



## Girl Scouts of the Missouri Heartland, Inc.

# Backpocket Games

*Have you ever finished all of your planned activities before the parents are due to arrive? Have you ever had a group of girls who come in to your meeting needing to get active and expend some energy? Or, have you ever had to “punt and kick” when a guest speaker did not show, an activity just didn’t work, or a supply was forgotten? That’s when you need a game or two “in your back pocket” to pull out and use. These games all require little or no props to play. If you keep a bandana (that can double as a blindfold) and a small ball or beanbag in your supply tote or box, you are good to go!*

*As an added bonus, many of these games come from another country, which is marked in the game’s description. These are especially nice when World Thinking Day comes around; you can tie them into a discussion about our fellow Girl Scouts around the world.*

*Games have been divided into general categories so that you can look for games by physical activity level and need for props.*

*Most games are appropriate or can be adapted for all Girl Scout grade levels, but please make sure to consider the skills and development levels of your girls.*

## games without props

### **African Simon Says (Africa)**

Number of players - four or more

Objective - to mimic the leader without error

How to play - At the beginning, both the “Simon” and the players raise their arms above their head and clap their hands. The Simon thrusts one of her arms at a player. The player must respond immediately by bringing her corresponding arm forward. If the player brings the wrong arm forward then the Simon wins. When the Simon wins an agreed number of wins, then she becomes chief and retires from the game.

### **Animal Who Am I**

Number of players - ten or more

Objective - to guess modeled animals

How to play - Divide the girls into groups of five to ten. Tell them they must form their group into types of animals or insects. Have the others girls guess what animal they are forming.

### **Grocery Store**

Number of players - any

Objective - to be the first to call out an article

How to play - Form two lines of players of equal number. One player from each side steps forward and the leader calls out a letter. The player who first calls the name of a grocery item beginning with that letter scores a point for her side. Prompting from the sidelines subtracts a point for each infraction.

### **Imaginary Ball Toss**

Number of players - any

Objective - to use your imagination and get acquainted

How to play - Have girls gather in a circle.

The leader says she has an imaginary tennis ball in her hand, and then she chooses one person in the group, calls her name and asks if she is ready to catch the "ball." Making sure that each person "throwing" uses the name of the person they are throwing to, let the ball go to a few people. Then the leader announces that the ball has changed to a basketball. After a couple different items, the leader announces that the thrower gets to designate what she is throwing. It could be a watermelon, a live chicken, a shotput, or an egg...or whatever the girls can imagine!

### **My Friend Has Returned From The Orient (Cuba)**

Number of players - any  
Objective - to get all the players on one side

How to play - Divide the players into two teams with a line drawn between the two teams. One group decides on some object to show in pantomime. They go up to the other group and say, "My friend has returned from the Orient." The other group asks, "What did she bring with her?" The first group shows by pantomime. If the other group guesses what the object is, the entire team starts to catch as many of the first group as possible before they reach the "safe" line. Those who were captured go to the other side.

### **Statues I**

Number of players - three or more  
Objective - not to move after being a statue

How to play - One player is chosen to be the statue maker. She takes each player by the hand, spins her around, and lets her go. The player must freeze into a statue in whatever position she lands. When all players have been turned into statues, the statue maker tries to make them laugh or move. The first person to move becomes the next statue maker.

### **Statues II**

Number of players - four to ten  
Objective - to make the right pose

How to play - One player volunteers to leave the room. The group decides upon a particular pose; for example, standing with left knee bent and hands on hips. The volunteer returns and tries to identify the position by moving into various poses. If the volunteer moves toward a position more like the one selected, the other players cheer. If the volunteer moves away from the selected position, the group boos or hisses. When the selected position is posed by the player, the group stands and claps.

### **Three Positions**

Number of players - three or more  
Objective - to have everyone choose the same position

How to play - Divide into three groups. Have groups work together to come up with three positions in which to stand. Save standing straight up for "neutral." Then, let each group choose in whispered discussion which one of the three positions they will adopt. When all groups are ready, say "ready, set, go" and everyone assumes their positions. The object of the game is for all three teams to choose the same position without discussing it overall or signaling to the group. If you have not all chosen the same position, go back to your huddles and choose again, and repeat until the group reaches a consensus on the same position.

## games without props, less active

### **1-2-3-4**

Number of players – multiples of three (3,6,9)

Objective – to reach the number eleven

How to play – Have groups of three gather in close facing each other. They need to have enough room that they could play “Rock, paper, scissors.” The group will count out loud, “1-2-3-4.” On “4” each member of the group puts her right hand with any number of fingers showing. The object of the game is to reach eleven fingers without talking to each other about it.

### **Coffeepot**

Number of players - any

Objective - to guess correctly what coffeepot is

How to play - One player is chosen to leave the room while the other players think of some kind of activity, like dancing, swimming, cooking, reading, eating, etc. The activity they choose is called "Coffeepot." When the absent player is called back into the room she tries to guess what coffeepotting is by asking questions like, "Do you coffeepot in the dark?" or "Can rabbits coffeepot?" until she guesses what coffeepot means. All questions must be answered truthfully with "yes" or "no." When the questioner thinks she has guessed what coffeepot is she may ask if her guess is right, and if it is, the player who answered her last question goes out of the room and a new activity is chosen as coffeepot. But if the questioner guesses wrong three times she is out of the game.

### **Fingers Out (China)**

Number of players – two

Objective - to guess the correct sum of fingers extended

How to play - The players face each other. They count "One, two, three!" On three they put out their right hands, either closed or with one or more fingers extended. At the same time they shout some number. The player who guesses the correct number of the sum total of fingers extended, or the nearest to it, scores a point. Five points may constitute a game.

### **Linda Lemon**

Number of players – four or more

Objective – to memorize items listed

How to play – Players sit in a circle. Tell the girls they are going to the market to purchase something they like, but it must begin with the same letter as their first name. The first girl might say “My name is Linda, and I am going to the store to buy a lemon.” The next girl might say “My name is Malia, and I am going to the store to buy a mango and a lemon.” Player three might say “My name is Naomi, and I am going to the store to buy a nightshirt, and a mango, and a lemon.” The last girl gets to name everything! Want an extra challenge at the end? Have a “shopping bag upset.” Have girls all change places, but see if they can still name all the items in the new order.

### **Poor Kitty**

Number of players - three or more

Objective - to make one of the other players laugh

How to play – One player is chosen to be the Kitty. The other players sit in a circle with the Kitty in the center. Kitty crawls around the circle. Every time Kitty stops in front of someone, that person must stroke Kitty's hair, look her in the face, and say, "Poor Kitty!" three times without smiling. Kitty, acting like a kitten, tries to make the player laugh or smile. If Kitty fails to do so, she moves on to the next player. The first person to laugh becomes the Kitty.

### **Solemn Action (Persia)**

Number of players - six or more  
Objective - to not laugh or speak

How to play - One player is designated to start the game. She makes some motion, such as pinching the nose of the player to the right of her or tickling her under the chin. You may choose not to allow touching, and just make a motion. Each player, in turn, repeats the motion with the person to the right of them. It goes around the circle. No player can laugh or speak. If anyone does, they have to drop out of the game. The last one left is the winner.

### **Songs by Syllables**

Number of players - four or more  
Objective - to create a song as a group

How to play - Have group sit or stand in a circle and choose a basic song that everyone knows. A great example is "Row, Row, Row Your Boat." One player begins with the first syllable of the song, and the person beside her adds the second, and so on. See how close the group can get to the actual rhythm of the song. The game is by syllables, so the word "gently" would be shared by two girls. If you have younger girls, adapt this game by going by words instead of syllables.

### **Who's the Leader**

Number of players - any  
Objective - to find the leader

How to play - Players stand in a circle. One player goes out. A leader is appointed. The whole group starts clapping and continues until the player sent out returns and takes the center of the ring. It is her business to discover who is leading the crowd in its actions. The leader changes actions to whatever she wants. Everyone else does the same thing immediately. The players should not watch the leader. When the leader is discovered she goes out and a new leader is selected.

## **games without props, highly active**

### **Back to Back Tag**

Number of players - six or more  
Objective- to not get tagged

How to play - a girl is chosen to be "it" and can tag anyone not standing back to back with another girl. No one may stand with the same person for longer than five seconds. When a girl is tagged, she becomes "it."

### **Brussel Sprouts**

Number of players - any  
Objective - to be the last person tagged

How to play - Brussels Sprouts is a tag game that changes speeds. When a person is tagged by "it," she links arms with the person who is already "it." As more people join "it," they should link arms at the end of the line. The game ends when everyone is "it." Play starts out in slow motion, with everyone moving in exaggerated slowness. At any point in the game, a player can call out "Lima Beans." At this call, the speed of the game changes from fast to slow, or slow to fast. Players may also call out "Carrots," which means that all the players who are "it" must let go, jump in the air, spin around and re-link facing the opposite direction. Just for the fun of it, players can also call out "Brussel Sprouts," which has no effect on game play whatsoever.

### **Daisy, Daisy, Juliette**

Number of players - four or more  
Objective - to be the first to reach the empty spot in the circle

How to play - Girls form a single circle. This is simply a Girl Scout version of "Duck, Duck, Goose." One girl is selected to be "it" and stands outside the circle. Girls in the circle are in a squatting position facing inward. "It" walks

around the outside of the circle saying "Daisy" as she taps each girl on the head. When she taps a girl and says "Juliette," she immediately starts to run clockwise around the circle. The girl who was tapped must run counter-clockwise. The object is to see which girl will first reach the place vacated by "Juliette." The girl who reaches the space first, while the other girl becomes "it." A girl can only be "it" three times in a row.

### **Dragon Tail**

Number of players - ten or more  
Objective - for the dragon to catch all of the players

How to play - Four players link their arms together, forming a chain. The players that linked arms are the dragon. They must not let go of each other's arms; they must always run linked together in this manner. The dragon runs around and tries to catch as many players at one time as it can, by forming a circle around them. As soon as one or more of the players is circled by the dragon she must link arms with the others on the dragon and help to capture the remaining players. The game is over when everyone has been tagged and is part of one long dragon.

### **Game Trap (Africa)**

Number of players - fifteen to one hundred  
Objective - not to get caught in the trap

How to play - Players form a single circle. Two players hold hands and form a bridge or "trap" under which the others must march. The marchers sing or chant the following as they clap their hands:

*Lions and leopards, lions and leopards, Hunting at night; Lions and leopards, lions and leopards, Catch the game!*

The trap falls on the word "game." Players caught form additional traps. The game keeps going until all the players are caught. Players cannot pause or dash through to keep from getting caught; they must move in rhythm.

### **Man Overboard**

Number of players - four or more  
Objective - to be quick to react

How to play - You can play with two or more teams or individually. One person needs to be the caller to call the commands. The game begins with everyone sitting down, or in lines if playing with teams. Commands are:

- "All the deck." Everyone jumps up.
- "Scrub the decks." Everyone pretends to scrub the decks kneeling down.
- "Bomb overhead." Kneel down with hands over head.
- "Captains coming." Jump up, stand to attention, and salute.
- "Man over board." Run and touch the nearest wall, run back to place, and sit down.
- "Climb the rigging." Stand up and pretend to climb up the sail ropes.

The slowest person to react each time is out, and the winning team is the last one to have any member still in it.

### **Paloma Y Gavilan (Bolivia)**

Number of players - eight or more  
Objective - for the eagle (gavilan) to catch the pigeon (paloma), and to not let the eagle in the circle

How to play - One player is chosen to be the eagle. Another player is chosen to be the pigeon. The other players form a circle and join hands. The eagle chases the pigeon around the circle. The players who make up the circle are on the pigeon's side. They let the pigeon pass in and out of the circle. The pigeon goes under the people's clasped hands. They try not to let the eagle through. The game lasts until the eagle catches the pigeon or the eagle gives up trying.

### **Stop and Go**

Number of players - any  
Objective - to listen intently to directions

How to play - This is a simple game

where players mill around a playing area. At any point, any player can call out "Stop," at which point everyone freezes in place. Any player can also call out "Go," to resume motion.

### **Wolf (Peru)**

Number of players - six or more  
Objective - not to get caught by the wolf

How to play - Everybody forms a circle, with one player in the center. The player in the center is the wolf. The other players call to her, "Wolf, Wolf, are you ready?" The wolf answers, "No, I've got to put my socks on!" Again they call, and she replies, "No, I've got to put on my shoes." Each time she goes through the motions of putting on a piece of wearing apparel she names. It may be her hat, her coat, her pants, her skirt, her shirt, or gloves. It can be whatever she chooses. Suddenly she answers, "Yes, I'm ready and here I come!" Immediately all players scatter and rush to a designated safety zone. It may be the bounds of the yard or the walls of the room. The wolf tries to tag a player before she reaches safety. If she does, that person becomes the wolf and the game continues. The wolf may get ready on any call that suits her.

## **games using props, less active**

### **Beast, Bird, Fish**

Number of players - eight or more  
Materials needed - bean bag  
Objective - to be able to name a kind of bird, fish, or beast

How to play - All the players sit in a circle. One player is chosen to be "It." She is given a beanbag. "It" tosses the beanbag to anyone in the circle, calling out the words, "Beast, Bird, Fish, Fish!" and the person who catches the beanbag must name some kind of fish, before "It" counts to ten. If she calls "Beast,

Bird, Fish, Bird!" the person catching the beanbag must name some kind of bird, and if she says "Beast, Bird, Fish, Beast!" the player must name a kind of beast. If whoever catches the beanbag cannot name a kind of beast, bird, or fish by the time "It" counts to ten, or if she names something that has already been named, she trades places with the player in the center and becomes "It."

### **Crazy Groceries**

Number of players - six or more  
Materials needed - paper and pencil for each girl  
Objective - to unscramble words quickly

How to play - Divide girls into teams, have each team sit in a circle. Every player writes down the name of an item sold by a grocer, but they mix up the letters. On signal, each girl passes her slip to the person on her right who tries to decipher the word. When the word has been deciphered, it is placed in the center of the circle. At the next signal, undeciphered words are passed to the next person on the right. Have the signals be just a short time apart to a fast-paced game. See who can decipher all their slips first. For a change-up, use the contents of a first-aid kit or items needed for camping as a theme. If one team is not scrambling its words well, have the papers exchanged between teams before beginning the deciphering process.

### **Doggy, Doggy, Where's Your Bone**

Number of players - six or more  
Materials needed - a small object to represent a bone  
Objective - to guess who has the bone

How to play - The players sit in a semicircle. A chair is placed in the center of the semicircle with its back to the group. One player is chosen to be the dog, she sits in the chair. Underneath the chair is placed an object to represent the dog's bone. The adult chooses someone to quietly tiptoe to get the bone and then that person hides it by sitting on it. The entire group says, "Doggy, doggy, where's your bone?" The "dog" then guesses who might have hidden the

bone. The adult might limit the guesses to three. If the "dog" guesses correctly, the person hiding the bone becomes the dog or the dog may choose someone to be the dog. If the dog guesses wrong, then she must be the dog again.

### **Giggling Gertie**

Number of players – any

Materials needed – a bandana

Objective – to not be the one laughing after signal

How to play – A circle is formed. One girl is selected to be in the center. She tosses the bandana in the air. The group starts laughing. All girls continue to laugh as long as the bandana is in the air. As soon as it touches the floor, they must stop laughing and make their faces "expressionless." Anyone caught smiling is out. Play until one girl is left.

### **Girl Scouts Are Great!**

Number of players – any

Materials needed – paper and pencil for each girl

Objective – to find new words in a sentence

How to play – Have each girl write the sentence "Girl Scouts Are Great" at the top of a piece of paper. Have them find as many words using those letters in a time period. Switch it up with another Girl Scout phrase.

## **games using props, active**

### **Catching the Dragon's Tail (China)**

Number of players - ten or more

Materials needed – bandana

Objective - not to let the head catch the tail

How to play - All the players stand in a line, with their hands on one another's shoulders. The first person in line is the head of the dragon, and the last person in line is the tail. The head tries to catch the tail by

maneuvering the line around so that she can tag the end player. The line must not break. All the other players do their best to keep the head from catching the dragon's tail. When the head catches the tail, the end player becomes the head and the player who was in front of her becomes the tail. You can also tuck a bandana in the waist line of the tail and have the head of the dragon try to snatch that.

### **Ocean Wave**

Number of players - ten or more

Materials needed – chairs (one less than number of players)

Objective - for the person in the middle to grab a chair that another player should have taken

How to play - All the players sit in a chair. The chairs are arranged in a circle. One of the players goes to the middle of the circle. She then calls, "Slide right!" or "Slide left!" and all the players move quickly into the chair to the right or left of them. There is always an empty chair which the player in the middle tries to grab. She may keep changing the direction she calls. When the player in the center finally grabs a chair, the player who should have taken that chair becomes "It." Then she goes to the middle and calls the direction.

### **Swiper**

Number of players – six or more

Materials needed – a bandana or beanbag

Objective – to be the first to grab an item and escape being tagged

How to play – Girls are divided into two teams. Teams line up facing each other about 20-30 feet apart. It's best if there is a line on the ground or drawn in the dirt or something marking the boundaries of the line. Girls in each line are numbered so that there is a 1,2,3 etc, on each team. In the center, halfway between the two teams, a bandana or beanbag is placed. The leader calls a number and the girls with that number rush toward the bandana. The first one to reach it grabs it and

heads back to her line. She is safe anywhere in the line. The other girl tries to tag her before she can get back. If she reaches her own line without getting tagged, she earns two points for her team. If she gets tagged, that team earns one point. Set a time limit and the highest score wins or play to a set number of points.

### **Swap**

Number of players - 10 to 30

Materials needed – chairs (one less than number of players)

Objective - to encourage quick reactions

How to play - Players sit in chairs placed in a circle. One player volunteers to start by standing in the middle. The volunteer names a characteristic that some of the players have in common. For example :

- "Everyone who likes chocolate "
- "Everyone with blue eyes "
- "Everyone who has been to Atlanta "
- "Everyone who knows how to change a car tire "

All the players who fit the named characteristic must change chairs. The volunteer tries to reach a vacated chair. The player left without a chair calls another characteristic.

### **Tsoo! Tsoo! (China)**

Number of players - four or more

Materials needed - blindfold

Objective - to touch the person blindfolded without getting caught

How to play - One player is blindfolded. All the other players are chickens. The blindfolded person says "Tsoo, Tsoo!" which means "Come and seek your mother." The chickens run up and try to touch her without being caught. The player caught becomes the blindfolded person.