

Bouldering Games From Indoor Summits

1. Flag Tag – This is a simple game, which is very entertaining for participants and teachers alike. Take two pieces of webbing, cloth, or flags approximately 1-2 feet in length and have the two players tuck them into their pockets or waistbands; this is similar to flag football. Then start the two climbing towards each other any distance apart. The distance is arbitrary, entirely up to the teacher. The object is to steal the flag of the opponent. If a player's flag is stolen **or** if he/she falls, a new player is up. We play this “king of the hill” style at our gym, but feel free to devise teams or different challenges; have fun with this and get creative.
2. Follow the Leader – A great game for all students, follow the leader works both memory and endurance. This is also works well with larger classes because everyone can be involved at once if the wall is large enough. Played just as it sounds, a student (perhaps one that did well on a previous game) begins climbing, or *traversing*, and once he reaches a certain point (again arbitrary) the next student in line begins traversing the wall, using the same holds the first student used. This entices most students to challenge each other, reaching farther and using more difficult holds. Keep working through the line of climbers, if a student falls, send him/her back to the line. If the leader falls, whoever was the second climber emerges as the leader. *Note – This game can be played with following both hands and feet, or just hands. It is recommended to start playing following just the handholds, to avoid frustrating the students early on.
3. Horse – Like many climbing games, this too is a variation of a game that already exists. Horse is a similar to the basketball game from which its name is derived. This game is geared toward smaller groups, and is ideal for introducing students to each other, an icebreaker of sorts. Just as in follow the leader, the first student to step onto the wall chooses holds that the others must use. Each turn consists of a player following the route that the previous turns have created and then adding on a hold or two or his/her own, then finally climbing down. Students must be able to complete the sequence they choose and then climb off. If a student falls during any part of the turn, a letter is given to him/her. Once “horse” is spelled out, that climber is out.

There are two ways to play Horse. The aforementioned is the “add-on” version; the other is “take-off.” When playing this, students must get from one point on the wall to another, i.e. a start and finish. Once they complete a student reaches the finish hold, a student may remove a hold (marking this “removed” hold with a piece of tape works well.) Just as in the “add-on” version, any student that fails to complete the route receives a letter. When “horse” is spelled, that student is out.

4. Limbo - Perfect for all ages and again, entertaining for teachers, Limbo is likely the easiest game to play and explain. Students must traverse the wall and make their way under the limbo pole. A broomstick or even a person with long arms will suffice for the limbo pole. Each time your students finish making their way under the pole, move it

down and have them try their luck, making their way under the pole again. Since all of the walls we build have bolt-holes spaced evenly 8 in. apart, resting one side of the pole on a hold and moving the pole down one hold (or bolt-hole) every time through the line is a good rule to follow. This keeps the game fair for everyone.

5. Mountaineering – When mountaineering and alpineering, as well as various types of rock climbing, it is common practice to link a team together by means of webbing or rope. This prevents the team from losing a member if an accident occurs or someone falls. This is an excellent game for team building. To play this game, you must have carabiners and a length of rope or tubular webbing. Also, to achieve the desired effect, you need climbing harnesses, though it is possible to play an altered version of this game with our harnesses. Basically, something capable of holding a person's weight. Tie knots several knots in the rope (one for each student playing) about 5 feet apart with one at the beginning and one at the end of the rope. Follow-through figure eights, butterflies, and even bites will work fine. Clip the carabiners onto the knots, then clip the climbers (harnesses) into those knots, one climber per knot. The climbers must traverse the wall together, making their way from start to finish with out the whole group falling. This game works well for team building because the group must work together; all must climb, and all must climb at the same speed and height. It also builds trust among the participants because if one falls, the group must hold the victim's weight. Once the victim makes his/her way back onto the wall, the group may continue traversing.

The benefit of the use of harnesses is immense because the game is then a trust & team building exercise as well as a work out. However, the game can be played without harnesses. Simply clip the carabiners to the waistband of the students' uniforms. The game must also be played low to the ground in this variation because the victims need to be able to touch the ground if they fall. If the participants forget to stay low the ground though, it is good for a laugh.

8. Routes - This is not so much of a game, but more of a way to continually challenge your students on a wall that is not rearranged much or at all. To do this you will need route tape or stickers to mark the route. Basically, choose a sequence of difficult moves and tape all of the holds used. Students can try to climb these routes and create their own. Routes can be as short as four or five moves or as long as the length of your wall. A fun way to set routes is by theme, i.e. all “slopers”(rounded, difficult holds), or all “crimps” and “jibs”(small pinch and ledge type holds). Also, many great routes emerge from playing Horse or Follow the Leader, so keep tape on hand to mark our these routes as they blossom. Remember to challenge the students, it is all right to have easier routes and harder routes, but all students should not be able to climb all the routes set. There should always be a few routes that almost no one can climb. “Ghosts,” as they’re called.

7. Tag - Tag is a great game when you are short on time. Quick to explain and even quicker to play. Line students up as in “follow the leader,” and have the first climber start traversing the wall. Once he/she reaches a designated spot on the wall (8’ from the start works well), start the second student climbing, chasing the first. Once the second reaches the designated spot, start the third and so on. The object is to tag whomever is in front of you. Students may only tag those in front of them. If a student is tagged or falls of the wall, they go back to the end of the line. A finish line may be established, or simply have a contest to see to who can make it the farthest.

8. Twister - This game may be the most complex, but it is also the funniest. This is played exactly like classic twister, just on a wall. To play this, you need route tape or colored holds and a twister spinner. Arranging colored holds to resemble a board or at least concentrated in a certain area is very time consuming and can be costly; route tape is recommended. Use different colored route tape to mark out holds on the wall either resembling a twister mat or randomly. After all the holds in that small area are marked, you can begin your game. Use the spinner and play just like classic twister.

*If you have any questions or need any of the materials mentioned in the games, please feel free contact George at Indoor Summits/Hallenbeck Expeditions and we’ll be happy to supply you with whatever you need.

Phone: (630) 357-3633 Email: George@IndoorSummits.com