

Low Org Games for High School

With Julie Pigott

Looking for some new activities to play with your secondary school students? Looking for ways to level the playing field in your class? Looking to find some games that focus on 1-2 particular skills, but are easy to set up and explain? Looking for a great Friday afternoon activity or a fast-paced activity to use between units? Look no further than these great Low Organizational Games that are tried, tested and true.

Speed Soccer

This game is indoor soccer played with a bench on either end of the gym, tipped down to face forward. Teams must score on the face of the bench, by kicking the ball past the goalie. Goalies are allowed to use their hands in a specific area, to be designated. A handball will result in a free kick, unless it is to prevent a goal, then a penalty shot will be awarded. Use the "Speed" Version, as described below:

** **"Speed" Version** - two teams play, and the first team to score a point stays on, but must switch ends (score in the other direction), while the new team runs on. This is a really fun and exciting way to play many sports, as long as the teams are even, and is a great solution for larger classes, with a smaller space. If nobody scores in two minutes, the next two teams come on. When two teams exit the court at the same time, a new order of who's coming on must be established. Once one team wins their third in a row, they earn a rest, and are designated the last team waiting to come on. This can be a twist added to any game where you score goals on a particular end of field/court - basketball, soccer, ruggieball, ultimate frisbee, ultimate rugby, etc.

Gym: Any size gym is suitable.

Equipment:

- 2 gym benches
- 1 indoor soccer or futsal ball (preferably something that doesn't bounce much)

Class Size: Groups of 20-40 students (at least 4 teams are needed to make it fun, otherwise it's just King's Court)

Game Rules:

- Teams play RPS to see who starts with the ball
- Use regular PE indoor soccer rules, more fun without boundaries
- Establish a goalie crease, where they can use their hands

- Tip a gym bench down at either end of the court as the “nets”. The ball must hit the face of the bench to count as a goal.

Modifications:

1. If the class is HIGHLY skilled at soccer, you could add boundaries.
2. 5 teams can be used for a very large class.

Target Skills: Passing, using side of the foot to keep the ball low, creating power play situations.

Speedball

This game is a mix of handball, soccer and basketball. The object of the game is to score points by either shooting the ball into the opposing team’s net OR to kick the goal onto the face of one of the opposing team’s soccer “nets”. (bench face forward) This is a very tiring game, so it is best if there is a built in break for students. My preference is to play timed games, where everyone gets equal playing time, but it can be played as a King’s Court (winner stays on), or up to 6 points, then a change - it really depends on your group size and personality.

Gym: A larger gym space is preferred. There must be at least two basketball nets and four benches, although mats could be used.

Equipment:

- 4 gym benches
- 1 indoor soccer or futsal ball (preferably something that doesn’t bounce much)
- 2-4 sets of 8 pinnies (eg - 8 blue, 8 red, 8 yellow, 8 green)

Ideal class size: Groups of 14-36 students - teams work best with 7-8 students - anything less will make scoring too easy.

Game Rules:

- The game begins with a jump ball at center court. Just like basketball, teams may be on either side of the court, but not inside the circle
- At anytime during the game, if the ball touches the floor, the game will be played as a soccer game. However, there are no hand balls. During the soccer game, players try to score on either of the two soccer goals. A soccer goal is worth 1 point.

- If a ball is caught out of the air on a kick, a pass, a rebound, the game will switch to be played as a game of handball. (3 steps max, 3 seconds to pass or shoot the ball) During the handball game, players try to score on the basketball net. A basket is worth 2 points.
- During the handball game, if the ball is dropped, it automatically converts to soccer. A player may intentionally drop the ball to switch to soccer. This is the ONLY time in the game where a self pass is allowed.
- During the soccer game, you are not allowed to chip it up to yourself to switch to handball and you are not allowed to kick it off the wall and then catch it yourself. You may not direct the ball with your hands, but continue to play soccer. You may not pick up the ball off the ground, or out of the air after it bounces.
- Soccer goalies have special powers and may pick up the ball off the ground. You may choose to designate a crease, where they are allowed to use their hands.
- After a basket or a goal is scored, the ball goes to the other team, and they may choose to start with soccer or handball by being allowed one free pass.
- If a ball is kicked behind a soccer goal (by any team), the goalie may take the ball and choose to start as soccer or handball.

Modifications:

1. Add a tchoukball net as another way to score points.
2. Add a line where soccer goals cannot be scored unless the ball is touch after that line - this prevents teams from kicking the ball from their own end and scoring if a team decides to pull a goalie.

Target Skills: chipping (lifting) the soccer ball, passing and teamwork, communication, zone defense.

Ruggerball

This game is a mix of rugby and basketball. The object of the game is to score points by shooting the rugby ball into the basketball net. This is also an exhausting game, so I prefer to play on two half courts with a larger class, as long as there is basketball nets on both half courts. This is a fun lead-up game to touch rugby.

Gym: Any space is possible, as long as there is a basketball net on each end of each court

Equipment:

- 1-2 rugby balls
- 5 sets of 6 pinnies

Class Size: Groups of 10-30 (if only one court)

Game Rules:

- The game begins with a jump ball at center court. Just like basketball, teams may be on either side of the court, but not inside the circle
- When players have possession of the ball, they may run, pass or shoot
- Players running with the ball may continue running until they are tagged (one or two hands depending on the class personality and/or gym size) Once tagged, the player must stop running and pass the ball. Tagged players may NOT shoot the ball.
- All passes must be TWO-handed - underhand or overhand.
- A loose ball is anybody's ball.
- A point is made when either team makes a basket. When a player has begun their shooting motion when tagged, may continue the shot and it will count if it goes in. If it does not go in, any team may rebound the ball. If a player shoots after being tagged, the shot will not count and the ball will go to the other team.
- After a basket, possession goes to the opposing team, and they must pass the ball in from under the basket (like basketball)

Modifications:

1. One or two hand touch. For more skilled players or smaller spaces, use a two hand touch. For weaker classes and larger spaces, use a one hand touch rule.
2. Eliminate loose ball play (it can become dangerous) by adding boundaries or by calling a turnover if the ball is dropped

Target Skills: looking to pass while running, off-loading the ball before being tagged, pivoting, faking, cutting/getting open.

Pin Dodge

This game is a mix of handball and dodgeball. The object of the game is to knock down the opposing team's pin, and then safely make it back to one's own side of the gym without getting hit by the ball. A point is awarded for a team that can do this. I like this fast-paced game as a lead up to handball. The dodgeball twist is always popular with the students, and the run back to the wall adds an extra bit of fitness to the game.

Gym: A smaller gym space is preferred, otherwise it becomes too hard to hit people while they are running. I usually use two half courts in a larger gym.

Equipment:

- 8-16 safety cones (for marking the crease)
- 2-4 bowling pins (or cones that are easily knocked down)
- 1-2 dodgeballs
- 4-5 sets of 5 pinnies

Class Size: Groups of 10-30

Game Rules:

- The game begins with a jump ball at center court. Just like basketball, teams may be on either side of the court, but not inside the circle
- Play with regular PE handball rules (3 steps, 3 seconds with the ball)
- Players may pass the ball to each other as many times as needed before taking a shot on the pin
- Players may not step in the crease. However, they may jump into the crease on a shot, as long as the ball is released prior to landing, and that they do not land on the goalie.
- Goalies may not leave their crease.
- When a pin is knocked down, the scoring team must run as fast as possible back to their side of the gym (line or wall). While they are running, the team who was scored on must pick up the ball and throw it in an attempt to hit the running players. They may pass amongst each other. They may also run with the ball now.
- If the running team gets hit, the point is denied. If the running team does not get hit before everyone gets to the other side (including the goalie!) then a point is awarded. If a player on the running team catches a ball that is thrown at them, the point is awarded. A ball that hits a player after bouncing on the floor or wall does not count.
- If the scoring team ends up with the ball in their hand after the pin has been knocked down, they must drop it where they are (they may not throw it) and run.
- If a goalie knocks their own pin down while the attacking team is surrounding them, it is as if the attacking team took a shot and knocked down the pin. They must drop the ball and run.

Modifications:

1. Goalies may be given a ball each to hold while they defend their pin. This would be better for weaker classes, because it will give them a better chance at hitting the running team
2. Add a line (extend the front of the goalie's crease across the full court) whereby you cannot get hit by the ball if you are behind it - known as the "Mason Rule".
3. With a stronger class, an incomplete pass results in a turnover.

Target Skills: faking, speed, throwing accuracy.

Golden Arm

This game is a striking and fielding game. The object of the game is to run the bases safely and make points by running across home plate. The rules are similar to soccer-baseball, but instead of kicking a soccer ball, you strike a volleyball with your arm as the bat. There are a few other "special" rules.

Gym: A larger space is best for this game.

Equipment:

- 4 gym mats for the bases
- 1 volleyball

Class Size: Best for groups of 12-24, not ideal for huge classes.

Game Rules:

- As the teacher, I always "pitch" for both teams, but I do not play defence unless one team is short a player, or struggling. A pitch in this game is not meant to strike someone out, it is an underhand lob that lands approximately $\frac{2}{3}$ to $\frac{3}{4}$ of the way between the pitcher and home base. Each batter gets three pitches.
- As the neutral pitcher, I also umpire the game. There is a force play at every base, just to keep things a bit simpler. That means that the defensive team must catch the ball, with their foot on the base, before the runner arrives to get them out.
- The batter must swing at it with one arm and hit it into "fair" (between first and third base) playing field, and then run to first, second, third or home base before the ball arrives to that base. The fielding team tries to get the ball to a base OR BACK TO THE PITCHER as fast as possible. Once the pitcher (teacher) has the ball, no runners are allowed to advance a base.

- There are a couple of very important (and extremely fun) rules that make it super exciting:
 1. Every batter bats once, regardless of how many outs there are. The last batter in each inning must try to hit everyone on base home. They should be one of the stronger batters. On the last batter, the defensive team's goal is to get the ball back to the catcher at home base to stop runs from coming through.
 2. The offense is allowed to have as many players on a base as they want. They could have three players on third base, for example.
 3. The defense is allowed to throw the volleyball at a runner, and they are out if they get hit below the waist. This is a risk, because if they miss, the runners will run extra bases.
- A fly ball is an out. I do not play with "tagging up" as it's too complicated to referee. I simply make everyone return to their bases on a fly ball.
- Bunting beyond a certain line is allowed. Defensive players may not enter the court between home base and the pitcher, until the batter has made contact with the ball
- Keep the game moving quickly, ask teams to keep track of their own score.
- Leading and stealing are NOT allowed.

Modifications:

1. You can adjust the level of baseball rules that you use, depending on the group... tagging up on a fly ball, forced play at first - tag on other bases. *For me, this is a fun game on a Friday afternoon, so the less rules that need to be refereed, the better.
2. Assign a pitcher to each team, instead of teacher pitching.
3. Change ball, or swing with an implement (tennis racket/dodge ball)

Target Skills: team strategy, learning concepts of baseball, hand-eye coordination, running.

Matball

This is a cooperative game, where each team has to work together to try to get their whole team onto the other team's mat first! A team point is awarded to the first team to do so.

Gym: Any size of gym works, but depending on the throwing abilities of the group, you don't want to put the mats too far apart from one another. For older or more advanced groups, it would be better to put the mats further apart, otherwise it will be too easy to score.

Equipment:

- 2 mats (each large enough to put half of your class on)
- 8-10 foam balls (dodge balls)
- Optional - 1 set of pinnies to fit half your class - but helpful!

Class Size: Groups of 10-30

Game Rules:

- Each team selects one member to go to the mat on the opposite side of the gym - each person may only start on the mat ONCE
- Each team starts with an equal number of balls on their side
- On the whistle, players attempt to throw the ball to their team member on the mat. If the player on the mat catches the ball, the person who threw it gets to join them on the mat
- Offense - players on the mat may not step OFF the mat, they may not push other players who are off the mat. If they step off the mat, they must go back to their side and try again (unless they are the first player on the mat). If they step off the mat and catch a ball - the player who threw it may NOT join the mat, AND the player on the mat must return to their side
- Defense - players may attempt to prevent players on the mat from catching the ball by standing around the mat and knocking down balls or catching balls out of the air. They may NOT step on the mat - if they do, the player who threw the ball will be allowed to go onto the mat. Players may not push or interfere with players on the mat.
- Teams should strategize about who they want playing defense, who should try to get onto the mat first, which player they want to get on last, and they should work as a team to get it done.

Modifications:

1. Change distance between mats
2. Change type of balls

Target Skills: overhand throwing, throwing accuracy, team strategy and communication.