

Learning with
CIRCLES and STICKS
by Hap Palmer

INTRODUCTION

These musical games and activities all involve the use of circles and sticks. The activities cover a variety of physical and academic skills, using a hoop or dowel as a concrete focal point. This helps children focus their attention and energy while enjoying the fun.

Each song has suggestions for increasing the challenge, which make the activities suitable for 4th and 5th grades as well as the early childhood age groups.

MAKING YOUR CIRCLES AND STICKS

STICKS

Materials: Hardwood dowels, three feet long, 1/2" thick, and cloth tape. These materials are readily available at your local hardware store, building supply store or lumber yard. (Note: Plastic golf tubes can be used in place of three foot wooden dowels.)

CONSTRUCTION: Cut dowels into one-foot lengths for rhythm sticks. Wrap ends of dowels with cloth tape for safety.

CIRCLES

Materials: Flexible, polyethylene plastic pipe and one coupling for each circle. These materials can be obtained at a well stocked hardware store or a plumbing supply house.

Construction:

- It is easiest to cut the pipe with tin snips; however, a sharp knife or hacksaw will also work.
- A four-foot length of pipe will make a circle approximately 15 inches in diameter, six feet makes a 23-inch circle, eight feet makes a 30- inch circle.

- Form circle by joining the ends of the pipe with a coupling. Dipping the ends of the pipe in warm water beforehand may help the coupling slip in easier. No glue or nails are necessary.
- For small circles you may want to saw $\frac{1}{2}$ " off each end of the coupling with a hacksaw.
- You can also purchase ready-made hoops (or "Hulahoops") in toy stores. However, I have found the homemade circles to be less expensive and more durable. (I've had my set for years and they still haven't cracked or bent.)

TRACK #1

STICK BAND

Objective: Recognizing instruments of the band; dramatic play.

Materials: 1 three-foot dowel for each person.

Action: Using your stick, pretend you are playing the instrument named in each verse of the song. During the last verse pretend you are playing any instrument you want.

INCREASING THE CHALLENGE:

Take turns being the leader. As the band follows you, create your own patterns for marching around the room. When the teacher rings a bell, go to the end of the line. The next person in line becomes the new leader.

TRACK #2

RUN AROUND THE SUN

Objective: Endurance; agility; counting from 1-32

Materials: 1 fifteen to twenty-foot rope; 4 to 15 three-foot dowels

Setting: Place the rope in a circle on the floor. Arrange the dowels around the circle like rays of the sun.

Action:

- Run around the "sun" for a count of 32 without stopping.
- Leap over the "rays" without touching them.
- **Rest and sing during the chorus, then repeat the activity.**

Variation: Divide large groups in half. One group goes on the first verse, the other goes on the second verse. The resting group counts in rhythm to 32.

See which group can keep the sun closest to its original shape.

INCREASING THE CHALLENGE: Make the rays into hurdles by raising them on blocks, cones, or chairs. As your endurance improves, work up to running around the sun the entire song without stopping.

TRACK #3

PUTT THE PAPER BALL

Objective: Eye-hand coordination; auditory discrimination

Materials: 1 three-foot dowel, 1 hoop, and 1 piece of paper wadded into a small ball for each person.

Action:

- The object is to putt your ball into the circle on the side of the room.
- Take only one swing each time you hear the bell-a miss counts as a swing.
- For safety and accuracy, take a short swing. Don't let the end of the stick come more than one foot off the ground.

INCREASING THE CHALLENGE: There are four levels of challenge -

1. Get the ball into the circle by the end of the song.
2. Get the ball into the circle and back to your starting point by the end of the song.
3. Go through the above cycle two times by the end of the song.
4. Set up a 4 to 6 hole course. Try to get through it by the end of the song.

TRACK #4

CIRCLES EVERYWHERE

Objective: Imagination; dramatic play; vocabulary enrichment

Materials: 1 hoop for each person

Action: Using your hoop, act out the scenes described in each verse. During the chorus, create your own rhythmic movements or try the following pattern:

Lyric: *There are circles everywhere*

Action: *Move circle in large arc,*

Lyric: *In the sea and in the air.*

Action: *Hold circle low then high.*

Lyric: *On the earth and in the sky,*

Action: *Hold circle low then high.*

Lyric: *They catch your eye.*

Action: *Hold circle in front of eyes.*

Lyric: *They're a part of everything,*

All these gently curving rings.

There are circles everywhere,

the gift of life is shared.

Action: *Hold your circle near something*

in the room that has a circular shape.

(Examples: clock, doorknob, screw

or nail head, a letter or number in a

poster, a vase, a button, etc.)

Follow Up: Of the four scenes described in the verses, pick your favorite and draw a picture of it. Can you think of other scenes or places where you might find the shape of a circle?

TRACK # 5

GOIN' OUT ON THE TOWN:

Objective: Counting; agility

Materials: Circles scattered around the room

Starting Points or
"Home"

Hoops

x



x



x



x



x

Action:

- Start at a point just outside the group of circles. This is "home."
- Each time you hear the drum, jump and land in a circle.
- The challenge is to jump from circle to circle and plan your trip so you arrive home by the time given in each verse. For example, to get home by 8 o'clock you would take 8 jumps, landing at your starting point on the eight jump.

TRACK #6

MAKIN' LETTERS

Objective: Recognizing capital letters; initial consonant sounds; eye-hand coordination; teamwork

Materials: 2 one-foot dowels to each person

Setting: Partners facing each other

Action: Working with your partner, form the letters as they are named in the song.

INCREASING THE CHALLENGE: Listen for the initial consonant sound of the words. See if you can make the letter before it is actually named. For example, the words of the first verse are, "Lovely little Lulu lassos leaping lions." If you recognize that the words begin with "L" you can make the letter before it is named.

TRACK #7

JUMP AND LAND

Objective: Endurance; agility; auditory discrimination

Materials: Circles scattered around the room

Action: When you hear the music, run around the room, staying outside the circles at all times. • When the music stops, stop running. • If you hear the drum, jump and land inside a circle. • If you hear the bell, jump and land outside a circle. • When the music starts, begin running outside the circles again.

INCREASING THE CHALLENGE: The teacher holds a drum and mallet. Whenever you hear the drum on the recording, the teacher will add one, two, or three beats.

- If the total number of beats is two, you jump and land with one part of your body in one circle and one part in another circle. (E.g., one hand in one circle and one foot in an other.)
- If total number is three, you jump and land with one part in each of three circles.
- If the total number is four, you jump and land with one part in each of four circles.

TRACK #8

MAGIC STICK

Objective: Creative movement;
Vocabulary enrichment

Materials: 1 three-foot dowel for each person

Action: • During the chorus put magic in your stick by turning it around one time and tapping it on the ground three times. • During the verses, pantomime the following activities: sweeping the floor; paddling a boat; twirling a baton; walking with a cane.

INCREASING THE CHALLENGE

- During the first two lines of the chorus, balance your stick in one of three ways: horizontally on one or two fingers; vertically on the palm of your hand; vertically on the tip of your finger.
- During the vocal part of each verse, act out the activities described. During the instrumental part of each verse, think of something else you could pretend to do with your stick.

TRACK #9

TAP YOUR STICKS

Objective: Laterality; eye-hand coordination; rhythm; working together

Materials: 2 one-foot dowels to reach person

Setting: Partners facing each other

Action: Tap your sticks as described in the song- tap your right stick with your partner's right stick; tap your left stick with your partner's left stick, etc.

- Toss and catch your sticks as described in the lyric of the song. The toss should be very gentle-only one or two feet high.

INCREASING THE CHALLENGE: Instead of tossing and catching your stick, toss and trade sticks-toss your stick to your partner and catch your partner's stick.

TRACK #10 CONNECTION

Objective: Vocabulary enrichment; body parts; things around the room

Materials: 1 stick (one to three ft. in length) with cloth tape over end for each person

Action: Make the connections described in the lyric of the song

INCREASING THE CHALLENGE: Make your own list of things you could connect with a stick. Write your list on the board and do this.

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