[Click here to download a winter scavenger hunt.](#)

### **Progressions:**

Next, students can create their own scavenger as a team. Provide each team with items that they will have to hide in the schoolyard. Once the items are hidden, teams can switch and take turns finding each other's hidden items. Items can be color coordinated by team so students easily know what to look for (i.e. "our turn to find the blue items") or you can divide the schoolyard into sections so each section has a different team's scavenger hunt.

### **Discussions:**

- How did you decide where to hide the items?
- How did you assign roles in your team? For example, did everyone pick one item to hide?
- When looking for items, what strategies did your team use?
- How did you ensure that you were listening to your teammates' ideas?

