



## Problem Solving Activities\*

### One Rope River Cross

Things Needed One 50ft (15m) x 1 inch (25 mm) manila rope

A small stream, river, or pond

Two trees opposite each other on the sides of the stream, river, or pond (the trees should be living and should be at least 10 inches [25cm] in diameter.)

- How To Do It
1. Before starting this activity, stress the importance of safety. Do not allow any horseplay or goofing around.
  2. Assign two people as spotters to watch for dangerous situations.
  3. Using a clove hitch, two half hitches, or a timber hitch knot, tie one end of the rope to one of the trees about 8 feet (2.4m) above the water level.
  4. Stretch the rope across the water and tie it to the other tree. Be sure the rope is level and tight. You may have to retighten the rope during activity.
  5. Have the youth cross the water one at a time.
  6. After the activity is over, discuss the following questions:
    - a. How did you feel?
    - b. How is this like other experiences you have?
    - c. How can you use this experience in your individual lives?
    - d. How can you use this experience as a group?

### Human Ladder

Things Needed A wall, rock, or other object about 15 feet (4.6m) high

- How To Do It
1. Before starting this activity stress the importance of safety. Do not allow any horseplay or goofing around.
  2. Divide the group into teams with about four members on each.
  3. Explain that the object is to go over the obstacle. No ropes, logs, or other materials may be used to help get over.
  4. Add additional rules to the activity to make it more challenging.
    - a. Set a time limit.
    - b. Allow no verbal communication.
  5. After the activity is over, discuss the following questions:
    - a. What things in life can you compare to the wall?
    - b. What things can you compare to the rules of the activity?
    - c. What have you learned about yourself and working with others?

## The Tower of Babel



- Things Needed An area out of doors with various logs and rocks.
- How To Do It
1. Divide the group into teams of about four members each.
  2. Challenge each team to build a tower using only the materials available in a 100-yard (91m) radius. The team with the tallest tower wins.
  3. Give the teams two minutes to plan and five minutes to build their towers. (The biggest towers in this activity are generally built using people as the structure. Do not provide this information, however.)
  4. After the activity is over, discuss the following questions:
    - a. What problems did you find in building the tower?
    - b. If you were to build it again, what would you do differently?
    - c. How does this activity compare to life?
    - d. How will what you have learned in this activity help you in life?
    - e. Why didn't all the teams use people as the structure?

## Blindman's Scavenger Hunt

- Things Needed An outdoor area  
A paper cup for each youth  
Blindfolds
- How To Do It
1. Blindfold each youth and give him a paper cup to hold the things he gathers.
  2. Ask each person to find—
    - a. Something green
    - b. Something yellow
    - c. A small stone
    - d. Something living
    - e. Something man-made
    - f. Something sharp
    - g. Something wet
  3. Set a time limit. The one gathering the most items wins,
  4. After the activity is over, discuss the following questions:
    - a. How did you feel?
    - b. What was the hardest thing to find? Why?
    - c. What was the easiest thing to find? Why?
    - d. What did you learn that will help you in life?
    - e. What gospel principles are involved?



## Two Man Obstacle Course

- Things Needed** Several pieces of rope 5 feet (1.5m) long  
An area where an obstacle course can be set up  
A watch
- How To Do It**
1. Set up an obstacle course with obstacles to go around, over, under, and across.
  2. Divide the group into teams of two members each. Tie one leg of each member to the leg of the other team member.
  3. Let each team run the course. The team completing it in the shortest time wins.
  4. Vary the rules to make the activity more challenging.
    - a. Blindfold one or both team members.
    - b. Allow no verbal communication.
    - c. Tie legs together so one team member is going forward and one is going backward.
  5. After the activity is over, discuss the following questions:
    - a. What were your feelings?
    - b. How did you feel toward your teammate?
    - c. What did you learn that would help you in life?

## Mine Field

- Things Needed** A large open area  
One brick or rock for each youth, plus one extra for each team
- How To Do It**
1. Mark a start and finish line on the field.
  2. Divide the group into teams and have them line up at the starting line.
  3. Give each team one brick for each team member plus one extra brick per team. Explain that the only place the team members can step is on the bricks.
  4. Have the teams race to the finish line. (Lay down the bricks one at a time in a line toward the finish point, with a team member standing on each brick. Pass the extra brick to the front team member who places it on the ground in front of him. Have the entire team move forward one brick. Repeat this process.)
  5. After the activity is over, discuss the following questions:
    - a. How did you feel?
    - b. How did you feel toward your team members?
    - c. What did you learn?
    - d. What did you learn that will help you in working with groups?

## Bomb Squad



Things Needed Six or eight ropes ¼ inch (6mm) thick and 50 feet (15m) long

A piece of heavy wire 10 inches (25cm) long

A small plastic bucket with a wire handle

A small cardboard box

A cooking timer

- How To Do It
1. In a wooded area locate six trees surrounding an open area about 20 feet (6m) in diameter.
  2. Place the timer in the bucket and place the bucket in the clearing
  3. Make a hook with the wire
  4. Tie one end of each rope to the hook. Run the other end of each rope over branches of the six surrounding trees, one rope per tree.
  5. Place the cardboard box on the edge of the clearing.
  6. Set the timer for five minutes.
  7. Have each person take the loose end of one of the ropes. By manipulating the ropes and the hook, pick up the bucket and place it in the cardboard box.
  8. Make the activity more challenging by—
    - a. Having a shorter time set on the timer.
    - b. Blindfolding one or more of the rope handlers.
    - c. Allowing no talking.
  9. After the activity is over, discuss the following questions:
    - a. How did you feel?
    - b. What was the hardest thing to do?
    - c. How did you feel toward the other rope handlers?
    - d. What did you learn that will help you work better with others?

## Swinging Log

Things Needed A 20-foot (6m) log about 8 inches (20cm) in diameter

Two 30-foot (9m) utility ropes about 1 inch (25mm) in diameter

One 40-foot (12m) utility rope about 1 inch (25mm) in diameter

Two trees about 30 feet (9m) apart. Each tree should be about 10 inches (25cm) in diameter

- How To Do It
1. Tie a 30-foot (9m) rope to each of the trees about 6 feet (1.8m) from the ground.
  2. Tie the free ends of these ropes to the ends of the log so it is suspended about 24 inches (60cm) from the ground.

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3. Tie the 40-foot (12m) rope between both trees about 6 feet (1.8m) from the ground.
  4. Place a youth at each end of the log. Have them walk to the opposite end of the log, passing in the middle. The third rope is used for balance.
  5. Make this activity more difficult by—
    - a. Allowing no communication.
    - b. Blindfolding the youth.
  6. After the activity is over, discuss the following questions:
    - a. How did you feel?
    - b. How did you feel toward the other person on the log?
    - c. What did you learn that can help you in life?

## Rope Climb

Things Needed A large tree with a branch about 20 feet (6m) from the ground that can support 500 pounds (227kg)

A 30 foot (9m) waxed manila rope 1 ½ inches (38mm) in diameter

- How To Do It
1. Tie the rope to the branch.
  2. Divide the group into teams with about six members on each team. Be sure each team has an equal number of strong and less strong youth. Assign several people to help maintain safety.
  3. Explain that no talking is allowed and that each team member must climb the rope and touch the branch.
  4. After the activity is over, discuss the following questions:
    - a. Who climbed first? Why?
    - b. Who climbed last? Why?
    - c. What was hardest?
    - d. How did you feel?
    - e. What did you learn that can help you in life?

## Jump Up

Things Needed Strips of cardboard or heavy paper 3 inches (76mm) by 9 inches (229mm)  
Pieces of string 30 inches (762mm) long  
Marking pen or dark crayon  
Newspapers  
Chairs for each player

- How To Do It
1. Using the cardboard strips and string, make a sign to be hung around the neck of each player. Write the name of an animal on each sign.
  2. Have the group sit on chairs that have been placed in a circle.
  3. Have one person stand in the middle of the circle. This person should have in his hand a rolled piece of newspaper to use as a swat. He calls out the name of an animal and tries to swat the person who has that name. The person called jumps to his feet and calls out the name of another animal. If he does so before being swatted, he may sit down again. If not, he replaces the person in the middle of the circle. (If a person calls out the name of an animal that is not in the circle, or if he calls the name of the person in the center of the circle, he replaces the person in the circle.)



## Donut Relay

- Things Needed
- Ball of string
  - Donut for each youth

- How To Do It
1. Divide the group into two teams.
  2. Tie a long string between two supports at about eye level. Tie 10-inch (254mm) long strings to each donut and tie the other end of each string to the long string. Have the two teams line up about 6 feet (1.8m) from the string.
  3. At a given signal, the first person from each team runs to the string and eats his donut without using his hands. After a player's donut is gone, he returns to his team and the next player runs up and eats his donut. This is continued until all the donuts are gone. The first team to finish wins.

## Balloon Scramble Relay

- Things Needed
- One chair for each team
  - One coat for each team
  - One balloon for each team
  - A paper cup for each player
  - Toothpicks
  - A pitcher of water

- How To Do It
1. Divide the group into two teams.
  2. For each team hang a coat on the back of the chair and put an inflated balloon, ten toothpicks, an empty cup, and a pitcher of water on the seat of the chair.
  3. At a given signal have the first player in each team run to the chair, bathe the balloon in the air and continue to bat it while he puts on the coat, pours and drinks some water, and puts the toothpicks in the pocket of the coat. Then he continues to bat the balloon while he puts everything back on the chair.
  4. Have each player do the same thing. The first team to finish wins.

## Ambush



Things Needed No special equipment is needed

- How To Do It
1. Divide the group into teams with about eight members on each team.
  2. Have the teams form ad line with their hands on the shoulders on the person in front of them.
  3. On a given signal, the leader of each team tries to tag (touch) someone of another team, other than the leader. Any person who is tagged must join the team that tagged him.
  4. Have each team try to avoid being tagged by moving away from the leaders of the other teams.
  5. After five minutes of play, count the members of each team. The team with the most members wins.

## Broom Handle Catch

Things Needed A chair for each player  
A broom handle ( or umbrella, cane, or stick)

- How To Do It
1. Have the players sit on chairs that have been placed in a circle. Give each player in the circle a number.
  2. Have one player stand in the center of the circle. This player should rest his finger on the end of the broom handle so it will stand straight up.
  3. Have the player in the center of the circle call out the number of one of the other players and al the same time take his finger off the broom handle. The player whose number was called must catch the broom handle before it falls to the floor. If he does it, he returns to his seat. If he fails, he must trade places with the player in the center of the circle.
  4. Play the game until everyone has a chance to take part.



## Feeding the Elephants

Things Needed A bag of individually wrapped pieces of candy

A cotton stocking for each team

- How To Do It
1. Divide the group into two teams. Have each team choose a captain.
  2. Have the first player in each team place the stocking over his hand. The captain of the team, who is standing 8 feet (2.4m) away from the team, throws the first player a piece of candy. The player must catch the candy with the covered hand, unwrap the candy behind his back using both hands, put the candy in his mouth, and then pass the stocking to the next player.
  3. Keep playing until all team members have a chance to play. The first team to finish wins.

## Running Dodge Ball

Things Needed A volleyball or soccer ball

- How To Do It
1. Divide the group into three teams.
  2. Have teams one and two line up facing each other about 30 feet (9m) apart.
  3. Give the ball to the members of team one to team two.
  4. Have the members of team three run one at a time between the lines formed by teams one and two. While the members of team three are running, teams one and two try to hit them on the legs with the ball. No member of teams one and two may step out of line or hold the ball longer than three seconds.
  5. Score a point for each member of team three that makes it through without getting hit.
  6. Rotate the teams so that everyone has a chance to run. The team with the most points wins.

## Tug-of-War

Things Needed A 20-foot (6m) rope

- How To Do It
1. Divide the group into two teams.
  2. Mark a goal line on the lawn or ground.
  3. Place the rope so half of it is on either side of the goal.
  4. At a given signal have the two teams pull on the rope. The team that can pull the other team across the goal line wins.
  5. To add variety to the game, stretch the rope across a small stream. The team that gets pulled into the water loses.

## Pig in the Pen



Things Needed A stick for each player

A base marker (large rocks or bricks) for each player

A small ball (or empty tin can)

A bucket

How To Do It

1. Have the players arrange their base markers in a circle.
2. Place the bucket on its side in the center of the circle.
3. Have one player stand in the center of the circle and the other players stand on their base markers. The player in the center tries to knock the ball into the bucket with his stick. The other players try to keep the ball away from the bucket using their sticks.
4. Have the player in the center try to take the place of anyone who leaves his base to hit the ball. If the player in the center is able to do this, the player who loses his base must now try to hit the ball into the bucket.
5. When the ball is finally hit into the bucket, all of the players, except the one in the center of the circle, runs to and back from a chosen point about 50 feet (15m) from the game area. While they are running, the player in the center knocks the ball with his stick as far as he can and moves onto another player's base. The player who has lost his base now tries to get the ball into the bucket.

## Tire Target

Things Needed An old rubber tire

Several Tennis Balls

How To Do It

1. Divide the group into two teams.
2. Have the teams form two lines facing each other about 20 feet (6m) apart.
3. Have one player from each team roll the tire between the two teams.
4. As the tire rolls between the teams, players from each team try to throw tennis balls through the tire. Each time a person throws a ball through the tire, his team gets a point. The team with the most points wins.



## Rubber Ball Bounce

Things Needed A broom handle or small baseball bat

Half of a rubber ball or a sponge ball

How To Do It

1. Mark four lines that are 20 feet (6m), 40 feet (12m), 50 feet (15m), and 80 feet (24m) from the batter. The first mark is designated first base, the second mark is second base, the third mark is third base, and the fourth is a home run.
2. Allow the player three hits.
3. Add the total feet of each player's hits. A hit that goes beyond 80 feet (24m) is a home run.

## Fox and Geese

Things Needed A large open area

How To Do It

1. Mark off a 20-foot (6m) square.
2. Divide the large square into four 10-foot (3m) squares
3. Have all of the players stand somewhere on the lines that have been marked off.
4. Pick one person as the fox. This person must chase and try to catch the other players (geese). All players must stay on the lines. Anyone who goes off the lines is out of the game. Any player who is caught is out of the game.
5. Have the last person caught be the fox for the next game.

Note: This game can be played in the winter by marking off a circle or square in the snow.

## Circle Jump

Things Needed A clean sack filled with rags or wadded newspapers

A 30-foot (9m) rope

How To Do It

1. Tie the rope to the sack.
2. Swing the rope in a circle near ground level.
3. Have the players jump the rope as it goes around. Any player that is hit is out of the game. Any player that is hit by the sack must take a turn swinging the rope. The person who can jump the rope the most times is the winner.



## Steal the Bacon

Things Needed A piece of cloth

How To Do It The object of the contest is to pick up the piece of cloth and get it back to your goal line before the other team gets it back to theirs.

1. Divide the players into two teams of equal number. Give each player on each team a number that corresponds with a person on the other team..
2. Set up goal lines thirty yards (27.4m) apart. The bacon, which is the piece of cloth, is placed between them in the middle.
3. The leader calls a number and the player who has that number from each team runs to the bacon and tied to race back to the finish line with it before the other team member can tag him.

## Kick the Can

Things Needed A can or ball

A playing area that provides hiding places

How To Do It 1. Pick a spot in the center of the playing area as the goal. Place a can (or all) on the goal.

2. Assemble the players near the goal.
3. Appoint one of the players to be "it." He closes his eyes and counts slowly to 50. As he is counting, all of the players run and hide. When he has finished counting, he starts to hunt for the hidden players.
4. When "It" discovers a player, he calls that players name and both run for the goal. Whichever one reaches the can first and kicks it is free to go hide. The other one becomes "It."
5. While "It" is seeking the hidere, the hidere may steal out and attempt to kick the can. As soon as "it" observes a player doing this, he may call the name of that player. After "It" has called the name of a player, no one but "It" or the player called may kick the can.



## Keep the Ball

Things Needed Medicine ball, basketball, playground ball or tennis ball.

- How To Do It
1. Establish a playing area 100 feet x 100 feet square (30m).
  2. Divide the group into two teams of equal numbers.
  3. Give team A a ball. The members of team A pass the ball among themselves, attempting to keep it away from the members of team B who attempt to get it.
  4. No player is allowed to hold the ball longer than five seconds.
  5. When the members of team B get the ball, they pass it among themselves, attempting to keep it away from team A who attempt to get it back.
  6. If any player violates any of the regular basketball foul rules or holds the ball longer than five seconds, the ball is given to the opposite team.

## Run, Sheep, Run

Things Needed A playing area that provides hiding places

- How To Do It
1. Establish a post or a tree in the center of the playing area as the goal.
  2. Divide the group into two teams of equal numbers. Have each team appoint a captain.
  3. Place team A at the goal, and direct team B to leave and hide.
  4. When team B has hidden, the captain of team B returns to the goal. Team A, operating under the direction of its captain, immediately starts looking for the hidden team. The captain of team B accompanies them.
  5. When any player of team A sees a player of team B, he notifies his captain, who immediately calls "Run, Sheep, Run" and all run for the goal.
  6. When the captain of team B thinks his team can beat the other to the goal, he calls, "Run, Sheep, Run" and immediately all run for the goal.
  7. The entire team reaching the goal first in either case is the winner. Throughout the game each team acts as a unit and does not split up.

\* This information is taken from *The Activity Book*, published in 1977 by The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Call 800-537-5971 to order a copy.