

Challenges

Human Pyramid

Challenge teams to build a human pyramid from rows of kneeling people. Which team can build the highest pyramid?

Skin the Snake

Team members stand one behind the other with legs apart and pass their right hands between the legs to grasp the left hands of those behind. Starting at the back, members crawl through the legs of those in front of them, without losing hand grip, until the whole team is standing in a line holding hands.

Chair Balancing

Challenge an entire team to stand on one chair unsupported by walls, ropes or third parties. If you don't have a chair handy, improvise.

Bean Walk

Each member of the team stands behind a base line holding a large tin of baked beans in each hand. The object is to place one of the tins as far away from the line as possible without any part of the body touching the ground in front of the line. The winning team is the one with the most distant bean can after all members have had a go.

Broomstick Twist

A contestant holds a broomstick against his or her body with nose touching the end of the stick. The person must quickly spin around six times, immediately place the stick on the ground, and attempt to jump over it. The winner is whoever succeeds. Good luck.

Team Stacking

Teams must find a way for one member to support the entire weight of the team for 10 seconds. No external means of support allowed.

Human Knot

Team members stand in a circle, arms outstretched and pointing into the centre of the circle. Each person takes the hands of two different people across the circle until all hands are linked. Then the team tries to untie the human knot by stepping over and moving under each other's arms without releasing hands at any time. Great fun that brings out a team's natural leaders.

Inuit Challenges

These northern challenges for individuals, pairs and small groups seem deceptively simple when you read a description, but give them a try and you'll quickly realize how fit you need to be. Stage them on soft, grassy ground or make sure you provide gym mats for soft landings.

Toe Hang requires a team of three - two to hold a pole between them about 1.2 metres from the ground, and one to hang by the toes from the pole. With feet together, toes hooked over the pole, and arms locked behind the knees, the competitor tries to lift his or her body completely off the ground. The longest toe hang wins.

Airplane requires a "plane" and three pilots. The airplane lies face down on the ground with arms straight out at the sides and feet together. One team-mate grasps the person's feet and each of the others grasps an arm to lift the plane 60 to 90 cm off the ground and carry it as far as possible. Airplanes must keep the body rigid: sagging, bending arms at the elbow, or dropping shoulders below arm level terminates the flight. The farthest flight wins.

Foot pull is a two-person contest. The two sit facing each other across a line with one leg straight out in front, the other bent at the knee, and arms placed on the ground slightly behind the body for support. There should be 60 cm to 90 cm distance between the feet of the straight legs. Tie together

the contestants' outstretched feet and give the signal to start pulling. The winner is the one who pulls his or her opponent's foot across the line.

Arm pull is another "tug-o-war" between two contestants. They sit facing each other with one leg bent and the other straight, hook their right arms at the elbow, and grasp the ankle of the opponent's bent leg with the left hand. On signal, they begin pulling slowly and steadily at the elbow, trying to pull over their opponent or to force the opponent's hand to touch the puller's chest.

For the *Muskox Fight*, two opponents get down on all fours in a 2.4 metre circle. They place their heads under the collarbones of their opponents, tuck them in, and try to push each other out of the circle. Caution them to push straight. Stop the action if it appears that a muskox is trying to twist the head of an opponent.

You might already be familiar with *Leg Wrestling*. Two competitors lie on their backs with heads pointing in opposite directions and outside legs bent, feet resting on the ground. They link inside arms at the elbow and each grasps the wrist of his or her linked arm with the free hand. On signal they raise their inside legs, lock them at the knee, and pull them down to try to flip over their opponent.

To provide Inuit high-kicking challenges, you need a portable stand from which you can suspend a soft target on a rope and easily adjust the target's height from the ground. The traditional target is a small stuffed fur sack called "the seal", but a bean bag will do.

For the *One Foot High Kick*, the starting position can be right under the target or from any distance up to 3 metres away. Start with the target low enough to give a realistic chance of success and raise it slightly for each successive jump. The competitor walks or runs toward the target, jumps from a two-footed take-off, kicks the target with one foot only, and lands on the same foot with which he kicked the target. It's easier to maintain your balance if you allow a little bounce on the landing foot before placing down the other foot. The winner is the one who manages the highest kick. According to our sources, the record is a little over 2.7 metres.

The *One Foot Hop Kick* is a bit more demanding. The start is the same as for the high kick, but the approach is made hopping on one foot only, with no changes allowed. The jump, kick, and landing must all be made on the hopping foot.

Bell Ring:

10 Scout team; judged on time. Given no equipment, ring a bell hung 3.5 m above ground. You must ring the bell with your hand.

No-Match Firelighting:

Two Scout team with materials supplied by troop; judged on the time it takes to get a self-sustaining flame in kindling. Flint, glass, steel wool, etc., are permitted but no matches, lighters, or commercial scratch lighters. You need good tinder here. I remember a Scout who used the gauze padding from the cast on his leg!

Bucksaw:

Four Scout team with troop saw (two-man crosscut saws not permitted); judged on time taken to cut through a timber 15 cm x 15 cm. Two Scouts hold the timber, two Scouts use the saw. Scouts may change places.

Your PLs may benefit from a few tips:

put the two heaviest Scouts on the log to anchor it; don't try to cut through a knot; avoid pushing on the saw, which only makes it bind. Use a 75 cm saw so you can get good strokes, and put in a new blade. The troop saw probably needs one anyway.

String Burn:

Two Scout team with wood and matches supplied by troop; judged on time it takes fire to burn through string. Stretch a wire 30 cm above ground and a string 45 cm above ground. The fire lay must be kept below the wire.

How High:

Three Scout team; judged on accuracy. Use various methods to estimate the height of a pole.

How Wide:

Six Scout team; judged on accuracy. On a field, draw two lines 20 to 40 m apart to represent the banks of a river. Using various methods, Scouts estimate the distance between the lines.

How High the Hill:

Six Scout team; judged on accuracy. Scouts estimate the height of a hill. They may climb it to do so. What do your patrol leaders say about the best way to make the estimate?

Tire Obstacle Race:

Two Scout team; judged on time. Scouts travel through a series of tires suspended at different levels from stout rope.

Stilt Race:

Two Scout team; judged on total distance travelled in three minutes. Supply stilts with step placed 45 cm off the ground.

Kim's Game:

Four Scout team; judged on number of accurate observations. You have a minute to view 25 items and three minutes to list them.

Atomic Bucket:

Four Scout team judged on time to complete. A bucket half full of water sits on top of a 30 cm high post. Two Scouts, using two staves as a stretcher, must move the bucket 15 m to the top of a post 120 cm high. The other two Scouts reverse the procedure. An upset bucket means game over!

Mine Field

Equipment: Various Objects, Chairs, Tables etc.

Description: The majority of the hall (except for two ends) is designated as a minefield. Anybody stepping in the minefield is blown up and must sit out the game. The players are divided into teams, and each team is given the same amount of materials (e.g. a few chairs, a table, rope, stave, some objects to transfer). The idea of the game is for the players to cooperate as a team to get their objects across to the other side of the minefield, using only what they have been given, in the shortest possible time (only the chairs and tables may touch the minefield, any other objects touching it are lost)Notes: The basic premise is to use the chairs as stepping stones. If you give them too many chairs the game is too easy. There should certainly be fewer chairs than players in the team. The tables should ideally be used as a fixed stop-off point. To make the game harder, give them more awkward objects to carry.

Variations: Allow teams to set up obstacles for the other teams Oil Drum Ball:

Three Scout team; judged on score. Give each Scout two tries at throwing a tennis ball into an oil drum placed 9 m away from the throwing line.

It's obvious that the challenges offer troops ways to win points, but we consider all the Scouts at a camporee winners and do not declare a top troop. Instead, we make awards in three categories:

gold for the 10% of the troops who gained top points, silver for the next 10%, and bronze for all the others. We hand out the awards alphabetically, without announcing points. We think it's important that, instead of aiming to be "the best troop in the world", Scouts work towards making their troop the very best it can be.

Obstacle Course

Equipment: Many and Varied

Description: The premise of this game is simple. Allow the players 10 minutes to set up an obstacle course with various challenges using any materials to hand. Then time each player around the obstacle course. The best time wins

Leaky Can Race:

Four Scout team; judged on the amount of water in the bucket after three minutes. Place a bucket 10 m away from a tub of water and give each team a small can with a hole drilled in the side near the bottom. Team members take turns to fill the can with water, race to the bucket to empty it, and return to give the can to the next Scout.

Styro Cup Relay:

Six Scout team; judged on time and the amount of water remaining in the cup. Place three Scouts at each end of a 30 m course. Hand the first Scout a styrofoam cup full of water. The team runs a relay race carrying the cup of water over the course.

Soccer Kick:

Four Scout team; judged on score. Give each Scout two chances to kick a soccer ball through a hula-hoop standing vertically 10 m from the kick line.

Fire Building Competition

For a small troop with several relatively young Scouts. Firebuilding was a new thing for them, and we wanted to see how well they'd caught on to techniques, etc. Rather than the old "first to burn through the string" type of contest, we juiced it up a bit and made it interesting for the older boys with the following twist: in addition to getting a fire going, each team should build a launcher to fire water balloons at the other team's fire. We didn't have a whole lot of time to let them work at the launchers, so for us, these were just overturned picnic tables with rubber slingshots strung between the picnic table legs. Old tire inner-tubes provided the rubber strips. One of our leaders brought some old tractor inner tubes from his family's farm, but I think a bicycle inner tube would have worked even better.

This game actually went rather well - the real objective of getting the Scouts to do some fire building was met (both teams' fires were easily built and kept going). We made up a couple of rules that helped keep some order in the chaos: the team fire had to be going before the team was allowed to launch a balloon; each team was only given two water balloons to fire at one time - they had to return the bits of broken balloon to get replacement balloons. (When we left the site where we did this game, there was no trace of any broken balloon bits whatsoever.)

A couple of hints though - we used a collapsible plastic water jug to fill the balloons - it was kind of tough to do and I fell behind the Scouts as they were firing - try to have as many as possible filled up before you start the game. Water pressure is something one tends to take for granted in the city, but at a campsite it can be a bit of challenge to get water balloons filled. Secondly, have a pretty good idea how your launcher will work; there are several designs around, if you have time to let the Scouts build them. With the rubber slingshot idea, rope that was tied through holes in the ends of the rubber tended to pull through the ends of the strips. We'll have a better design for next time though. :-)

One great story came out of the game - one team's balloon managed to land squarely in the middle of the other team's fire. But they'd already discovered that half full balloons flew much better than full ones, so the darned water balloon didn't burst when it hit the fire! Better yet, even though flames were all around the balloon, the water inside kept it cool so that it didn't burst! Everybody ran up to see this silly water balloon in the middle of a roaring fire (very much the boiling water in the paper cup principle), when suddenly the top of the balloon popped and a little stream of water spurted out. The top even started to rotate a little - just like a miniature lawn sprinkler. There wasn't enough water to put out the fire, but it certainly made an impact and got a big cheer! After that, the game kind of degenerated into lobbing a few remaining water balloons around but it was a warm spring day and everybody had a lot of fun.

Blind Square

Equipment: Large rope tied in a circle

Description: The object of this game is to have a group of at least eight players form a perfect square while blindfolded. After the players have put on blindfolds, place a rope that is tied in a circle, in each person's hands. Players must then form the rope into the shape of a square. When they believe the square has been formed, they place the rope carefully on the ground and remove their blindfolds. All players must have at least one hand on the rope at all times

Trading Post

Equipment: Lots of varied 'building' materials, 'Currency'

Description: The players are divided into teams and each team is given the same amount of currency (e.g. beads, cardboard squares). A trading post is set up with areas where the teams can buy raw materials (paper, card, scissors, pens etc.), an area for selling items they have made and a bank. They then have to decide what they are going to buy from the trading post in order to make something to sell back for a profit. Most things that the trading post buys back should result in a profit, but you should put in some items that produce no profit or even a loss. Play continues for a set time. The team with the most currency are the winners

Notes: This can be adapted to fit any theme by building related items. The game works best if pre-made examples are available for inspection by the players. Periodically introduce 'special offers', 'contracts'. Vary the price according to demand.

All Aboard

Equipment: 2-foot square Platform or Table

Description: The goal of this challenge is to get a group of twelve to sixteen people on a two-foot square platform without anyone touching the ground.

Each person must have both feet off the ground. Everyone in the group must remain on the platform for at least 10 seconds. Participants can not lay on top of each other, forming a dog pile, as a solution to this activity. Play continues for a set time

Variations: Use hula-hoops instead of platforms