ELEVATE CHURCH EVENTS: 5 FUN OUTDOOR GAMES FOR YOUTH MINISTRY

If you're like most youth ministry leaders, you're *always* looking for new ways to keep teenagers entertained. That's a pretty important part of your role. Not only are you responsible for helping kids grow their relationship with Jesus, but you have to do it in a way that helps them connect to God and other teenagers. That's a lot to balance, but you're not alone! All around the world, pastors and ministry leaders like you are sharing a similar burden. **You're looking for ways to create a fun, inviting environment while helping teenagers foster their relationship with Jesus.**

Maybe you're reading this and thinking, "But why games? Aren't there other ways to have fun and help teenagers grow closer to Jesus?" Yes! There are! Games aren't the only way to create a fun environment for teens to learn and develop their faith. You can use videos and images, lead discussions, use questions and polls, and so many things. We actually think there are 13 ways to teach teenagers effectively. Games are just one small part of creating a great environment for your teens.

Games have the unique ability to bring people together through fun. When we play games together, we build connections with people through a shared experience. A lot of our favorite memories from when we were younger are associated with the different games we played. So, we play games to create shared experiences, but those experiences are just a part of it. When we create experiences, we create connections, which can help a teenager feel comfortable enough to share something. Talking with a group of people you don't know can feel intimidating, but talking with a bunch of teenagers who just launched water balloons at their youth pastor? That's something something we can all do.

Playing games and doing other activities during your weekly environment can be key to making teenagers feel welcomed and comfortable. They're so much more than a way to entertain teenagers or fill time until they go home each week. Instead, games can serve a powerful, strategic role in your ministry, so you only need to find some great games to play.

To help make that search just a little bit easier, we've put together this list of games you could play with your teenagers and leaders the next time you see them. We've pulled together five great games to play outside. But, if you're looking for something to do *inside,* we've got a great list of over 670 game ideas over in the Grow Games App. There are all types of games over there—indoor, screen, large group games, up-front games, and so many more. But you're probably looking for that list by now, so let's go!

THE POTTY RUNNETH OVER

This game is more than an intriguing title. It's a way for teenagers to have an *incredibly* silly time. All you need are some buckets (or actual toilets, if you prefer), rolls of toilet paper, some tarp or drop cloth, bowls of water, and tape.

- Split your group into teams and choose two players from each team to play. Then, give them a bowl of water and a roll of toilet paper.
- Set the "toilet" buckets at some distance and lay down tape for your players to stand behind.
- On "Go," players will tear toilet paper off their roll, dip it in water, and try to throw it into their toilet without stepping over the line.
- The team who has filled their bucket with the most toilet paper by the end of the playing time wins!
- As a variation, choose more players from the teams to play during each round.

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CHARLIE AND THE CHOCOLATE FACTORY

This game is inspired by the classic movie (or the more recent one, depending on which of our team members you talk with). This is a great game to play over a large space, and you'll simply need a few trash bags, lots of multi-colored balloons, and some candy!

- Before you play, make some point values for the different balloons, but don't tell anyone what they are.
- Split your group into teams of five to six, and give each team a trash bag to hold their "candy" balloons.
- Select two adult leaders to play the role of "Oompa Loompa" while a few of your other leaders play as "Candy Makers."
- On "Go," players will run around the playing area looking for Candy Makers. Once they find a Candy Maker, they'll receive a balloon to put in their trash bag. Then, they can return to their base to drop off the balloon or keep searching for new candy makers.
- They'll need to watch out for Oompa Loompas, though! If they're caught, the team must carry out a task like making a human pyramid or answering some trivia questions. If they pass their test, they can keep going, but if they get it wrong, the Oompa Loompa takes their balloon!
- Any balloons players drop off at base are locked in and can't be stolen.
- At the end of your playing time, count up the point totals using your point values. The team with the most points wins!

WATER BALLOON TIC-TAC-TOE

This is a great game to play during your water events! You'll just need some chalk, tape, or ropes to make your Tic-Tac-Toe grid, lots of water balloons, and a balloon launcher!

- Create a large Tic-Tac-Toe board using whichever materials suit your location best. Also, at a fair distance, make a line where you'll launch your water balloons.
- Split your group into teams and play rock, paper, scissors to choose which team will launch first.
- One at a time, have teams launch a balloon towards your grid. If they land in a square, have a leader stand in the square while making an X or O, depending on the team. Be sure to give them a helmet and goggles for safety!
- Keep taking turns launching balloons. Any time a balloon lands in a square, change the letter of the square. The first team to claim three squares in a row wins!

YOU AND ME AGAINST THE WORLD

Great friendships can survive the most challenging tests. But this dodgeball challenge is unlike any test they've ever been through! For this game, you'll just need a few dodgeballs.

- Have everyone get into pairs and select one pair to go through the challenge first.
- Spread the rest of the players out around the area, and give the dodgeball to the team facing the challenge.
- On "Go," the team will kick the ball in any direction and a one-minute timer will start. If the ball is caught in the air, the round ends and no points are rewarded. If the ball lands, the other players must work together to try and throw the ball at the competing pair.
- Once the ball is kicked, the pair must run around the area, either together or separately, trying to avoid getting hit with the dodgeball. If they're hit, they must freeze until their partner tags them. If both players are hit, the round is over.
- Players receive points for every team member who isn't frozen at the end of the one-minute round.
- Play as many rounds as you can, and consider adding more dodgeballs to increase the difficulty!

ONE-AND-DONE KICKBALL

Kickball is a great team sport to play with your teenagers, but what would happen if a team only started with one player? For this kickball remix, you'll only need a kickball and some hula hoops to use as bases.

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- Start by choosing one person to pitch for the whole game. This person won't get a chance to kick the ball, so choosing a leader might be best.
- Set out your bases to make a kickball diamond, and have everyone but the pitcher line up in a straight line a few feet from home plate. Be sure to write down your lineup because once the ball is kicked, it might be hard to get players back into the right order.
- Have the pitcher roll the ball to the first kicker. Once the ball has been kicked, *every player* starts running around the bases, trying to get back to home plate before the pitcher can tag them with the ball.
- The pitcher must retrieve the ball and tag players running the bases. Any player that is tagged joins the pitcher's team, and the last player remaining wins the game!
- Once all of the players have crossed home plate, get the lineup back in order, and the next person gets to kick the ball!

These are just a few of the awesome games you can play with your teenagers any time you're outdoors with them. But the ideas don't stop here! Inside the Grow Games App, you'll find over 670 games you can play in your youth ministry. Each game comes with instructions, editable graphics, and a supply list! Let us make it easier for you to create shared experiences with your teenagers, and download the Grow Games App today!



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