

Anytime Games

PLAY TIME ESSENTIALS

- Relate the activities to the Bible lesson and verse for the week whenever possible. Play Time is part of Total Time Teaching.
- Keep it simple. A good rule of thumb to follow for the number of instructions to give young children is their age minus one. So an average 4-year-old can follow three instructions.
- Work on developing gross motor skills. Encourage walking, running, jumping, leaping, hopping, skipping, galloping, sliding, twisting, balancing.
- Play noncompetitive games. No score keeping. No winners or losers. Just have fun!
- Keep the games moving so Cubbies' turns come up quickly. If preschoolers have to wait too long, they'll find something else to do, and that may include mischief.
- Alternate high and low energy games. Cubbies love to run and play hard, but they tire quickly.
- Repeat familiar games or slightly modify them to fit a lesson theme.
- Tailor game suggestions to your particular club. Club size and age of the average Cubbie will affect what you can play. Simplify games for younger children. Jazz them up to challenge your older Cubbies.
- Keep the tone upbeat and cheer for each child.
- Be flexible. Plan more games than you think you can play. That way if one game doesn't work, you are prepared to quickly move on to another one.



PLAY TIME IDEAS

Use the following list of games any time during the year when you need an extra idea or two. Some games can be easily adapted to fit various themes.

IDEA 1: Duck, Duck, Goose

What You Need

- Nothing

Cubbies sit in a circle facing each other. One person is chosen as “It” and walks around outside the circle, tapping Cubbies on the head and saying “Duck.” When “It” taps someone and says “Goose,” the tapped person gets up and chases “It” around the circle. The goal is for the “Goose” to tag the runner (“It”) before he or she is able sit down in the “Goose’s” spot. If the “Goose” is not able to do this, he or she becomes “It” for the next round and play continues. If the “Goose” does tag “It,” the person tagged has to sit in the center of the circle. Normally, the person in the middle cannot leave until another person is tagged and they are replaced, but with preschoolers, the leader can send them back to the circle after one or two rounds of play.

Variations: “It” says, “Cubbie, Cubbie, Cubbie, ... Bear!” You can also adapt this game to your lesson by replacing the words. For example, “Adam, Adam, Adam, ... Eve” or “Jesus loves, loves, loves ... YOU!”

IDEA 2: Musical Chairs Variations

What You Need

- Music player
- Chair for each child
- *Optional* — Hula-Hoops®, carpet squares, name cards

You can play the traditional musical chairs game but preschoolers do not like to lose, so try one of these variations.

- **Musical Shares** — Arrange chairs, Hula-Hoops or carpet squares in a large circle in the room. When music plays, Cubbies walk in the same direction around the chairs. When the music stops, they each find a chair to sit on. (If playing with hoops or carpet squares, they stand inside a hoop or on a carpet square.) Remove a chair and play again. This time, two Cubbies can share a chair, since there will not be enough chairs. Remove another chair and play again. Allow Cubbies to continue sharing chairs until all Cubbies are squeezing onto one or two chairs. (If your club is large, stop play when you feel it is no longer safe.) You could also play this game and choose not to remove any chairs for each round.

- **Musical Names** — Work on name recognition by taping each child’s name to a chair. When music plays, Cubbies walk around the chairs. When music stops, they must find the chair with their name on it. Start the music; mix up chairs (or names) as Cubbies walk and play again.

IDEA 3: Animal Actions

What You Need

- Nothing

The leader names an animal that God made. Children move around imitating that animal until the next animal is called. For younger children it is probably best to call out both the animal and the way it moves. For example, “Hop like a bunny” or “Swim like a fish” or “Flap your wings like a bird.” Cubbies can take turns suggesting animals.

IDEA 4: Obstacle Course

What You Need

- *Optional* — play tunnel, chairs, sheets, Hula-Hoops, beanbags, cardboard box, masking tape, blocks, children’s basketball hoop, etc.

Create an obstacle course that involves a variety of movements. Use whatever objects you have on hand. Here are movements Cubbies can do:

- Hop, jump, climb or slide.
- Crawl through a tunnel. (You can create a tunnel by placing a sheet over chairs placed across from each other.)
- Walk a “tightrope” (a length of masking tape placed on the floor).
- Toss beanbags or small stuffed animals into a box.
- Walk a short distance trying to balance a beanbag on their head.
- Use a large spoon to transfer blocks or other small items from one container to another.
- Shoot a ball into a basketball hoop.

To make it more challenging for older Cubbies, ask them to sidestep or walk backwards. See if they can “butterfly walk” (slowly wave arms up and down like wings), “chicken walk” (tuck hands under arms, flap arms like wings and bob heads) or carry objects across the tightrope.

IDEA 5: Shepherd, Shepherd, Where's Your Sheep?

What You Need

- One small toy sheep
- *Optional* — Use a white pom-pom or cotton ball for the sheep.

One child sits in a chair with his back to the group. Place the toy sheep (or pom-pom) under his chair. The leader points to another child who quietly sneaks up and takes the sheep and hides it in their lap or behind their back. Everyone sits quietly and says, "Shepherd, shepherd, where's your sheep? Someone took it while you were asleep!" The shepherd has three chances to guess who has taken the sheep. The person hiding the sheep becomes the new shepherd and the game repeats. This game works well with lessons about the Good Shepherd or the parable of the lost sheep.

IDEA 6: Clean Your Room

What You Need

- A large quantity of newspaper balls or soft sponge balls
- Masking tape or ropes

Divide the children into two or four groups. Use tape or ropes on the floor to divide the room into two or four spaces — include a space for each group. Equally scatter balls on the floor in each space. On the leader's signal, Cubbies rush to "clean their room" by throwing the balls into the other groups' spaces. They want to get as many balls as possible out of their area. After a designated time, blow a whistle and everyone must freeze. See which area is the cleanest. Which is the messiest? If desired, play again. Note: This is a high energy game and children will tire quickly.

IDEA 7: Tiger Tails (or Mouse Tails)

What You Need

- Bandana for each Cubbie
- *Optional* — length of yarn 12"-18" (30-46 cm) per Cubbie

This game works best with older Cubbies. Each Cubbie tucks a bandana (or yarn piece) in their waistband to resemble a tail. Leader defines running boundaries. (Example: "Stay inside circle.") On the leader's signal, Cubbies start running and try to pull

off each other's tails, while trying to keep others from pulling off their own tail. If their tail is pulled off, they must come out of the running area to reattach it before resuming play.

Variation: Mouse Tails. Each Cubbie tucks a length of yarn in one shoe so that a good portion still sticks out (resembling a mouse tail.) Game is played as above except Cubbies try to pull off each other's tails by stepping on them.

Note: These are both high energy games and children will tire very quickly.

IDEA 8: Ball Play

What You Need

- A fun ball

Stand in a circle. Leader calls a child's name before tossing the ball to that child. Child repeats by calling another child's name before tossing the ball. The group members can sit and roll the ball to each other instead.

IDEA 9: Hot Potato

What You Need

- An item to pass (beanbag, ball, plush animal)
- Music player

Cubbies sit in a circle. As music plays, the item is passed from child to child around the circle. When music stops, the child holding the item says his or her name, names something God created, recites the verse, etc. You can easily adapt this game to any lesson theme by varying the action the child does when the music stops.

IDEA 10: Cubbie Pokey

What You Need

- Nothing

Stand in a circle. Do this like the "Hokey Pokey" song, except change the words.

You put your right paw (hand) in.
You put your right paw out.
You put your right paw in
And you shake it all about.
You do the Cubbie Pokey
And you turn yourself around.
That's what it's all about.

Repeat with left paw, right claw (foot), left claw, bear ears, tail, blue vest (whole self).

IDEA 11: Find Cubbie Bear

What You Need

- Cubbie Bear puppet or stuffed bear

Hide a plush bear in the room while children are not looking. Then let everyone search for him. Whoever finds him gets to hide him for the next round.

IDEA 12: Treasure Hunt

What You Need

- Small items to hide
- *Optional* — small paper bags (one for each Cubbie)

Young children love going on any kind of treasure hunt. Hide anything related to your lesson in your room (silk leaves, plastic eggs, paper fish, happy and sad faces, pictures of children, hearts, toy sheep, toy food, etc.). Give each child a bag and let the children put what they find in their bag.

IDEA 13: What's the Time, Mr. Wolf?

What You Need

- A large play area

Cubbies pretend to be sheep and line up at one end of the room. A leader plays "Mr. Wolf" and stands at the other end of the room with his back to the group. The Cubbies call out "What's the time, Mr. Wolf?" The leader answers with an hour of the day between one and 12. (For example, "Five o'clock.") The "sheep" can take that many steps. (Leaders may have to count steps with Cubbies.) After several rounds, the leader will answer "Dinnertime!" He turns around quickly and chases the sheep, who try to run back across their line to safety.

IDEA 14: Shepherding Sheep (or Bunny Tail Hunt)

What You Need

- Many white pom-poms or large cotton balls
- Hula-Hoops
- Awana® game batons (or empty paper towel tubes)
- *Optional* — bucket, music player

Spread pom-poms around the play area. Cubbies use batons to "herd" the pom-pom sheep across the floor and into the Hula-Hoop pens.

Variation: Bunny Tail Hunt — Leader dumps a bucket of pom-poms around the play area. When music plays, Cubbies run to pick them up and put them back in the bucket. When music stops, everyone freezes.

IDEA 15: Simon Says

What You Need

- Nothing
- *Optional* — Cubbie Bear puppet

Cubbies must listen carefully and follow the leader's instructions if the leader says "Simon Says." No one is ever out. If a child does the wrong thing, just remind him or her to listen carefully. For added fun, the Cubbie Bear puppet could lead this game and say "Cubbie Says" instead of "Simon Says."

IDEA 16: Red Light, Green Light

What You Need

- Nothing
- *Optional* — red, yellow and green circles to hold up as visuals

Cubbies pretend to drive cars. The leader acts as a stoplight. When the leader says, "Green light," Cubbies may drive forward. When the leader says, "Red light," Cubbies must stop. If you have older Cubbies, add a yellow light and instruct them to go slowly.

IDEA 17: Praise Parade

What You Need

- Toy musical instruments
- *Optional* — music player

Give each child a musical instrument and let the children form a band to march in a parade around the room, praising God with a joyful noise.

IDEA 18: Parachute Play

What You Need

- Parachute sized for your club (number of children and size of your play area)
- Items related to the Bible lesson (e.g., white bath scrubbers for clouds, small stuffed animals, rubber frogs)
- *Optional* — Use a large bed sheet instead of a parachute.

Bounce the items on the parachute.

IDEA 19: In and Out

What You Need

- A soft playground ball

This game works best with a larger group. Have the Cubbies stand in a circle. Choose one child to stand in the center of the circle. That child tries to kick the ball out of the circle. The other Cubbies use their feet to try to keep the ball in the circle. Once the ball is kicked out, choose a new child for the center.

IDEA 20: Copy Cat Game

What You Need

- Nothing

Leader chooses a child to be the first Copy Cat and chants:

Let's play Copy Cat just for fun.
Let's copy (insert name). (He's/She's) the one.
Whatever (he/she) does, we'll do the same.
That's how you play the Copy Cat Game.

The child performs an action for everyone to copy. Then the leader repeats the game with a new Copy Cat.