

# Cooperative Games

Cooperative games allow participants to develop team-work, creative thinking, problem solving, and mutual support.

## Game 1: The human knot

**Duration:** 10–15 minutes

**Target group:** Children aged 8–9 years

**Material:** none

**Facilitator:** 1

### Overview

Standing in a circle, group members reach across and shake hands – each hand connecting to a different person. The group then tries to unravel the “human knot” by unthreading their bodies without letting go of each other people’s hands. *Be aware that the activity involves close physical proximity.*

This activity is a good “icebreaker”: it allows participants to get to know each other and work together, and (with older participants) it can also help focus on group understanding of communication, leadership, problem solving, teamwork, trust, persistence, etc.

### Instructions

#### The game

- The ideal group size is approximately 10, but it can be done with anywhere from about 7 to 16. If there are two or more groups doing the task simultaneously, have the groups reasonably spaced out.
- Ask participants to form a circle, shoulder-to-shoulder. Then tell them to close their eyes and place each a hand in the middle of the circle and to grasp another hand.
- Explain to participants that what you’d like them to do is untangle themselves, without letting go of hands, into a circle.
- Stand back and see what happens...

#### Debriefing discussion

(to be adapted to the participants’ age): start by asking questions about the activity. If you want, you can then make a link to team sports and to the Olympic values.

- How did you find this activity?
- What strategy did you find to untangle the knot? Did you try other strategies before?
- Was there a “group leader” (someone that told others what they should do)? Was it useful to be guided by someone? Did everybody listen to him or her?
- Were there any other roles in the group?
- What is important when a group must find a common solution?
- Let’s talk about sports now (team sports): can you compare what happened in the knot to what might happen during a match?
- Can the three Olympic values of Excellence, Respect and Friendship be useful if applied in an activity like the knot?

## Game 2: The chairs

**Duration:** 15–30 minutes

**Target group:** Children aged 9–15 years

**Participants:** 12–25

**Material:**

- 4 chairs
- 4 sheets with instructions  
(a different one per sheet – they look different but are compatible!)

**Facilitator:** 1

### Overview

Different groups receive different (yet compatible) instructions and the group needs to figure out how to find a common solution that is satisfactory for all. The activity allows a discussion about the importance of communication and about the importance of setting clear rules (also in sport).

### Instructions for the groups

**Group 1:** Place all the chairs in a circle.

**Group 2:** Move the chairs into another room (or just out of the room).

**Group 3:** Each member of the group sits on a chair.

**Group 4:** Make sure that the chairs are never face-to-face.

## Instructions

### The game

- Place four chairs in the middle of the room, and separate the players into 3–5 groups of 4, depending on the number of participants.
- Each group receives a sheet with an instruction to follow. Tell them to keep their instructions secret.
- Let them play.

### Debriefing

When the activity is over, discuss with the whole group about their impressions:

- How did the activity go?
- When did they understand that the instructions of the groups were not incompatible?
- Did they have any conflicts?  
How were they solved?
- Discuss about rules: what is important when you give instructions to a group?  
And in sports?