

# GAMES FOR SHARING, SOCIALISING AND SMILING (SOCIALLY DISTANCED)

Enjoy our selection of drama games, ideal to get your pupils working, laughing and creating together. They have been specially chosen to be social-distancing-friendly.

## SIGN NAMES

A game to get to know each other

### Circle game

10-15 minutes

Age 8+

- Ask everyone to stand in a circle and create their own sign name. Your sign name is an action which you perform to represent you – it can be something that you like, a hobby that you have, or something about your appearance. Sign names should use hands and facial expressions, and you should be able to sign your name in front of your body.
- Once each member of the group has created their sign name, everyone signs their name in turn round the circle – they can also explain why they have chosen this sign. The group copies each sign name, so that the person signing sees their name reflected back to them by the whole group.
- Now the games can begin. Ask participants to move carefully around the room and meet each other. They should aim to introduce themselves to as many people as possible with their sign name. (You could skip this stage if you don't have a big enough space.)
- Then, form a circle: you sign your own name, and then choose someone else in the circle and sign their name. That person signs their own name, and then someone else's, to pass it on. It is a game of memory and quick reactions – you can raise the stakes by saying players will be out if they can't remember another name or react quickly enough.
- This can also be a great game to help build familiarity with characters in a book, play, or topic you're studying. Students pick a character and create a sign name for them – within the group you can have several of the same character, or ask them to pick character names out of a hat if you want to ensure variety. Now play as above – students should share their sign name in a circle and explain why they chose it. They then meet each other and play the game passing names across the circle.

**This is a good way for a new group to find out more about each other, or to introduce characters or concepts.**



# VENGA VENGA

A silly call and response game



**Circle game**  
**5-10min**  
**Age 8+**

- This call-and response game is a quick and useful way to get a company warmed up and laughing. At CSSF, we use it to introduce Shakespeare's language and characters in a light-hearted, low pressure way.
- Ask the group to get into a circle and teach them the following calls and responses:

*When I clap my hands once  
You slap your thighs twice*

*When I say 'High!' (reach up with a high voice)  
You say 'Low' (reach down with a low voice)*

*When I say 'Venga Venga' (raise two hands like crab claws and move them from left to right)  
You say 'Hula Hula' (spin an imaginary hula hoop round your waist)*

*When I say 'I'm looking for the man who shot my pa' (Cowboy walk on the spot)  
You say 'But darling I love you' (30s black and white movie voice, hand to heart)*

- Remember to build up slowly so pupils get the hang of one call and response before you teach them a new one. Don't be afraid to go for it, be bold and loud!
- We use this game to introduce characters and concepts from Shakespeare's plays. Ask pupils to suggest lines or characters from your play that could work with this game. Ask for a phrase, tone of voice and accompanying gesture and then a different phrase, tone and gesture in response, e.g.

*When I say 'To be or not to be' (Hamlet holding a skull pose)  
You say 'A plague o' these pickled herring' (Rub stomachs)*

**This game is quick and fun and should set a playful tone. It's a good way to get your pupils thinking and reacting quickly, so keep it energised and make the cues speedy. With the Shakespeare-themed extension, you should find that it encourages ownership of Shakespeare's languages and characters.**



## WHO'S THE LEADER?

A game that will help participants focus and work together



### Circle game

10min

Age 6+

- Ask players to stand in a circle and start a flowing sequence of slow movements e.g. tapping your head, waving gently. Ask everybody to copy you. Once you are all in the flow of the movement it should look like no-one is leading. Once participants are comfortable with this exercise, ask for a volunteer to leave the room, so that they can come back and guess the leader.
- Once the person is outside, ask somebody to become the new leader. Now everyone should copy their movements. Encourage the group to look at each other and not necessarily the secret leader. The volunteer should come back once the movement sequence has started and stand in the middle of the circle. They can have three guesses to identify who the leader is.
- Once the group is confident with the game, you could ask leaders to make the movement specific to a moment or location, such as preparing for battle, enjoying a feast or getting ready for a party.

**This is a great exercise to focus your group, build trust and get them working together as a team. It also provides opportunities for students to lead a group non-verbally.**



## THE CLAPPING GAME

A playful, low pressure way to create comedy

1 player at a time, with audience

10-15min

Age 10+

You will need: clear space, random objects

- Set up some random objects in the space (e.g. a coat, a chair, a hat, an umbrella).
- Ask for a volunteer and explain that they will leave the room while the 'audience' decide on a simple task for them to do. As they get close to achieving the task the audience will let them know with applause. The closer they get, the more generous the applause will become.
- Once they're out of the room, decide as a group what you want them to do. It will be tempting to invent something extravagant – keep it simple. Remind the 'audience' that they need to be clear and generous in their applause.
- The player re-enters and tries actions out until they arrive at the solution. You may need to raise the stakes by giving them a time limit. If time runs out it doesn't matter - whatever happens will be funny, and the aim of the exercise is to find the comedy in their performance, which will happen with or without them finding the 'right' answer.

**This game is a lot of fun and guaranteed to get people laughing. In a drama context, it will ease young actors into performing comedy, which is often an intimidating prospect.**

# CHARACTER CARDS

A quick way to introduce a story

Small groups/Circle

30min

Age 8+

You will need: character cards, summary of the story

We will use the example of Macbeth. This game will require some preparation and knowledge of the story.



- Before you play, create character cards for your play or story. Each card should have the character name and a brief description, e.g. 'Macbeth - a brave and noble soldier'. It's up to you whether you make one for every character or just the key characters. Now, create a summary of the story that includes all these characters. At CSSF we use our Ten Event summaries but any clear synopsis will do. The important this is to ensure all characters on the cards are mentioned at least once.
- Split your company into small groups and give each group a character card. Ask them to make up an action for that character and a way of saying their name.
- Bring players back into a circle. Go round the circle and ask each group to read out their character description, then do their action and say their name as a group.
- The whole group should repeat the name and gesture as a call and response.
- You might like to take some characters, themes or locations and create them as a whole company. e.g. Scotland, Kill, Birnam Wood. You could split your characters according to where they belong or who they're related to (e.g. England or Scotland) and begin to create an understanding of the different worlds of your play.
- At this point you might like to check understanding by asking some questions. E.g.
  - Put your hand up if you're the king during this play
  - Macbeth, point to the people you're related to
  - Who is a supernatural character?
  - Who has a son?
  - Who's name begins with M? Let's be clear who these different people are...
- Now introduce the story. The first time you read it, ask participants to sit in a circle. Give them the instruction that every time their character is mentioned their group must stand up, do their action and say their name, then sit down again.
- The second time, establish a playing space in the middle of the circle. Explain that you're going to read the story again but this time when they hear their character's name groups should enter the playing space, do their action and say their name, then react and respond in character to the story being read. Encourage them to enter the space with pace, each character should aim to out-do the others with their energy and commitment to the story. Remind them to use the whole space and keep their distance so everyone can see the story.
- You can use the instruction 'clear the space' to reset the performance space between story points.
- You may also like to feed key lines to some characters, asking them to repeat them in the moment.

**This is a very quick way of introducing a whole cast of characters, establishing relationships, exploring the entire story, delivering key lines and beginning to identify key themes. It also encourages full participation from everyone.**

## ROUND HERE WE

An active game to build teamwork and focus



Active game

20min

Age 8+

You will need: clear space, big enough for everyone to move around

This collaborative game will help you to create clear 'rules' for your space or activity.

- Set up some simple rules, beginning "Round here we..." Your pupils should bring them to life as you say them. We suggest the following to start the game:
  - Round here we move around the space filling all the gaps when I say Go
  - Round here we stay 2m away from other people
  - Round here we smile at people when we pass them
  - Round here we all freeze when I say Stop
  - Round here we jump into the air when I say Jump
  - Round here we clap our hands once when I say Clap
- If you want to test focus you could try swapping commands over, e.g. Stop means Go and Clap means Jump. Return to 'normal' before the next stage.
- Next, layer in some rules of your own. We like ones that are Shakespeare-themed, but they could be linked to any story, group of characters or your pupils. For example:
  - Round here in Macbeth we're exploring a cold, spooky castle
  - Round here in Elsinore we bow when the queen enters
  - Round here in Verona we all love eating pizza
  - Round here in St Mary's School we say hello to everyone we pass
- Once your company are responding enthusiastically and creatively, invite them to make suggestions in the same format "Round here we...". When a player makes a suggestion the rest of the company should bring their suggestion to life.

**This is a good game to build the confidence of players in taking the lead and making suggestions.**



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