

a resource by
REACHOUT

Short energiser activities

for getting young people
moving and thinking.



What is this resource?

At ReachOut, we regularly use short energiser activities to get our groups of young people thinking, moving, engaged and ready to take part in our wider curriculum. These are a collection of some of our favourite energising activities.

Aimed at: young people aged 9-14.

When to use it: whenever you feel your young people could use a bit of an energy boost – at the start of the day, in between lessons, it's up to you!



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Who are REACHOUT ?

ReachOut are a strategic partner for schools. Through after school mentoring sessions across London and Manchester, **we build the socio-emotional skills that transform outcomes for 9-14 year olds.**

We exist because **not all children have the opportunities to just 'pick-up' socio-emotional skills.** The 9-14 age bracket is an especially crucial juncture in childhood development, so we focus our efforts on helping children in this range.

Within this bracket, we further focus our efforts on helping young people constrained by circumstance. Our programme delivery is informed by an evidence-based curriculum and delivered through collective mentorship with trained practitioners and volunteer mentors. This combines positive peer support with supportive adult role models, allowing us to have the most impact.



What socio-emotional skills do these activities build?

At ReachOut, we focus on developing young people's socio-emotional skills. Research has shown that the development of these skills at a young age is one of the strongest indicators of a young person's success at school and their happiness in life.

These activities help build these socio-emotional skills of:

Teamwork: Many of the activities require working as part of a group, making sure rules are followed and everyone is heard.

Empathy: They require young people to be mindful of their peers' emotions, being fair and ensuring everyone feels part of what's going on.

Emotion-Management: The activities can be fast-paced and exciting, but also frustrating. It's important to learn how to deal with these emotions.

Responsibility: Young people are encouraged to take ownership of their roles and actions during the activities.

Problem Solving: The activities promote listening, critical thinking, overcoming obstacles and making decisions.

Initiative: Young people need to be proactive, contribute ideas and persevere when things get difficult.



Activity Category Catch

A game that requires quick thinking under pressure.

Time	10 minutes
Rules	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In this game, students will pass the ball around a circle and whoever catches it must say something related to the chosen category. • Have the class choose a category together. For example: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Year 5-7 categories: Animals, vegetables, fruits, colours, items of clothing, famous landmarks. ◦ Year 7-9 categories: Movies, musical artists, countries, sports, brand names (e.g., clothing, phones), TV shows. • The ball will be passed around the circle and each person who catches it must name something in that category. • If they take more than three seconds, or can't think of an answer, they're out of the game. Repeat until one winner remains!
Adaptations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If you can't get everyone into a circle, you could pass the ball between desks, or you could throw it from the front of the class. • Why not switch categories after a set time? The last person either to say a correct answer, or to have been eliminated, can choose the next category. • To increase the physical element, you could get the group to do a different sort of pass with each category – i.e overhead, underarm, over their shoulder etc. • Why not link the categories to topics you're teaching?
Socio-emotional skills developed:	Participants can develop their: Teamwork – relying on everyone working together to keep the ball moving. Emotion management – handling the pressure, excitement and possible frustration. Initiative – staying motivated and thinking on the spot.

Activity First Letter, Last Letter

Avoid repetition, take turns and think quickly in this short team game.

Time	5 – 10 minutes.
Rules	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduce a category to the group – for example: countries, celebrities, animals, films or TV shows. • You can go first, or pick someone to start, and name something within this category. • The next person has to name something else starting with the letter that your word ended with. For example, 'elephant' could be followed by 'turtle'. • Continue around the group – if someone can't think of an answer, they're out of the game. No repetition of words is allowed!
Adaptations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If you don't want to make the game competitive, people can pass when they can't think of anything, and the game ends when no one can think of any more words.
Socio-emotional skills developed:	Participants can develop their: Problem solving – thinking on their feet and remembering what's been said before. Empathy – being kind and considerate when someone can't think of an answer. Emotion management – handling the pressure, excitement and possible frustration if they can't think of a word.

Activity ③ Switch it Up

A fast-paced activity that needs creativity, quick thinking, and juggling different ideas.

Time	5-10 minutes
Rules	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One person will perform an action, for example - cleaning their teeth, but at the same time they will describe a different action, for example combing their hair. • The next person must perform the action that was just described - combing their hair - but they must say they're doing something else, for example, playing football. • The next person then performs that action – playing football - and says something else. • Continue the game until everyone has had a turn.
Adaptations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You could either play this in a group, with turns being taken until everyone has had a go, or play it back and forth in pairs or small groups. • You also have the option of making it competitive – eliminating people who make a mistake, or hesitate, until there's a winner.
Socio-emotional skills developed:	Participants can develop their: Initiative – it might be challenging, but they can think on their feet and persevere, even when it's hard. Empathy and teamwork – paying attention to what others are doing, encouraging them and choosing actions that they'll be able to replicate. Emotion management - handling the pressure, excitement and possible frustration.

Activity Hot Air Balloon Rescue

An activity that encourages critical thinking, public speaking and group decision-making.

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Time	10-15 minutes
Rules	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Put the group into 2-3 teams.• Introduce the game and scenario: Each person will pick a character. These characters are in a hot air balloon that has a fault and is sinking fast. To slow it down, some characters will have to be removed – don't worry, they have parachutes! There can only be 1 character left in the basket at the end.• Each young person must take turns giving a short statement about why their character should stay in the balloon. This could be an appeal to empathy, popularity, or practical reasons why they're most likely to see the balloon safely to the ground.• After everyone has spoken, they will turn around, facing away from each other, and you will ask everyone to put their hand up and vote for which character they want to stay in the balloon. They cannot vote for their own character.• The person with the fewest votes will be eliminated and will sit down.• The game goes on with the group giving another short statement on why their character should stay and the voting begins again. Only 1 character can stay in the hot air balloon so keep going until you have a winner!
Adaptations	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Instead of asking the young people to choose their own character, you could assign specific characters such as a doctor, a scientist, a teacher, a child, an influencer, a paramedic etc.• If you wanted to expand the game, there could be a period of debate during the voting, or questions and answers after each statement.• If you want to keep children whose character has been eliminated included, they could join up with another child still in the game.• For a shorter game – there could be one round of speeches and voting. After the voting, the person with the <i>most</i> votes is the person who gets to stay in the balloon.
Socio-emotional skills developed:	Participants can develop their: Empathy – students need to listen to what other people are saying and think about things from their point of view. Initiative – each person has to convince others of their point of view. Emotion management: handling the disappointment and frustration of their character being voted out.

Activity **5** Champion of the Wild

An activity that focuses on teamwork, creativity and thinking outside the box.

Time	15 minutes.
Rules	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Split the group into four teams – each team will be assigned a number. The team number corresponds to a list of animals on the next page. • In groups, students must read the events on the next page and choose the animal that they think would be best suited to be victorious in each scenario. Animals can only be entered into one scenario. • Each round should consist of four scenarios – one for each animal. • Students have 10 minutes to prepare reasons as to why they have picked a certain animal to enter an event. • After this, go through each event as a group, and each team can feedback their answers.
Adaptations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You could change the list of animals to more obvious, or more obscure, animals depending on age range. • Groups could vote on the best answer for each scenario – but they can't vote for themselves. • To make the game shorter, you could give each group fewer animals and fewer scenarios. • For future games, why not ask the class to come up with their own scenarios? • If you want to add a physical or dramatic element, groups can also act out their scenarios.
Socio-emotional skills developed:	Participants can develop their: Problem solving – analysing the scenarios and applying critical thinking. Empathy and teamwork – there's a focus on collaboration and respectfully listening to people's ideas. Emotion management – they may need to manage emotions such as frustration or competitiveness if there are disagreements or if their favoured animal isn't chosen.

Champion of the Wild Scenarios

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Animal Group Examples: **Group 1:** Ant, Walrus, Flamingo, Turtle | **Group 2:** Mosquito, Snake, Penguin, Shark
Group 3: Grasshopper, Kangaroo, Bison, Crab | **Group 4:** Ladybird, Reindeer, Eagle, Lobster.

Hide and Seek: Your group's animals have 15 minutes to find a hiding place in a stately home. Which animal would escape detection for the longest? How would they do it?

Invention Showcase: Your animals have been tasked with creating the most innovative, effective, and useful invention that could improve their survival. Whether it's a tool for hunting, building shelter, or navigating terrain, the animals must present their ideas and demonstrate how their inventions work. You must choose which animal would come up with the best invention!

Demolish a Shed: Animals must destroy a wooden shed, knocking all parts to the ground as quickly as possible. Which animal will do this the best?

Midnight Escape: Your animals have been captured and placed inside a zoo. They must find a way to escape under the cover of night. Which animal will have the most clever, creative, and successful escape strategy? What tools or resources would they use? How would they outsmart the guards or any obstacles?

High-Speed Chase: Your group's animals are in a high-speed pursuit across varied terrains: desert, forest, and mountain. Which animal has the stamina, speed, and agility to keep up with or outrun the other? They must navigate obstacles and survive the intense chase until one animal successfully outruns the others.

The Great Heist: Your animals have teamed up to plan and execute a heist—stealing a diamond from a booby-trapped museum. Which animal would be the best at sneaking around undetected, avoiding traps, and taking the item? Consider stealth, agility, and problem-solving skills.

Rescue Mission: Your group of animals must work together to rescue a stranded animal high up in a tree, cliff, or mountain peak. They must figure out how to safely reach the stranded animal without falling or getting injured. Which animal has the best rescue strategy?

Animal Olympics: Your animals compete in an Olympic-style competition with various events, such as running, jumping, climbing, and swimming. Each animal must participate in different categories and showcase their physical prowess. Which animal will have the most gold medals at the end of the games?

Take a look at our reflection wheel resource.

As part of our new and growing bank of resources for teachers and youth groups, we've shared our reflection wheel – a tool we often use in our projects to reflect on how an activity has gone.

If you want to follow any of these activities with some group, or individual reflection, [you can download our reflection wheel resources here.](#)



