



Parachute Games

Program of Parachute Games			
Game #	Parachute Game	Level of Activity	Extra Equipment Required:
1	Wave Machine	Medium	Nil
2	Mushroom	Low	Nil
3	Jumbo Mushroom	Low	Nil
4	Gophers	Medium	Three to five foam balls
5	Popcorn	High	Lots of soft balls
6	Snake Tag	High	Ropes that measure 1.2-1.8 metres
7	Heartbeat	Medium	Nil
8	Racing Heartbeat	High	Nil
9	Cop and Robber	Medium	Nil
10	Ball Surfing	Medium	Large ball
Back-up Parachute Games:			
1	Merry Go Round	High	Nil
2	World Record Merry Go Round	High	Stopwatch, Frisbee or marker

Wave Machine

The easiest parachute game and the one everyone plays without any prompting is Wave Machine. Simply spread out the parachute, grab an edge, and begin to shake. Tiny ripples will soon turn into frothy waves.

Variation – have groups of three or four players, who are concentrated together along one arc of the parachute, take turns sending a large wave directly across to the players on the opposite shore.

Mushroom

Here is something that involves teamwork, is not too hard, and looks beautiful. Everyone kneels down and holds the parachute taut on the ground. On the same count everyone stands up, lifting the parachute high up over their heads. A giant mushroom is formed. Have the players stand still and watch as the parachute slowly settles back down to the ground.

Having a hard time getting everyone to begin on the same count? One way to get people to lift the parachute together is on the universal word “Mushroom.” Calling out preliminary vegetables such as “Broccoli” or “Asparagus” builds up the suspense.

Jumbo Mushroom

This game is similar to Mushroom, but this time as you lift the parachute, you ask everyone to walk in a step or two. This makes the mushroom grow even bigger. Repeat the game with everyone taking an

additional step. Each round makes the mushroom bigger, and eventually everyone meets in the middle.

Gophers

Spread the parachute out on the ground. All the players sit around the edge of the parachute holding onto it, except for a few gardeners who stand outside the parachute. Each gardener has a foam rubber ball. The leader asks players on one section of the parachute to become gophers and burrow under the parachute to the other side and back. While the gophers are crawling underneath the parachute, the gardeners try to hit them with a foam ball. Play for a set time period. Switch around the gophers and gardeners so all players get a chance to be both. You might also allow those holding on to the parachute to throw a ball if it comes to them.

Popcorn

If you have lots of soft balls, you can make a giant popcorn machine. Just throw the light, spongy balls onto the parachute. People will get the idea.

Variation – what would it look like if everyone tried to cook up a batch of risotto, rather than pop popcorn? Risotto needs to be stirred gently and constantly, or it will stick to the sides. Without making any waves, everyone needs to swish the parachute around and around to keep all of the balls rolling around on the top of the chute.

Snake Tag

Throw a bunch of short ropes on the parachute. Divide the parachute down the middle into two opposing teams. The object is to shake the parachute so vigorously that a snake bites someone on the other team. Watch out that you don't get bitten yourself.

Heartbeat

Here's how to create a nice steady heartbeat. Everyone gets into a steady rhythm by making a mushroom, walking in a step or two, and then walking back out as the parachute falls. When blood has left the parachute, the players all lift up the chute and step in again to keep the heartbeat going.

Variation – ask your players, “What would it look like if the parachute were to model the heart of a jogger? A sprinter? Someone who is sleeping?”

Racing Heartbeat

Once you establish the heartbeat, you can have people cross under the parachute while it is in the air. Be careful! Everyone will want to run under the parachute at the same time. To prevent total pandemonium, you should take time to explain the activity first, clarify that everyone will get a chance to cross under, and state that you will announce specific categories describing who should cross.

For instance as the parachute is going up, ask people who are wearing certain types or colours of clothes to cross under the parachute. Or you can select players by their birth month etc.

Safety tips – be sure to remind players to watch out for others as they run underneath the parachute. (Everyone tends to converge in the middle.) Although contact with other players is fine, we don't want to have any high-speed collisions between players.

Warning – sometimes people mistakenly think the object of the game is to bring the parachute down quickly on one of the runners. Unfortunately, this strategy can lower the edge of the parachute down to the same level as the neck of someone who is running fairly fast; this of course, can be rather dangerous. It is important to stress to the players that the heartbeat must maintain a steady speed.

Variation – don't forget to vary the means of locomotion, as well as the category. While people born in April may run across, those born in September hop across, or whatever the leader decides.

Cop and Robber

“Stop! Thief!” And the chase is on. The robber makes a dash for her hideout. Her gang attempts to close ranks after her, thereby keeping the cop out. Actually, the robber can go underneath or outside the parachute while the cop tries to follow. The players around the parachute let the robber in or out but shift positions to get in the way and prevent the cop from following.

Justice is served when the robber gets caught. Then it’s time to choose a new cop and a new robber. Later try introducing two cops and two robbers.

Variation – introduce the option of a role reversal into the game. When you yell, “Switch,” the cop and the robber reverse roles.

Ball Surfing

Place a large ball on top of the parachute and roll it around the edge. Players should lift the parachute just after the ball passes by. Timing is critical. If someone lifts up a section of the parachute too soon, the ball slows down and stops. If someone lifts a section too late, the ball either runs into the player or rolls off the parachute.

The smaller the ball, the greater will be the challenge. The larger the ball, the easier the game will be and the greater the effect.

Merry Go Round

This game brings back the spirit of the carousels. Everyone grabs an edge of the parachute with one hand and begins walking in a giant circle. To really get into the mood, you can start bobbing up and down as you walk, just like the wooden horses.

Got the idea? Have everyone run a lap, and then have them jump on both feet for a lap. How about hopping on one foot? Or alternate five hops on the left foot with five on the right. Can you all skip together while holding the parachute? How about a gallop? After a while, switch directions.

World Merry Go Round

Set a Frisbee or some other marker on the ground outside but near the parachute, and you can play a competitive version of Merry-Go-Round. What is interesting is that the group ends up competing against itself.

Use a stopwatch to time how long it takes the players to make one complete revolution clockwise, stop, and then return to the same starting position by going counterclockwise. Now, can we beat that record?