

**GAMES AND ACTIVITIES
FOR THE
YOUNG AT HEART**



CUONG NHU
-For Kids!

Games and Activities for the Young at Heart

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2012

for the Cuong Nhu Oriental Martial Arts Association

Special Thanks to: Quynh Ngo, Bao Ngo, John Burns, John Kay, Didi Goodman, Rikki Kay, Joe Montague, Chris Baglieri, Tony Kay, Heidi Goldstein, Doug Storm, and all the instructors who have shared their insight and wisdom to make this document possible.

EXTRA special thanks go to Debbie Annen of Bowie, MD, who laid the groundwork for this project many years ago.

Disclaimer: The authors do not assume any responsibility for how the information presented in this manual is interpreted or used. The nature of martial arts training makes injuries possible. Extreme caution should be exercised at all times when practicing with a partner. Readers are responsible for any liability that may occur as a result of their actions.

Introduction

Being a Cuong Nhu instructor presents a unique set of challenges. As instructors, we must not only have the martial skill and technical expertise in the subject matter being taught, but we must also possess another set of skills that allow us to effectively convey that knowledge to our students. Boredom can be the biggest enemy of any martial arts teacher, especially when teaching children, and unfortunately, even the best teachers sometimes get into a rut. A serious demeanor certainly has its place in the dojo, but it is also important to sprinkle a little fun in the mix. Teaching can become stagnant and monotonous if you are not constantly presenting new teaching ideas, drills, games, exercises and techniques. Not only will your students be bored doing the same old drills, you will be bored teaching them over and over again. To maintain an excited, active student body, and to keep yourself motivated about teaching, you need a ready source of ideas and brain ticklers at your fingertips.

This document is meant to be just that, a resource that you can turn to while you are developing your lesson plans or just before you head out to start a class. A quick reference guide packed with new ideas, as well as ideas you might have long forgotten, or ideas that may lead you to create games and drills of your own. And remember, these activities can be just as effective with your adult students as they are for your kids' classes! Adults can, and should, be "young at heart." Often times all they need is an opportunity and a little encouragement to "let go" for a while. You might be surprised when you first see the "little kid" come out of someone who is normally serious and reserved, regardless of their chronological age. Congratulations, that's when you know you are making your classes FUN!

5 F's of Teaching & Learning

Fun
Friendship
Focus
Fly your spirit
Finish your goal



Shuriken Lids

Background: A shuriken (literally: "sword hidden in the hand") is a traditional Japanese concealed weapon that was generally used for throwing. Commonly known in the West as "throwing stars", they actually took many different shapes and designs made from a variety of everyday items such as needles, nails, and knives, as well as coins, washers, and other flat plates of metal. The art of wielding the shuriken is known as shurikenjutsu, and was taught as a minor part of the martial arts curriculum of many famous schools.

Materials: You will need at least two dozen plastic lids (like butter tub lids). You can collect them yourself or order them cheaply online in a variety of colors and sizes (six-inch diameter lids are perfect).

Objectives: This game encourages awareness, quick reactions, and evasive movement. When demonstrated beforehand, this drill can be used to practice specific ducks, dodges and blocks.

Directions: Line the students up against a wall, then move back 15-20 feet and throw the lids at the kids like little Frisbees. If they get hit, students can either keep playing, or sit out, depending on the variation being played. Instructors should be careful not to throw too hard or to target the face. Older kids can be graduated to metal lids like jelly jar lids. They don't hurt much if they are not thrown too hard, and when they miss, the sound of the metal hitting a hard wall makes it seem that much more dangerous, and henceforth exciting for the student. You can divide the class into teams and allow students to throw lids at other students (much like the classic "dodge ball"). Of course, students always enjoy throwing lids at the teacher, too!



Jello Jigglers / Stone Statues

Ask the students if they can move like Jello. You can say, "Nothing moves like Jello but Jello and kids!" Ask, "Can you move your arm like Jello?" "Can you move your leg like Jello?" "Can you move both hands like Jello?" This is a great tension breaker, and attention getter.

Now say, "Can you stand still like a stone statue?" "Remember, statues stand straight and tall, and stone statues *never* wiggle!" This is aimed at developing body awareness, core muscle engagement, mental discipline, and focus by helping the students to feel the differences between loose and tight.

Finally, start mixing it up. "Jello bodies everyone...now stone statues!" Try, "Jello arms and statue legs!" then "Jello legs and statue arms!" Mix it up and have some fun.



Tameshiwari - Breaking

Background: Tameshiwari is the art of breaking wood or bricks with different parts of the body. While this is, of course, not the purpose of our karate training, it is a useful exercise for developing a strong body and a calm, focused mind. Tameshiwari requires excellent form, balance, and concentration. It is also fun and rewarding to feel your technique actually going through an object.

Objectives: This activity encourages confidence, reinforces proper technique, and allows the student to experience striking "through" an object.

Materials: A roll of paper towels, stack of paper napkins, or sheet foam insulation cut to size.

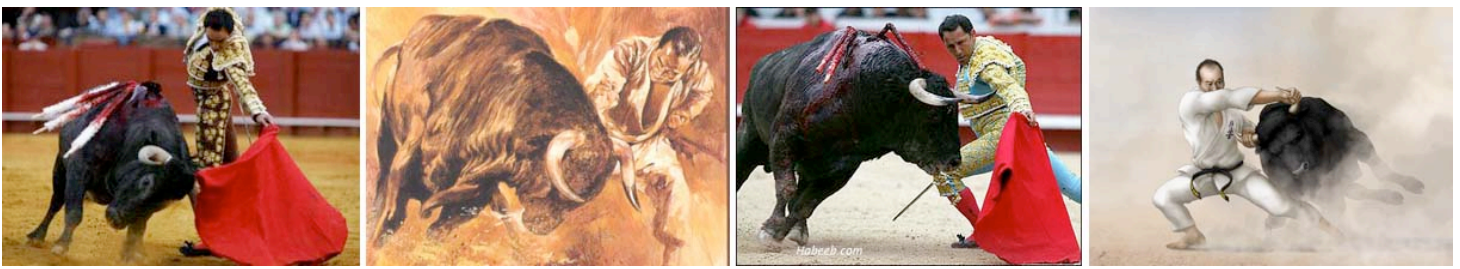
Directions: Start out holding a paper towel or napkin out tight in front of you like a board. Have the child chop downward with vertical chop to "break" the paper. Repeat with different punches, chops, and kicks. You can also have students do an activity, such as a forward roll, before they break the paper. Once the students develop the knack of consistently striking through the paper targets, you can step up to pieces of expanded polystyrene foam. To maximize your cost/practice ratio, you can cut the sheets into 12" X 12" squares beforehand with a utility knife. After they are broken, you are left with two roughly 6" X 12" rectangles of foam that can be broken again.



Walls and Roofs

Want to know what to do those boards (or foam) after a board breaking session? Give each child a piece of board and have them sit in a large circle. Explain to the children they are going to build a building. There are walls in a building and roofs. They have to decide which their board will be. Be sure to explain the object is for everyone to get a turn. Have each child add his/her board to the building in turn. You may have to tell them to back up every once in a while. They should be focused upon each board's placement, and thinking where their board might go next. Remind them to be careful so everyone gets a chance. Expect false starts at first, just let the next student in line start the next building if it falls before everyone gets a turn. If you get every child's board into the building, you can either have them each take a board off, or, if the "boards" are foam, one lucky student can get to kick the building down!

The aim of the activity is to develop focus and teamwork, plus the kids are a joy to watch while they are building. You can also use this as a chance to discuss the importance of recycling, trying to reuse materials when possible, rather than just throw them right in the trash.



Matador

Have the students stand in a circle. The instructor should be the first “bull.” The bull holds his fists together in front of him and “charges” a student in the circle. The object is for the student to “open the door” like a gate to avoid the bull. If the turn is poor, the bull returns to the center of the circle so he can charge a new student from the inside. If the turn is good, the bull is avoided, and that student becomes the new bull and “charges” another student in the circle. A second variation has the new student become the head of the bull and the initial bull becomes part of the body/tail. The game continues until all the students are part of the bull. If the bull only charges students in a good ready or fighting stance, then students will be encouraged to practice that as well.

Circle Ball

Have the students stand in two circles in rectangular stances, close enough to touch feet with the people next to them. Introduce a ball into the middle of each circle. The ball is batted around the circles with the feet. If the ball leaves the circle between the legs, or between the students (below the belt), the student or students who let the ball pass through must join the other circle. Play is continuous. This strengthens leg muscles for rectangular stance and sharpens reflexes.

Carpet Kata

Place two foot-sized carpet pieces on the floor, fuzzy side down, for each student. Have the students place their feet square on the carpets, then have them do kata or basic footwork such as moving forward or backward in forward stance. The students will have to leave their feet close enough to the floor to move the carpets along with them. This helps students pay attention to footwork instead of just hand techniques while doing kata.

Balloon Boppers

Have a greater number of balloons blown up than the number of students playing the game (5-10 more balloons than students). Have 3-8 students sit on the floor in a tight circle, and have 3-8 students stand in a circle behind the sitters. The object for the sitters is to punch the balloons up as high as possible. The object of the standees is to keep the balloons in the center for the sitters. The standees can use blocks or punches. For a large class have more than one group.

Tail Chase

Instructors usually have several unused white belts lying around. Take a few and cut them into equal lengths about 18 inches long. Divide the students into pairs and give each group a length of belt (or any piece of ribbon or cloth of sufficient length). One of the partners threads the piece of belt through his/her own belt at the back, making a “tail.” It is the other partner's job to try to pull the piece out. If the partner snatches the tail, the rolls are switched. Give a one-minute signal to switch rolls for those who don't snatch the tail. You could also give each student a length of belt and have both try to get the other's tail. Try larger groups of 3, 4 or more. Try playing in teams. This game develops defensive strategy, quick footwork, and improved reflexes.



Teaching Tip: The Importance of Positive Language

Children are very susceptible to the behaviors of other people and the circumstances that unfold within their environment. Because children have a very limited experience of the world, they naturally take on board everything that is thrown their way without questioning the events or circumstances. They are very much like wet clay that can be molded into shape very easily. Since their belief systems are very weak, they will naturally accept pretty much anything that anyone tells them without a second thought. Weak belief systems are somewhat a blessing and a self-sabotaging force that could cripple them with emotional problems for the rest of their life.

Fears are natural outcroppings of a child's beliefs that they have allowed to dwell within their minds for extended periods of time. As instructors, we sometimes take for granted the power of the language we use to communicate with our students. Too often we take the easiest path of correction for the instructor, which is the use of negative language. Of course, the purpose of our negative language is to attempt to communicate our displeasure in a way that will help our students to get better or to understand the dangers or inappropriateness of particular behaviors. Our goal is to protect them and to keep them safe from the realities of the outside world, and this is all well and good, however we must also take into consideration that every time we are communicating with our students, that we are at that very moment programming them with behaviors, habits and decisions that could very well stay with them for the remainder of their lives.

Each and every time you say "No!... Don't... You Can't..." to your students, you are, at that specific moment, encouraging them to link negative emotions to the events, people, behaviors or circumstances under question. Simple words like these might not seem like a big deal, but repeating these words over time with varying levels of emotional intensity can indeed cause your students to fear certain events, objects or circumstances. Our negative words may seem rational at the moment, however, they may in fact be quite counterproductive on an emotional level in the long run. We must also take special care not to emotionally overreact to events or circumstances, as these behaviors may psychologically scar our students in ways that we weren't expecting.

Instead we must learn methods and strategies on how to get our message across to our kids in a way that will reduce resistance and allow for natural growth without fear or remorse. Dr. Maria Montessori, the founder of the Montessori educational method, was also a pioneer in the use of positive language. Her message to parents and teachers at first seems so simple, "Instead of saying to a child, 'Don't be stupid!' say, 'Please be wise.' Instead of saying, 'Stop running!' say, 'Please walk.'" When we use positive language, this one seemingly simple change from negative to positive, can change everything in our lives. The use of positive language changes a teacher from being a nag or a scold into a being a mentor and a coach. The expected results are the same; we expect children to try and be wise, to walk in the dojo, to be good people. With positive language, we demonstrate that we believe that children can achieve these results.

As with many universal truths, what seems so simple and so obvious, yet it is also difficult and profound. It is not easy to turn our language patterns around. It takes a lot of thought and even more effort to break the habits of a life time, but if we can just try being conscious of using positive language, we will begin to see very real differences in our lives.





Mirror, Mirror

The instructor stands in front of the group and holds his/her hands in a specific still position. The students duplicate this position. The position is changed, and the students follow suit. Start with simple single movements and move on to simple combinations. To make it more entertaining, mix funny poses with serious moves like punches, chops, blocks, and kicks. Pause between positions or repeat positions until all the students are doing the moves correctly. Besides being a good release of tension and excess energy, these activities encourage careful observation, self-control, and following directions.

An extension of this is to have the students pair up and face each other. One acts as the leader and the other a follower. Let the children use any motions they want, as long as they continue to face each other. Have the students switch roles after a minute or so.

Try this extra challenge! Have the followers follow one step behind the instructor. Example: Put your hands on your head while everybody waits. Put your hands on your shoulders, and everybody puts their hands on their heads. Put your hands on your hips, and everybody puts their hands on their shoulders. This is tougher than it sounds.

Pattern Ball

Have the students form a circle (circles of 5-8 children are best). The leader throws a soft ball or other object to another player in the circle. The leader is no longer available to catch the ball. The player throws the ball to another player in the circle. Once a player has thrown the ball he is no longer eligible to catch it. When the last player catches the ball it is thrown back to the leader. Each person must remember that he will always throw the ball to the same player each time. When the pattern is established, challenge the group by starting a second ball while the first one is half way through the pattern. The object is to see how many balls the group can keep in the pattern at once. An added challenge is to see if the group can do the pattern backwards.

This requires focus and self-control. If you have the students call the name of the person they are throwing to, or say their own name when catching, this can become an excellent "getting to know you" game. If the children recite philosophy, such as the 5 A's of self-defense, it can be a memorizing game as well.

Compass Needles

The students face a given direction. Tell them to close their eyes and turn 45, 90, or 180 degrees to the left or right. Then have them open their eyes and check their results. Reset and repeat. Add stances and simple hand techniques. Add signs on the walls reading North, South, East, and West to add a further dimension to the activity. You could tell the students to turn 45 degrees left and ask, "Are you facing east?" Or you could say, "Move 90 degrees to the west into back stance with knifehand block." This reinforces awareness of direction and orientation, and sharpens listening skills.





Don't Look Behind You!

The students form a circle. One student is picked to stand in the middle, with eyes shut. The instructor points to someone to quietly stand behind the student in the middle. With eyes closed, the student must guess who and how many students are standing behind them. Encourage the students to make little noises to help the student guessing. This drill sharpens sensitivity, listening skills, auditory focus, and alertness.

Hat Snatch

Have the children choose partners. Both partners wear a loose fitting hat, and each tries to snatch the hat from his partner's head. Students can counter with blocks. At first have the students stand in one spot, and if their feet move, they lose. Next, try with the partners moving about in a confined space on the floor. Later, you can try the drill with multiple partners, and even teams. This drill develops offensive and defensive strategy, high blocks, and quick reflexes.

Blind Buddy Relay

Divide the class into teams of 4-6 and have the students on each team pair off. Each team should have an equal number of pairs and its own identical obstacle course. The pairs line up and get ready to navigate their course (the course itself will vary depending upon the skill level of the students and the available props). In the simple version, one student leads their blindfolded partner through the course and back to the beginning so the next pair can go. The first team with all couples home wins. Another way to play is to have the blindfolded student navigate the course themselves while the other partner acts as their guide, giving only verbal instructions to get their partner through the course. To make it even harder yet, students could be only allowed to give their instructions as martial arts moves. For example: "Move in forward stance three steps. Now do a left turn (this gets the partner around an obstacle). Move forward two steps in forward stance. Now left kicking stance and slowly extend your front snap kick (knocks a ball off a cone). Turn right in forward stance, etc." The obstacle course should have the players end up back at the starting line, so the next pair can begin. To make it even more interesting, change the obstacles slightly between pairs.

Streamers

Give each student a short length of crepe paper party streamer for each hand, and have the students go through their basic techniques. Simply holding the streamers can make a student's blocks faster and punches sharper. Holding the streamers encourages keeping a tight fist, while the visual action of the streamer trailing behind the technique allows the student to concentrate and focus on their techniques in ways they never could before. Oh yeah, and it's fun, too.





Tiger, Tiger

The instructor may want to be the first tiger to demonstrate how the game is played. Have the students sit in a circle and close their eyes. The instructor moves around the outside of the circle, picks a spot and roars. The students, with eyes still closed, points to where they think the sound came from. The instructor tells them to open their eyes and a new tiger is chosen. Try mewling softly instead of roaring, this is much harder to hear and distinguish where it's coming from.

Toe Fencing

Make two foot long tubes out of newspaper and tape them to create "fencing swords." Place a paper fencing sword in one hand while placing the other hand on the forehead, both to prevent head bumping and illegal interference with the free hand. Split the children into groups of three: one referee and two fencers. The object is to touch the outside of the opponent's toes as many times as possible in one minute. The referee keeps count. This develops offensive and defensive strategy, footwork, and quick reflexes. Restricting the targets to the toes keeps students from getting poked in sensitive areas, especially the face and eyes.

Parts and Points

The leader challenges the players to place a given combinations of body "parts" (hands, feet, head, etc.) and "points" (elbows, knees, shoulders) into a specific position or pose. This could be done standing solo, leaning up against a wall or other object, or even with partners. For example: "Touch your left elbow to the wall. Holding that, now touch your right knee to the wall. Now reach over your head with your right hand and grab your left ear. Now touch your nose to your shoulder. Did you do it? Good, you WIN!" These actions can be cumulative, or they can change. Running out of ideas? No problem, simply solicit the class for suggestions of what to add to a current pose. They will come up with things you NEVER would have thought of! See who can follow the most instructions.

Sensei Says

Play this just like Simon Says, but make it Sensei Says! Start by telling your students that Sensei says they must wait until the "*hutt!*" to do the move. This will give them a few seconds after you call out the command to figure out if "Sensei said" and if so, then how to execute the move. Add twists like "Sensei Says 10 jumping jacks- *hutt!*" and then yell "STOP" after the first 2. Everyone who stops must sit or do a small penance, such as 5 sit-ups. Ask the students to raise their hand if they know how to play this game. Those that raise their hand are out - Sensei didn't say! Get them comfortable by doing punches, "Sensei says punch- *hutt!*", Sensei says punch- *hutt!*", ONE MORE PUNCH- *hutt!*" Everyone who punched a third time is out- Sensei didn't say!

The Rules of the Road

Tell the students that it's time to take a drive! Pretend to get into a car, shutting the car door behind you. Ask them what kind of car they are driving. A sports car? A truck? What color? Now have them put the key in the ignition and start up their cars. They can drive their bodies around the room, following some simple road rules. Have the children list some "Rules of the Road" (i.e. no speeding, avoid reckless driving, no illegal parking, etc.). For example, "Everyone drive in a circle going this way! Stop sign, put on the brakes! Now everyone put your car in reverse, look over your shoulder, and drive backwards around the circle. Red light, stop! OK, now drive wherever you want, but don't speed or crash into any other cars! Now, drive back to your lines and park your car. Turn it off, get out, and put your keys in your pocket. Great job, everyone!" This helps the students learn about self-control, body control, and the need to respect personal space (no crashing!).



Dear Cuong Nhu Instructor

Do you find it challenging to teach kids? Are kids much harder for you to reach than adults? More often than not, as soon as a student gets bored, his/her mind drifts off and they're looking around the room for something more stimulating. They start talking or playing with the kid next to them and very quickly the boredom spreads like a virus across the room and you realize you're losing control of the whole class, even the good students. You know you can teach them but their hearts just don't seem to be in it. You end up feeling like you are wasting your time just trying to keep the kids under control, so much so that you don't feel like you've been given the chance to teach them anything.

I think we can all agree that classes have to be fun, but that we should not compromise the integrity of the martial arts skills we want to teach. We have all seen instructors who focus on the extremes, some who are all silly games and no content, and others who are all hardcore training and no fun. Both teaching styles fail to meet the needs of the majority of our students, which eventually leads to failure. Our aim as instructors should be to find a perfect balance between the two. Games are a great way to break up the lesson while still teaching the important skills you have planned for that class.

Of course, nothing is easy, but it is also rarely as hard as it seems. Put some time and energy into preparing your lessons for the week. Put forth a focused effort in every class to adhere to and fine-tune those lesson plans. With every lesson test new ideas and look at the results. Ask yourself what worked well and what didn't? Some ideas might fail miserably, while others might work surprisingly well and show good results. You won't get everything right the first time. We all make plenty of mistakes in the beginning, but you will quickly adjust.

To help you in making your kids' classes fun, we are presenting you with a variety of games and activities that you can play to reinforce the skills that you are teaching in that lesson. For example, if you were teaching kicking skills, you could use the "Balloon Bomb" game, or if you were teaching blocking, then you could use the "Noodle Attack" game to help show the kids how to apply their new skills rather than just do repetitive martial arts drills over and over again to the air.

These special martial arts games really hold the kids' attention, but, when properly implemented, they have other unexpected benefits. For example:

-Your students will learn their techniques much more quickly, which saved you from the frustration of spending several classes going over the same material again and again.

-Your students will build core body strength that helps perform better as well as protects them from training injuries.

-Your students will exhibit increased eye-hand and eye-foot coordination that can dramatically improve all of their techniques.

-Normally shy students, even the youngest, will start showing leadership skills and gaining inner confidence.

**Believe in yourself.
Have an open mind and the courage to change.
Work hard, keep at it, and you WILL SUCCEED!**

A Philosophy Tale

Learning philosophy can be difficult, especially for kids. Take the time to explain each set carefully, discussing it with the students to ensure comprehension. The instructor can make a simple short story to illustrate the application of the philosophy to everyday life. The students can even act out the story as you go. The five A's are a good example. The instructor could say something like, "Baby Bunny had to walk to his Grandma's house to give her some cookies. As he walked along the forest path, he looked all around him. We call this *awareness*. As he looked all around him, he kept his eyes peeled for any signs of danger, like poison ivy that would make him itch or other animals that might like to eat a baby bunny like himself. Looking for sign of danger is called *alertness*. Suddenly, Baby Bunny saw a shadow cross over the path in front of him. He looked up in time to see a hawk zip overhead! Baby Bunny knew that hawks were dangerous, so he dashed under a bush to hide. Getting out of the way like this is called *avoidance*. Baby Bunny was watching when the hawk circled back, and he saw that the hawk was looking for him. Baby Bunny decided he was not safe here. This is called *anticipation*. Baby Bunny decided that it was safest to run home and come back later when the hawk wasn't around. When you decide on a plan and do it, we call that *action*. Baby Bunny was careful and got home safe and sound, and his Mommy told him he was a smart little bunny!" What other stories can you and your students come up with? This makes a great written homework assignment. If the kids are too young to write the story themselves, they can dictate to a parent and have them write the words. When they come back to class, the students can read their stories aloud to the rest of the group. This encourages analytical thinking, demonstrates a practical application of Cuong Nhu's philosophy, and is excellent practice for public speaking.

Balloon Kicks/Grocery Bag Kicks

Give each student a balloon or plastic grocery bag. Have them toss the balloon or bag into the air and front kick it as it floats down. If the student doesn't snap their foot back after the kick, the bag will wrap around their foot. Do relays with front kick balloon/bag races. Be sure to tell the students to respect each other's space! This helps students with their front snap kicks.

Negative Kicking

Have the students stand one leg-length from the wall and press the ball of one foot against the wall. When the Sensei gives the command, the students snap back to ready position, then put their foot back on the wall. Older students can do this with a sidekick as well. This activity reinforces pulling kicks back quickly to ready position.

Kendo Sparring

Kendo means "The Way of The Sword." Using foam swords (these can often be purchased cheaply at a K-Mart or similar establishment), the students gather for a sparring match. Point out the three scoring locations used in Kendo (kotea/glove, men/head, do/chest). Explain that the student must call their point (kotea, men, do) just *before* the point is made. Be sure to tell the students that if the referee doesn't hear the call *and* see the point, it's not going to be called, and there is no arguing with the judge! Emphasize that this is a game and that they must use control so as not to hurt their partner. The instructor is the first referee, to show the students how it's done. Then break into groups of three (one judge and two competitors). After a student scores three points, the students switch roles. This reinforces sparring rules, good sportsmanship, strategic planning, and respect for the referee.





The Dancing Dragon

Have the students form a conga line and walk in a given stance. If a student does the wrong stance and breaks the line, you can have that student go to the tail of the dragon (end of the line), or you can keep the line broken at that student and make two lines. In addition to stance training, this teaches awareness, coordination, and cooperation with others.

Leap Frog / Alligator Crawl

Partner the students with someone about their own size. Partner one stands in front of partner two who gets in a rectangular stance and bends over with his/her hands on knees. Partner two does a leap frog over partner one, then quickly drops and slides under partner one's rectangular stance from the front. A fun variation for advanced students is for partner two to hook partner one's ankles as he/she is going under, making them roll forward. Partner two stands up facing away in rectangular stance with hands on knees just in time for partner one to leap frog over and repeat the exercise. This is a good cardio drill. Challenge each group to do the most jumps in one minute!

Animal Dance

Introduce the animal forms of Vovinam and kung fu by discussing and showing examples of tiger, crane, monkey, and snake forms. Most students will be somewhat familiar with these already through movies such as "Kung Fu Panda." Have the students suggest further movements for each animal you discuss. Once they get warmed up and are moving well, put on music and let the students move about creating their own "animal kata." As you watch the students, pick a move you see someone doing that you think is particularly effective and, after the music stops, discuss possible self-defense applications to that move. This is a fun introduction to animal forms and kata applications.

Frogs and Logs

Have the children stand in two lines, facing each other across a mat. The first student in line one rolls on the mat. The first student in line two rolls across the mat. Line one student stands in time to jump over the rolling line two student, who stands in time to jump over the next line one student rolling at him. When a turn across the mat is finished, the student goes to the back of the opposite line to file through again.

Relays and Races

Most kicks, punches, and stances can be used in a relay or race. For a relay race, it is best to divide the class into even teams of 4-6 people (avoid having too many people on a team to minimize the time spent having to wait for a turn). If a team comes up short, one person may have to go twice to even things out. Examples of possible races include lunge punches in forward stance, backstance with knifehand block, or moves taken from particular kata. Regardless of the specifics of the race, it is a good idea to have the teams sit or kneel in seiza silently. First team in position is the winner. This helps to develop discipline and self-control. Whenever doing competitive activities, always remember to emphasize the importance of good sportsmanship to everyone in the class. It is a very good lesson to learn that winners shouldn't get cocky, and losers shouldn't get disappointed.

"It's not whether you win or lose, it's how you play the game!"



Dragon Tails

The players form a “dragon” by standing in a line with their hands on each other's shoulders. The line leader acts as the head of the dragon and jogs around, twisting and turning, trying to tag the tail, the last player in line. When the head tags the tail, he goes to the end of the line and becomes the next tail. The next person in front becomes the new head and the game starts again.

The game is over when each player becomes the head and the tail.

Winners Dodge Ball

Divide the students into two fairly equal teams. Have the teams face each other. Give each team the same number of balls or soft objects to throw. If a player is hit, he or she must cross over to the other team. When all players are on one team, that team is declared the winners...and the best part is that, in the end, there are no losers!

Philosophy Count

This is not so much a game as a teaching tip. When doing drills, you can drill a little philosophy as well without losing any training time. Instead of counting or giving a “*Hutt!*” to signal the count, instead recite the 5 A's of Self-Defense or the Five F's of Friendship. The students can learn the words surprisingly quickly, sometimes after only a few repetitions. Have the students take turns keeping the count by reciting philosophy as well.

Old Mac Donald's Stretching

This is especially popular with younger kids from 5-7. Sing “I can stretch from head to toe, E-I-E-I-O! I can stretch my (neck, arms, back, legs, etc.) just so, E-I-E-I-O! With a stretch, stretch here, and a stretch, stretch there, here a stretch, there a stretch, everywhere a stretch, stretch. I can stretch from head to toe, E-I-E-I-O!” Repeat for a few rounds letting the students suggest the things to stretch (or rotate) for greater interaction. You could even mix in the “Head, shoulders, knees, and toes” song!

Snakes In The Grass

Very much like “Red light, Green light,” the students start at the edges of the room and try to crawl on their bellies to a circle in the center of the room without being seen by the instructor, who walks around the room trying to catch someone moving. The instructor should purposely turn his or her back at times to allow the students to move, then turn back and see if they can catch any of the students moving. If he or she does catch a student moving, that student has to return to the wall and start again. The students learn awareness and stealth.



Jump the Snake

The snake is a towel tied to the end of a rope. The instructor holds the rope and begins to twirl it overhead slowly. The other players stand in a circle around him or her, then instructor spins the shot around him at approximately ankle height from the floor. The students must jump over the snake as it comes to them. The players must not back up to avoid the snake. If a student misses or stops the snake, they are bitten and out for that round. This is an excellent drill for teaching and discussing the 5 A's: Awareness, Alertness, Avoidance, Anticipation, and Action!

Teaching Tip: **A Sample Lesson Plan**

Lesson Plan: Stances Required for 1 Yellow Stripe

Class / duration: White belts / one hour

Objective: Teach the stances required for 1 yellow stripe.

Equipment Required: Tape or CD player with appropriate music

Introduction: Warm-up and Basics (15-20 minutes)

The portion of the lesson is centered on stretching interspersed with stamina drills, developing the students' physical dexterity and stamina to complete the demands of the class and improve their current physical state so they enjoy health benefits outside of class. Students line up and perform all exercises in their predetermined spots while the instructor or assistant rotates between his position at the front of the class and moving in between the rows of children correcting form and encouraging effort. Stamina activities include punches in horse stance, jumping jacks, push-ups, leg scissors, leg lifts, crunches, bicycles, jackknives, etc. Following this part of the warm up students are given one minute to quickly get a sip of water and get ready for bag work. Hitting a heavy bag or focus mitts gives children the chance to practice techniques with more power and experiment with different combinations.

Lesson Focus: Stances (15-20 minutes)

During this section of the class the kids are again asked to line up. Most of the movement basics can be taught from the line drill format, and using this group drill format, children work together and can watch the form of other students and the instructor. This format allows the instructor the ability to still command class but also weave through students correcting form and giving individual feedback and encouragement to students who need it.

Stances:

- ~ Horse stance: A basic position used to develop strong legs while practicing other techniques.
- ~ Cat stance: Used for ease of transition from stance to stance and as a ready position that allows for quick reaction to an opponent.
- ~ Diagonal stance: A strong stance that acts like a coiled spring ready to pop!
- ~ Forward stance: The "power stance" of karate. It is not just a static position, but part of a dynamic movement used to deliver powerful strikes.
- ~ Moving in forward stance: This is actually a series of movements utilizing the cat, diagonal, and forward stance. This cumulative stance drill teaches the coordination required for a balanced transition from stance to stance.

Game: The Stance Dance (5-10 minutes)

Once the students show a knowledge and understanding of the stances, the final portion of the class may begin. The class is lined up and explained the rules of the game. They must stay within a given area. While the music is playing, the students move around and shadow box, performing punches, blocks, and kicks, but not touching anyone else. When the music stops the instructor calls out a stance, and the students all do a move in that stance and freeze. When the music is turned back on the students continue to shadow box until the music stops again.

Closing (5 minutes)

Before dismissing the class, congratulate them on their effort and on learning the stances so well. Quickly review the lesson and pass out homework assignments for the students. Homework consists of drills and different activities to practice outside of the dojo to improve their skills.

Balloon Bombs

The martial arts balloon game is played with one or more players. The game is a little easier if the balloon is spherical (other shapes are more difficult but also fun). The players get together and one student throws their “balloon bomb” in the air. Then the players try to keep the balloon in the air as long as possible without it touching the ground. Every time someone hits the balloon to keep it up in the air, the players count the hit. To make it harder, students are only allowed to hit the balloon with martial arts techniques. They can punch, block, kick, elbow, knee, or head butt, as long as it is martial arts move. Balloons that touch the ground “blow up” and that team has to start the counting all over again. See which team can get the most points in a given number of minutes.

The Whistle Drill

A more advanced variation of Simon Says is the whistle drill. The students spread out across the floor and the instructor gives a command like “jumping jacks” and blows a whistle. The students then do jumping jacks until the instructor blows the whistle again, at which point the students must freeze and not move. Then the instructor gives another command and blows the whistle to signal the students to begin. Any student who moves between whistles has to do 5 push-ups or is out and has to sit down. The instructor may try to trick the students into moving by calling a technique but not blowing the whistle, and any student who does the technique would be out. For really tough students, the instructor can talk to them, approach them, ask questions, and otherwise try to distract them into to moving between exercises.

Octo Tug

Tie three or more equal length pieces of rope or unused belts together (a great use for extra white belts). Make sure the knots will not come loose. Lay the ropes on the ground with the “arms” radiating out from the central knot like an octopus laid out on the floor. Place an object like a piece of sparring gear, a cone, or a line of tape just out of reach, far enough from each end of the rope that the players will have to really stretch to touch or cross their goal. The players each pick up an arm of the octopus and, on the instructor’s signal, they tug and reach for their goal. The one who pulls the hardest will pull the others off balance and reach the goal. This can be done “freestyle” or in particular stances (i.e. everyone has to maintain a rectangular stance, back stance, side stance, etc.) to train rootedness and balance.

Blob Relay

Divide the class into two or three teams, but for this race, the bigger the team the better (limit to about 20 per team). The entire team is a “blob.” Have 5 or 6 players form a circle around the others on their team, facing outward and joining hands or elbows to make a tight group. At the instructor’s command, each group moves as one, down the floor to a cone, around the cone and back to the starting line. The group that can stay intact and return to the starting line first, wins.

Blob Tag

One student starts as “the Blob.” Whenever he or she tags another student, that student links hands with the person who tagged them. They are now part of the blob, which keeps moving to catch more and more students. If there are a lot of students and the blob becomes too big, the instructor can break it apart to make two or more blobs. The game is over when everyone has been captured by a blob.



Cleaning House

Use any odd number of soft objects such as playground balls, sparring gear, or focus mitts. Divide the players into two teams and then divide the objects between the two teams. The players should spread out on one side of a line dividing the room. A physical barrier such as a volleyball net, a row of mats, or a line of gym bags works well. The goal is for each team to keep throwing objects over the net or line to the opponent's side so that, when the time limit has expired, there will be as many objects as possible in the other team's possession. The time limit should be changed and unknown to the players to avoid hoarding the objects and throwing them at the last second. You can play the game in four quarters. Add up the number of balls in each court at the end of the time limit for each quarter, then add the four quarters together at the end of the game. The lower number wins!

Teaching Tip: *Charisma*

What is charisma? How can you increase your own? Most people think that charisma is something magical that people either have or they don't. But it's actually much simpler than that, and something you can control. Nick Morgan, founder of Public Words Inc., one of America's top communication and speech coaches, teaches his students, "Charisma is two things: **authenticity** (and by that I mean something quite specific) and **attitude** -- the passionate expression of emotion.

Most of us don't radiate a lot of charisma because we're either not authentically present, right there, in the moment, or because we're not expressing much in the way of emotion. We either are split in focus – nervous, thinking about something else, distracted – or we're bottled up – afraid to show what we really feel. We tend to put actors high on the charisma list because they're so good at expressing emotion. They work on making the emotions very true, even though the circumstances are usually made up.

So how do you increase your own charisma? **First, increase your authenticity.** And that means being absolutely aligned in what you say and how you say it – content and body language. You can't be authentic if those two modes of expression are not aligned. **Second, increase your passion.** Focus in yourself on how you feel about the moment, the people you're with, the situation you're in, and then express that (see #1).

Working on these two steps will create a virtuous cycle that will increase your charisma quotient as you get more and more practiced at expressing emotion authentically."





Push-ups

Push-ups are not exactly fun, because they require hard work, but we need to do a lot of them to make our whole bodies strong. Fortunately there is a technique that educators call *disguised repetition*. Disguised repetition allows instructors to drill a specific technique over and over again while avoiding boredom. This is accomplished by switching up often, constantly introducing slight variations to the exercise or drill, keeping it “new” for the students. There are a multitude of variations when it comes to push-ups. You can do push-ups against a wall or with hands on a chair to make it easier for students who initially need to build their strength. For more advanced students, push-ups can be done with your feet raised on a chair, or, for more of a challenge, on a medicine ball or balance ball. Push-ups can also be done with one leg consistently raised behind you throughout the exercise. Exceptional students may be able to do handstand pushups against a wall...or even without a wall! Other variations include plyometric push-ups, commonly referred to as “Marine push-ups”, where you clap once (or twice!) in between each lowering motion, and sphinx push-ups where you lower yourself on palms, then drop your elbows to the floor, then come back to plank position to raise up, and repeat. There are still a multitude of additional variations on individual push-ups, probably enough to fill a book, let’s move on to doing push-ups with a partner.

The benefits of working with a partner include improved observational skills, increased ability to respond flexibly to a changing situation under stress, and increased endurance. Observing somebody else can take you “outside of yourself”, lessening self-indulgence and attention to yourself, so you won’t give up so easily. Have the students pair up head-to-head in push-up position across from each other on the floor. One student leads while the other follows, trying to mimic not only the gross physical movements of the leader, but his or her breathing as well. Introduce this concept with a set of 5 push-ups to an instructor’s count of 5, breathing in as they go down and out as they press up. Next, do another set to a count of 10, working up to a set that is freely paced by the leader. The leader can get creative at this point (i.e. going half-way down then rising, varying the speed, repositioning the hands or feet, etc.). The follower should try to mimic as many nuances as possible, keeping the same rhythm, the same breath pattern, the same posture, even the same spirit and feeling. Try the same drills with the partners lined upside to side (elbows facing back). You can even try placing a ball between the shoulders for automatic alignment checking.

Finally, no examination of push-ups would be complete without including team push-ups! Students can put their feet on another student’s legs as he/she stands in rectangular stance, with the standing partner doing hand techniques such as punches or blocks for each push-up done. Students could also stack their feet on the back of another student and do push-ups in tandem. This could be extended to include 3 or more students working together. Be aware that students should be about the same weight for this activity. Although stronger students can sometimes support individuals larger than themselves, always keep safety foremost in your mind.





Obstacle Courses

Obstacle courses are always a favorite, especially for kids' classes. Whenever possible, put some thought into the course beforehand. Do you have any goals you are trying to accomplish such as developing balance, strength, or agility? Are there techniques you are working on in class that can be integrated into your course design? It is a good idea to avoid letting anyone stand around waiting in line, so assign a time-killing exercise like jumping jacks or running place between turns at a station.

Some ideas for obstacles include: jumping over a pile of kicking shields; crawling through a tunnel of kicking shields without touching them; jumping over a series of heavy bags laid about two feet apart; kicking or striking a hanging target, hanging bag or stand up heavy bag; weaving around a line of cones or focus mitts laid out on the floor; duck walking or alligator crawling under a hanging heavy bag, looking in the mirror and kiai-ing loudly five times; rolling between two kicking shields without touching them; blocking an "attack" by a foam sword or padded stick; crawling under a stick balanced on two chairs; walking on a line on the floor (masking tape works well and removes easily); slalom hopping over a belt laid on the floor; etc., etc., etc!!!! Keep in mind that some stations may require a separate instructor to reset an obstacle or keep an eye on the students' progress and be there to help if needed. Always remember, safety first!

Kicking Cups

This is a great exercise to develop fast, accurate kicks. Get some disposable plastic or paper drinking cups and a soft support such as a free-standing heavy bag taken off the base. Place a cup on top of the bag and have the student kick it off with a well-placed kick. Have the students try kicking the cups into a target such as a trashcan placed several feet behind the target. Challenge advanced students to kick 10 cups off in a row with wheel kicks without stopping. Stack two cups one atop the other and have the student kick only the top cup first, then the bottom one with the other foot, or try two or more kicks with the same leg. You are only limited by your imagination! Kicking cups is fun, and helps develop proper distancing in kicking.

Predators and Prey

This is a fun tag game. Divide the students into teams and have them face off about five feet away from each other. The instructor then says "Prey" and points to a team. That team then attempts to run to a safe zone such as a wall without getting tagged by a member of the opposing team, a "predator." To switch things up, the instructor can alternately shout "Predators!" Ask the student what some examples of predators and prey are, then you can add variety by playing "Cats and Mice", "Foxes and Rabbits", "Wolves and Sheep", etc. Try playing with the teams starting facing away from each other, or lying on their backs, possibly with the soles of their feet touching the soles of a member of the other team. You could also combine this activity with the game "Tail Chase" by giving each student a piece of cloth or cut up old belt to tuck in their belt, giving the predators something to grab. As with all of these games, the variations are nearly endless.

All you need to do is USE YOUR IMAGINATION!!!

Bear Hunt

This is like the classic camp song "Bear Hunt." Have the children stand in a circle and slap their thighs to make a walking sound as they pedal their feet. Recite "I'm going on a bear hunt, a bear hunt, a bear hunt, I'm going on a bear hunt," then suddenly put your hands to your face in surprise and exclaim, "What do I see? I see"

...a wide field." Pretend to look through field glasses.

...a ninja coming at me!" Do a front snap kick and a chop.

...a gate" act out opening and closing a gate.

...a robber coming at me!" do a sidekick and backfist strike.

...a tree." climb the tree to see what's ahead.

You get the idea. The students mimic each movement. Repeat the refrain "I'm going on a bear hunt, a bear hunt, a bear hunt, I'm going on a bear hunt. What do I see?" between each sighting. After the instructor does a few moves, go around the circle with each student taking their turn acting as the leader, demonstrating their move and the other students to follow. After everyone has had a turn, say "I see a Bear coming at me! Run away home!" Then have the students run and touch a wall and come back, or just slap their thighs rapidly with their hands as if they are running. End with "Home again, safe at last!" This game develops basic motor skills and imagination.



Through the Jungle

Similar to "Bear Hunt", have the students line up or make a circle with the instructor in the middle. When the game starts, everyone jogs on the spot and sings "Going through the jungle, going through the jungle..." When the instructor yells "Branch!" all the students duck. When the instructor says "Log!" the students jump and kiai. When the instructor says "Cheetah!" the students need to run in place very fast. When the instructor says "BEAR!" the students need to quickly lie down and play dead. When the instructor is not saying any of these, the students continue to sing "going through the jungle", and they jog in place. Feel free to change the setting each time you play. Ask a student, "Where do you want to go to today?" Try the desert, the beach, or even an alien world! This game can be a useful tool for reviewing realistic responses of what to do in an emergency such as a fire or being confronted by a potential abductor in your own neighborhood.

Freeze tag

After practicing low, middle and rising blocks, have your students spread out over the dojo. Use a foam sword and move around, chasing the children. Tell them that once you "lock on" to them, you will attack, so they need to face you as soon as they realize you are following them. Make sure to remind them to always look where they are going as they walk quickly around the dojo (no running) so they do not crash into each other. Strike the student with a downward vertical blow to the head so they must block with rising block, a horizontal blow at chest level for a middle block, or a stabbing motion toward their belt for a lower block. If the student fails to do the correct block, they are "frozen" in rectangular stance until 3 students crawl under them (you can't attack students who are freeing a frozen friend!). Start by doing only one attack, then, after your students get the hang of it add two or more attacks to different levels.





Frogger

In this exercise your whole class needs to work like one giant video game. First, get them warmed-up by lining them up in "crouched frog" position. On your mark, have them jump in sequence (one hop) from one end of the line to the other, with each student waiting for the frog on their right to jump first (spice things up by randomly switching the starting side). You can really challenge the class by starting at both sides (left AND right) at the same time (each student will hop twice in this example). Timing can be difficult in this drill, so if your students are having a tough time, help them out by running in front of them and pointing at who should be jumping. Once they figure it out, you and an assistant stand on one side of the line. Tell your students they get to jump once, and they need to do it after your assistant passes but before you "run them over." Your assistant should walk just in front of the line of frogs as you follow him (pretending to drive a Mac truck!) along the current line of frogs. If they jump too early, your assistant runs them down, if they jump too late, you run them down!

Noodle Attack

Use full-length pool noodles to attack your students. Twirl them like you would double tambos or rope darts. Students can jump, duck, dodge and block. Alter your attacks from slow to fast, and from the vertical to the horizontal. Have your students gather around you in a circle, or have them spread out and avoid you like in Freeze Tag.

Line up!

A quick and simple game that kids LOVE to play- have them wander the dojo, or run to touch a wall, and clap your hands twice. This signals the start of the game. Time how long it takes to get lined up correctly and in natural stance. See if they can beat their old time. Add a twist by telling them "last time it took you 14 seconds to line up, this time if you take 12 seconds or more you must do 20 pushups. HOWEVER, if you can line up in under 10 seconds WE (all sensei/sempai) will do 20 pushups!" You will be surprised how happy your students are when they are counting the pushups they made you do!

Drag Racing

Students should pair up according to size. Each team gets 2 "flags" (12" sections of cut up white belts.) One student lays on their back the ground, head facing the direction he will be dragged. His partner stands at his head, facing him, with back toward the direction he will be pulling. The standing partner holds 2 flags, one in each hand, down to his partner who reaches up with straight arms to grab the flags. The standing partner backs up and pulls the other across the dojo to a predetermined line. When they reach the line the partners must change places, then return. The partner that lays down must lift his feet off the floor and not help by pushing himself along the floor. This exercise helps build strength, teamwork and communication skills. The real fun of this game is watching the kids work together to figure out how to turn around quickly and efficiently.



DRAG RACING



Teaching Tip:

The Importance of Using Positive Statements

All students occasionally require redirecting. As instructors, we want to get the students to do the desired behavior as soon as possible so we can go on teaching. We also, however, have an incredible responsibility to make our students' experiences in the dojo positive ones. Traditional negative statements (like always starting corrections with "don't") and punitive punishments (like push-ups) often do more harm than good. Try instead to make redirections statements that deescalate the situation. Think to yourself, what is your goal? The student needs to be reminded what the correct behavior is that they are to be doing, and that you have the confidence in them that they will be able to do it. Endeavor to reframe their actions in a pro-active way by using clear, positive language. Never lose your composure, but instead increase your compassion. Use the student's name and look them in the eye gently. Let them know that you care, and they will be more likely to respond to you.

Instead of saying, "Don't talk in line!" you can say "Remember, Billy, we remain quiet in line."

Rather than say, "I'm very disappointed in you, Kate." you can say "Kate, from now on I'd like to see you do this..." and state or demonstrate clearly and the desired behavior you expect to see.

Daisy keeps jumping in line and you've already told her not to. Rather than shout, "Daisy, I already told you, don't butt in line!" calmly state the problem, then state the solution to the problem. You might get better results by calmly stating, "Daisy, you cut in line again. It is important that you wait your turn. I know you can do it, because last week you waited in line so well. Show me you can do it again!"

Instead of saying things like, "Stop fidgeting!" try something like "Class, remember that I expect you to control your bodies and stand still. I know it's tough, but I also know you can do it!"

Rather than shout, "Mandy, Stop hitting Tommy or you'll sit out!" try saying, "Mandy, hit Tommy. Tommy can't concentrate if you hit him. Please focus on what you are doing."

If the disruption escalates, especially if it is negatively affecting other students, it is appropriate to use more assertive language, but remember to maintain your composure. Calmly state the problem, then state the consequences that will ensue if the student's behavior persists. For example, "Mandy, you are still hitting people. It is dangerous. You may hurt some. If you do it again I will have to ask you to sit down."

Remember, if you make a threat you have to follow through with it. Give a student who is misbehaving two clear warnings, one positive, and one with a consequence. If a student repeats the behavior, calmly ask them to go sit. "Mandy, go sit down. Stay still and stay quiet. I will be with you in a moment." After a few minutes, go over to the student, get down to eye level, and ask the student if they are ready to reenter the class. If they reply affirmatively, ask if they are ready to follow the rules. If the student further agrees, give them an encouraging word as you escort them back into class.

If a student is asked to sit out during a class, it would serve you well to discuss the incident with the child's parent at the earliest opportunity, preferably immediately after class, but just prior to the next class will also work. You will find that a cooperative parent is an essential ally in modifying a student's undesirable behaviors. Therefore, treat the parent as a valued teammate, being careful not to make the parent feel like you are blaming or attacking them personally for their child's actions. Calmly inform the parent of the student's behavior and state what the expectations are. Then let them know that you know their student can do better, and that together, you can help the child do their best and reach their full potential. Stay positive!



Snake

A very popular game is Snake. To build a "snake" you will need to create a foam rope dart. Some pipe insulation duck taped to the end of a 8 foot piece of heavy rope will work nicely, or you could improvise with a karate belt and a piece of sparring gear. Gather your students around you and start spinning the "Snake" around your head. Swing it low to strike at the students' feet, and they will need to jump to avoid being "bitten." Remind them to jump by bringing their knees to their chest and then land quietly. Eventually you can change the game to "poisonous snake." If a student is bitten, they are out and must sit out. Encourage those who get knocked out to cheer for those who are still in. You can spice up the game by striking high, which makes the students duck. You can add different strikes, such as a downward vertical swing, or a "shoot" straight into their chest. In these cases, students should "open the door" and let the attacks strike where they were standing, all the while keeping their eyes on the snake. You can then add a small soft ball to the mix. The snake will be targeting the student holding the ball. Whoever has the ball must call out another student's name before throwing the ball to them (underhand). If a student is hit, they must do a small penance, such as 5 pushups.

Kata Statues

At any point during kata say "we are going to freeze like statues in 3, 2, 1.... FREEZE!" At this point you can walk around and correct stances and hand positions. Students can blink and breathe, but that is it. This exercise will teach the children to keep focus during kata and not drift between counts. After 20 seconds or so, start to mess with them- make a fart noise. Whoever laughs sits down. Act like a monkey and goof around. Whoever turns their head to look at you sits down. Ask if that is someone's 5 dollar bill on the ground? Those who looked must do a small penance, such as 5 pushups.

Hero Rolls

This is a special challenge for students who are already experienced with forward rolls. Have the students cradle a foam roller (a foam cylinder approximately 6"-12" in diameter commonly used in fitness) in their arms. Explain to them that this represents a baby that they are trying to save and they have just fallen or been pushed (you can even wrap the cylinder in a t-shirt or towel). Since they don't want to injure the baby, they must roll carefully with their arms in a circle.

Indiana Jones (addition to Hero Rolls)

Once kids start rolling correctly you can spice their rolls by adding timing. Use the foam rope dart described in the Snake game (above), and spin it like a fan perpendicular to their roll. Have your students time the "blade of doom" so when they roll they are not hit by it. If this is too hard, you can tell them that a correct roll gives them a "shield of protection" and getting hit will not harm them. Make sure they do not roll off the sides of the mat. You can alter how you spin the dart to create different scenarios. Try using foam swords and scissor them up and down in front of the student. They need to leap through the blades to avoid being hit. You can also add other objects to make rolls more fun- try laying a padded sword down in front of the child who is rolling. Have them scoop it up as they roll and, as they pop up, they must come to a standing position and strike/defend against an attack with another padded weapon. The possibilities are endless. If you have problems thinking outside of the box, ask your students for suggestions, but remember, it is up to you to keep it SAFE!



CHICKEN — ★★ ★ — FIGHTERS



Chicken Fights

This is a good drill to develop balance and strategy. Have your students pair up according to size and face each other about 2 feet apart. Each student should get into crane stance, tucking the top of one foot behind the other knee. The partners should then hold their hands up and place them palm to palm with their partner. No grabbing is allowed, no interlacing of the fingers, no pushing the chest of the opponent. Each partner then tries to push the other off balance using only their hands. If one of the students puts his or her foot down, that student drops and does one push up. After getting back up, both students switch to the opposite stance and continue the game. Change the game by having students hop around in kicking stance while moving their "up" leg in a left and right horizontal motion. They can now try to nudge the other off balance by making contact with the other students "up" leg. Hands should remain in a guarded position. Make sure to tell the students that bringing the knee up (as in a knee strike) is NOT allowed, only left and right motions are permitted. A third version of the game has the students hopping around with their hands clasped behind their backs, holding the foot of their bent leg, bumping hips and shoulders in an attempt to knock their opponents off balance. Put each pair in a square or circle taped onto the floor, and the students can try to bump each other out of the "ring." Try a mass chicken fight with small groups, or even teams...last chicken standing wins!

The Stone Guard

Put on a pair of sunglasses and grab a padded weapon, the bigger the better. Tell your students that a stone guard is protecting a treasure. Have them go from one side of the dojo to the other collecting balls, flags (cut up white belts) anything - all the while avoiding the blows of the stone guard. Before the game begins tell them the stone guard is invincible, but nearly blind and quite slow (UGLY too!). He reacts to movement and sound. If a student is struck he must lay on the floor and have another student drag him back to the starting point to "heal." Students should move stealthy all the while observing the stone guard. They should freeze when he looks their way. Smart students will use the "treasure" as a distraction to get away by rolling/throwing it across the room. Make sure the students know the game is not over until all injured students are dragged to safety. Add a twist by hanging a few flags from your belt and make the kids get them off of you.

Kata Variations

With so much necessary repetition, kata 1 (or any other kata for that matter) can get boring to students, so utilize the concept of "disguised repetition" to keep things fresh. Spice it up by speaking verrrry slllloooooowwly to the students and tell them to do kata 1 super slow. You might say something like, "Oh no, we've been hit by a slow motion gun!" Doing kata slowly will help them correct mistakes *before* they make them. After a slow kata, do one very fast. "Now we push our super-fast buttons!" This will teach them to plow over their mistakes and attempt to fix them as the kata progresses. Change the kata again by turning the students into robots that can only move when the command word has been said. This will teach them to remain motionless between counts. Try letting them do a normally traditional kata in animal style; mimicking the tiger, crane, monkey, and snake. Since this can make things somewhat hectic, don't worry too much about what the students are doing with their hands, but make sure their feet are always in correct position and following the floor pattern of the kata. Let the students make some suggestions so they feel ownership in the process as well.

GRAPPLE N PLAY

Snakes and Blankets

This game is an excellent introduction to grappling and ground fighting. You should have mats and pair the students up by size. One partner is the “snake” and lies down on their back while the other, the “blanket”, lies perpendicularly across them, belly down, in side mount. The snake then tries to escape from under the blanket. The blanket can move around and should be heavy, but can't grab with the hands. If the snake escapes he or she wins, the roles are reversed and they start again. To discourage the students from giving up their backs (a bad habit in grappling), if the blanket can get into “piggy back” position on the snake, blanket wins and they start again. Switch partners often.

Elevators

Students pair off with someone about their own size and sit back to back, hooking each other's arms at the elbows. Together, the partners try to rise to a standing position. Then, they can try to lower themselves back down to a seated position. Elevators can be done solo as a cooperation-building activity, or can be part of other activities such as a relay race. In this case teams of partners start in a seated position, must rise up, run around a cone or other to another line, then lower back down to a seated position to win.

Airplane

Break the students into teams of four. One student lies face down on the floor with their arms outstretched, and concentrates on activating their core muscles to stiffen their entire body. Two students take hold of the arms, one on each side, while the fourth student takes hold of the feet. Then the entire group moves as one making the first student fly like an airplane. This is a great cooperative activity that can also be worked into relays. Tell the class that if a team “crashes” a plane, not only will that team lose, but someone might get hurt, so fly safely!

The Crab Run

The students assume the crab-walk position by dropping their hands behind them, holding themselves up without letting their bottoms touch the floor. They can now have a race from one side of the room to the other, or perhaps do a lap around some cones. A crab fight is when the crabs bump into each other and try to knock each other off balance, making the other crabs' bottoms touch the floor so they will be “out.” Emphasize that crabs don't kick each other...but they can kick balloons! Play the balloon bomb game in crab walk position, counting how many hits a student or team of students can get while trying keep their balloon in the air and not it touch the ground.

In another variation, two partners start sitting back to back. On the ready signal both contestants raise themselves up on their hands into the crab position. At the instructor's command, each player tries to push their opponent out of a circle or across a line taped on the floor.





Indian Wrestling

The Native Americans had many traditional games that acted as tests of strength, stamina, and courage. These many different contests all fall under the general term "Indian wrestling." Much like sparring, several of these activities, such as staff wrestling, involve considerable physical interaction, so take special precautions such as the wearing of mouth guards or other protective gear. Pair students off with someone approximately their size, but switch partners often to allow your students to experience other opponents with different strategies and strengths. Indian wrestling easily lends itself to tournament competition. Simply use a standard tournament bracket, continuing the competition process until only one person remains. The many variations of Indian wrestling include:

Thumb Wrestling

Partners grasp hands (right to right or left to left) so that their curved fingers interlock and the thumbs are on top and can easily reach each other. The students start with their thumbs on opposite sides of their upturned hammerfists, then they switch position and count, "1...2...3!" On the third switch back and forth, both partners attempt to get their thumb on top and hold the opponent's thumb down, pinning them for a slow count of three.

Arm Wrestling

Arm Wrestling can be traced all the way back to ancient Egypt where a painting depicting a type of arm wrestling was found in an Egyptian tomb dating to about 2,000 B.C., but the modern sport is based on a Native American game. In fact, it was usually called "Indian wrestling" when practiced by frontiersmen during the 19th century and by children in the early 20th century. Students can be seated at a table or lie prone on the ground facing each other. Each student puts one arm forward, placing the elbow on the table or floor. The competitors clasp hands and attempt to force the back of the other's hand to the table or floor without lifting their own elbow. The loser is the one whose hand is forced to touch first.

Leg Wrestling (standing)

Partners stand facing each other, slightly offset so their right feet can be placed forward and side to side. The partners grasp each other's right wrists and push and pull trying to get their opponent to move their front foot. The first player to move their front foot loses. Switch to the left side and repeat.

Leg Wrestling (prone)

Both players lay on the floor, hip to hip, facing in opposite directions. To begin, each player simultaneously raises their inside leg to a ninety-degree angle three times. Each time their leg reaches the top they count, "1...2...3...GO!" On "go" the two contestants lock legs at the knee and push forward with all their strength in an attempt to flip their partner over backwards. Once one partner has completely flipped the other player over, the game is ended and the winner is declared.

Hop Wrestling (one legged)

Students face each other standing on their right foot and grasping right hands. At the start command, each player attempts to pull the other off balance. The right foot may move and hop around, but the left foot may not touch the ground. Switch and play left footed and left handed.

Push-Foot Wrestling

Two opponents stand facing each other, each standing only on his/her right foot. The partners raise their left feet and oppose them sole to sole. At the instructor's start command, they attempt to push or maneuver the other so as to cause them to fall or touch their left foot to the ground. No kicking, no grabbing or pushing with the hands, only steady pushing with the extended leg.

Shoulder Wrestling (seated)

Two challengers sit back to back with their elbows locked. On the start signal, they each attempt to force the other's right shoulder to the ground. The game can be played best two out of three falls to determine the winner.

Shoulder Wrestling (kneeling)

Two opponents kneel facing each other. At the instructor's "Ready!" command they lock fingers palm to palm, left to right and right to left. At the "Push!" command, they attempt to force their opponent's shoulders to the ground, in either direction. Only the hand contact is allowed.

Chest Wrestling (arms behind)

Two opponents stand chest to chest with hands clasped behind their backs. Pushing only with their chests, each attempts to push the other across a line taped on the floor about five feet behind him.

Chest Wrestling (arms outstretched)

Two challengers stand chest to chest with their arms outstretched. About two paces behind each is a line taped on the floor. At the instructor's first command of "Ready!" the challengers firmly push chest to chest. On the second command, "Push!" they each attempt to push their opponent over the line behind them. This contest usually goes quickly and so can be decided as a best two out of three.

Back Wrestling (arms locked)

Two opponents stand back to back, locking elbows. Each attempts to pull, tug, carry, or otherwise get his/her opponent across a line taped on the floor about five feet behind him.

Lift Wrestling

Two contestants stand facing each other. Each places their right arm under the opponent's left arm and around their back. The left arms are then placed over the opponent's right shoulder. At the instructor's start command, each player attempts to lift the other off the ground. The first person whose feet lose contact with the floor loses.

Reach Wrestling

Two opponents grasp either right or left wrists. A small stick or other object is placed 6 feet behind each. On the instructor's signal, each attempts to grab the object behind him or herself, without releasing the locked wrist grasp. The first to obtain their object wins.

Crook and Collar Wrestling

Two opponents face each other. Bending forward, each places his or her right arm behind the other's neck, and his or her left hand in the crook of the opponent's right elbow. At the start command, each contestant attempts to force the other to move a foot. The first to move a foot loses. In a second variation, the first to touch the ground with anything other than his or her feet loses. If the grip is lost, the match restarts.

Staff Wrestling (standing)

Students stand facing each other in a wide stance, and both opponents grasp a stout staff with both hands. On the instructor's signal, they attempt to force their opponent to let go of the staff or move his feet without letting go of the staff or moving his/her own feet. An advanced version allows the students to move their feet, the objective being only to get the opponent to release their grip on the staff.

Mas-Wrestling

Mas-wrestling (“mas” means stick in Yakut) is an ancient traditional sport from Yakutia in Russia. Although looking quite simple, mas-wrestling is considered a form of strongman contest, which demands great muscular strength from the hands, legs, back, and abdominals. Participants taking part in mas-wrestling competitions sit in front of each other, prop their feet against a special board that divides the competition area, and grasp a wooden stick or staff, making sure to keep it parallel to the propping board. Victory is declared when a contestant manages to pull his opponent over the board while still keeping the stick in his or her hands.



Newaza Pulling

Newaza pulling is a judo game where two partners sit facing each other and clasp wrists with either their right or left hands. At the instructor’s signal the contestants try to pull their partner over a line taped on the floor. You could also give one partner the task of pulling the other out of a circle, while the second partner’s job is to try to stay within the circle. If the puller succeeds, switch roles and repeat. You could play to see who can stay in the circle the longest, or set a time limit for 30 seconds to determine the winner.



Heavy Bag Football

The game teaches students to focus and develops stamina while allowing them to work on specific kicks, punches, or combinations of techniques. Position a water-filled base heavy bag between two pieces of tape on the floor. Have two students position themselves on opposite sides of the bag. Using the same technique or combination of techniques, the students will take turns alternating striking the bag, moving it back and forth until one student is able to drive the bag over the opposite tape mark on the floor to score a “Touchdown!” Of course, the base must not be too heavy for the students attempting to move the bag.

Dodge Bowling

Prepare by placing two strips of tape in rows approximately three feet apart. Tell your students to stand on one piece of the tape. Take a large exercise ball (a light balance ball, *not* a weighted medicine ball) and rolling it at the students. The students may only jump to the side *ONCE* to dodge the ball. Immediately after they must return to their spot on the tape. If a student is hit, he/she must go sit until there is only one student standing. That student is declared the winner.

For advanced students, you may require them to perform a specific footwork or technique such as shuffle step, skip, etc., to dodge the ball. After playing a few rounds, extra balls can be added to provide an even greater challenge to the student’s attention, peripheral vision, etc.



Ninja Ball

This game is great for reflexes and develops defensive skills and good footwork. You will need a dozen or so small, soft, tennis ball-sized sponge balls. All the players take their places within a pre-determined “combat arena.” At the instructor’s command the students move around the combat arena and throw the foam ball “ninja bombs” at each other. As soon as a player is hit anywhere on his or her head, body, or legs they immediately move to the perimeter of the combat arena and sit down in seiza or with their legs crossed. It is important that the players are honest and move out quickly as soon as they are hit on a valid target area. They can help to bowl the ammo back into the combat arena for the remaining players, but they must not throw them. Students can’t score once they are out of the game.

Players can dodge, block, catch, and throw the balls at each other. If they are hit on the arms, from shoulder to finger tips, it is considered a block and that student is safe. Only the head, body, and legs are legitimate targets. To keep the balls flying, students are not allowed to hold on to any more than two balls at a time. The game continues until only one player remains...the Ninja Champion!

Snake Bridges

Break the students off into teams of three. Have one student stand in a horse stance about 5’ in front of the starting line. Now have another student in a horse stance 5’ in front of that student. The student snake standing behind the starting line is the “snake” and will crawl on his or her forearms and toes under the “bridges”, the legs of the two students standing in the horse stances. Once through the snake will go 5’ in front of the last bridge and stand in a horse stance. The student standing closest to the starting line then becomes the “snake” and the activity repeats until the students reach a goal such as a line taped on the floor.

Kung Fu Circle

In this exercise the students will learn to pay attention to their environment through listening for movement and sound; plus they will learn balance, focus and technique. Have a student stand in the middle of a circle formed by the other students standing about 5’ or 6’ away from the student in the middle. The students forming the circle take turns giving commands “block,” “punch,” or “kick”). Once a command is called, the student in the middle of the circle turns towards the person who called the command and executes it. For example, if the person said punch, the student in the middle will do a punch of his or her choice (the same goes for blocks and kicks). Older or more advanced students can call specific techniques such as “front kick,” “roundhouse kick,” “lunge punch,” etc.

Once they’ve mastered the basic game, have the students in the circle move together clockwise or counterclockwise while they call the commands. The student in the middle now has to track the caller as he or she executes their command. The students in the circle are now getting a leg workout as well!



Add-Ons

Have your students line up for forms. The first student performs a technique of their choice, and the group follows. The next student adds a new technique then the group performs both in succession. Each student in the class gets to add a move until you get a full-length form that the students made up themselves. Encourage your students to be creative! For larger classes you can split them into groups and have each group make up a form. Then the groups can demonstrate their new forms for each other. Students always enjoy this and also like to make up a name for their form. This drill is great for memorization skills and a fun break from doing regular forms.

Sensei, May I?

Get your students to line up against a wall. Go down the line and tell each student to perform a prescribed technique. Once the technique has been completed, the student must ask "Sensei, may I?" If the technique is acceptable the instructor replies with, "Yes, you may" and that student moves forward one square. If the technique is not suitable, reply, "No, you may not" and that student must stay where they are. A student may ask "Sensei, why may I not?" and you can give your reason.

This is a great game to play with students between 4 and 8 years of age. It teaches them to focus on doing techniques correctly in order to progress to the next stage. It also teaches good manners, but it is equally important that the instructor reply with good manners as well. Dependent on age or rank, you can ask a student to do a technique again and give an example or show them. This also teaches your students the importance of listening closely and following directions.

Ground-dori

The drill can be done as a group or in pairs. The objective is to safely and gradually introduce students to randori while developing a strong, balanced base on the ground.

Pair up the students by size and have the students face each other on their knees. The students bow to each other to signal that they are both ready. Only grabbing the uniform, never the neck or fingers, each student tries to unbalance their opponent and roll them to the ground (on their back, side, or stomach). The person who gets their partner to the ground first is the winner. Repeat.

Another way to do this drill is called "King of the Ring." The objective is the same, but this time the students kneel in a circle around the contestants. Starting with smallest two students, have them battle for center position, the winner staying in until they lose.

Closing Wisdom:

An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure. Prepare. Follow your plan.
Use your equipment. When things go wrong, keep your head. Think on your feet.

Identify the main problem quickly and set an attainable goal.

Come up with a strategy and simple tactics to accomplish that goal.

Don't be afraid to think outside the box and try new things.

Laugh at yourself. Learn from your experiences.

Persevere. Improvise. Overcome.

And, above all, remember,
they're only kids...