



# Playground Markings & Other Traditional Games



Feidhmeannacht na Seirbhíse Sláinte  
Health Service Executive



Other resources available from the Health Promotion Department, HSE South to support and encourage physical activity with children include:

- 1) Lets Get Physical Pocket Play Pack
- 2) Get Kids on the Go - A5 booklet and poster
- 3) Little Steps Go A Long Way - DL booklet
- 4) Bizzy Breaks Resource Pack (includes CD and poster) - Activities for the classroom designed to get pupils moving on the spot
- 5) Action for Life - A resource for primary school teachers
- 6) Action for Everybody - A resource for primary school teachers

The Health Promotion Department, HSE South would like to acknowledge the contribution of the following;



The Health Promotion Department, HSE North East



The Waterford Sports Partnership



The Languages, Tourism and Sports Studies Department at the Waterford Institute of Technology

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**You Tell Me, I Forget  
You Teach Me, I Learn  
You Involve Me, I Remember**

**Benjamin Franklin**

Ex-President of the United States of America

# Introduction

Traditionally, playground games have always been an integral part of childhood leisure time, which is not surprising given the fact that children can spend up to 21% of their time at school in the playground. As well as offering children an opportunity to be physically active during the day, games played during breaktime also provide children with a vehicle for social interaction and a platform for creativity. Current physical activity guidelines recommend that young people should participate in physical activity that is developmentally appropriate, enjoyable, and of at least moderate intensity for one hour per day. Young people who currently do little activity should participate in physical activity of at least moderate intensity for at least half an hour per day. At least twice a week, some of these activities should help to enhance and maintain muscular strength and flexibility, and bone health<sup>1</sup>. Research conducted in the UK, however, has reported an increase in the proportion of children who do not participate in any physical activity during school time from 15% (1994) - 18% (2002)<sup>2</sup>. There is much anecdotal evidence to suggest that this statistic is also representative of trends in Irish Society. The Health Behaviour in School-Aged Children (HBSC) survey reported that overall 11% of children surveyed exercised less than weekly (7% of boys and 14% of girls)<sup>3</sup>. Data from the Central Statistics Office indicate a clear decline in the percentage of young people who walk or cycle to school (actively commute) in Ireland over the last two decades. The proportion of 5-12 year olds who walk to school decreased from 47% in 1981 to 39% in 1991 to 26% in 2002 to only 24% by 2006<sup>4</sup>. The reduction in activity levels may also be reflected in the recent increase in childhood obesity levels in this county. One in every 5-12 year olds in Ireland are overweight or obese<sup>5</sup>. In addition to potentially tackling rising obesity levels, playground activity has also been shown to improve attention and reduce anti-social behaviour and bullying levels among children<sup>6</sup>. The purpose of this resource, therefore, is to use the Playground Markings and Games to increase the level of school based physical activity and play as well as increasing the number of children who are active during school time.

The nature of games outlined in this resource are such that even the least active of children can get some enjoyment from playing these games. All games are task orientated and research has shown that such an environment increases enjoyment, adherence and motivation in pupil involvement and learning in physical education<sup>7</sup>. Games are also aimed at group and/or individual participation to suit all children.

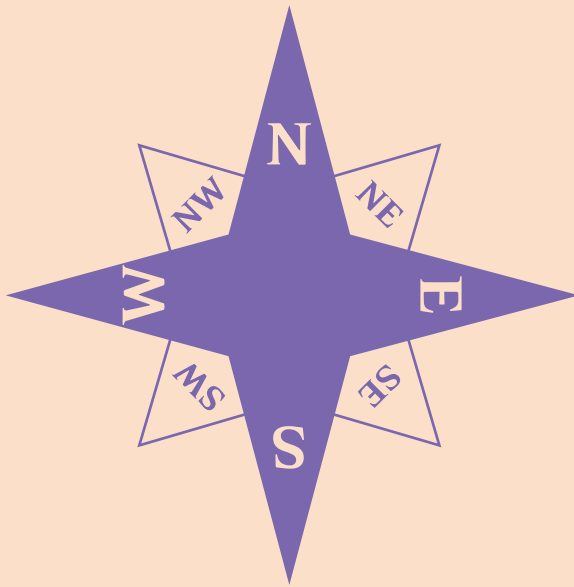
While the Playground Markings and Games resource does have considerable potential, the involvement of the school is paramount to ensure that potential is maximised. Familiarisation of the teachers and children with the games is essential for success in this venture.

We hope that this resource will facilitate you, the teacher, in getting the children in your care more active!

## References:

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# The Compass



## How to Put Down This Marking

- Centre circle 3ft diameter.
- Chalk in 2 further circles one of 2m diameter and one of 3m diameter.
- Divide into eight equal sections through center points. Extend lines through all circles and align N and S to compass points.
- Chalk in N, S, E, W triangles to join on edge of inner circle with apex on outer circle line. Repeat for other compass points extending to 2m line.

## (a) Compass Tig (Players 6+, No Equipment Needed)

### Principle

One child is appointed the Navigator. The Navigator stands in the center of the compass and calls out different compass points. The children must quickly head for that point on the compass, without being caught by the Navigator. Alternatively, the Navigator can call out two compass points and the children standing on those points must swap positions without being caught by the Navigator.

### Rules

- The Navigator may only move to chase the other players once a compass point has been shouted.
- When a player is caught they become the new Navigator and the game continues.

## (b) Compass Ball (8 ideally, Soft Ball/Beanbag Needed)

### Principle

Players stand one on each of the inner (NE, NW, SW, SE) and outer (N,S,E,W) compass points. A soft ball or beanbag is given to one of the players standing on an outer point. The players on the inner points should move in a clockwise direction. The ball or the beanbag is thrown to the inner points caught by the nearest player and passed out to the next of the outer players. To make the game more demanding;

- Introduce a second ball or beanbag and this can increase to a total of 6 beanbags.

- Change the direction of the inner circle.
- Rotate the children at the outer points aswell.

#### Rules

- Should the ball or beanbag drop all players should change position and the game should start again.

### (c) Compass Toe the Line (6 Players)

#### Principle

Divide children into equal groups (2x3 or 3x2) and assign them a compass point that is their base. Assign a leader. Children should all move around the compass, changing direction and altering pace. The group leader calls toe the line and the children should quickly form into a line, standing one behind the other, back at their own base. To alter the game, introduce conditions such as toe the line height, small to tall and the children should form a line tallest to smallest at their base. Alternative conditions could be shoe size, age, birthday. Keep children moving in between the toe the line instructions.

#### Rules

- The team which toes the line quickest according to the conditions can appoint a leader for the next instruction.

### (d) Target Practice (any number of children, chalk and 4 beanbags)

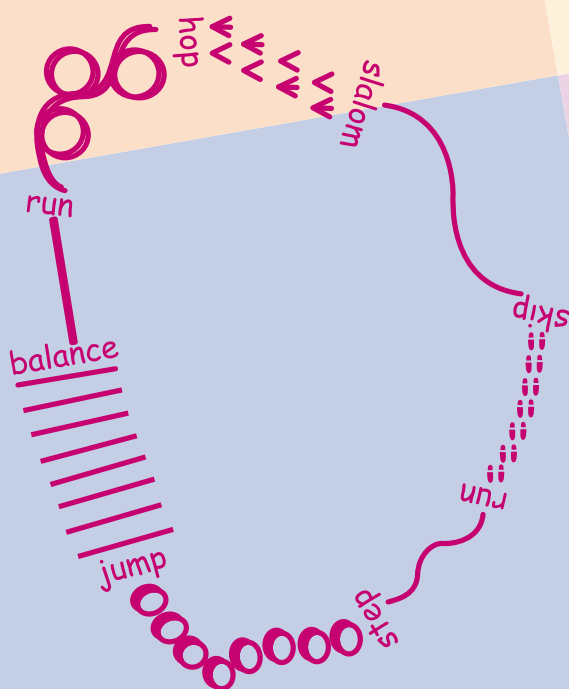
#### Principle

Divide the children into four groups and get them to stand at the navigational points N, S, E, W. Get them to move 2m back from the navigational point and draw a line with chalk which they cannot pass. Award points 12, 20, 30 etc. to the different navigational points i.e. N, S, E, W 10 points, NE, SE, NW, SW, 20 points and also draw a bullseye in the centre of the compass and also award it points i.e. 30 points. Each child on each team gets three throws of the beanbag and the team has to add up their points to determine the winner.

#### Rules

- The beanbag must land on the navigational point.

# Activity Circuit



## How to Put Down This Marking

- The circuit can be any size, as this will be determined by the space available.
- Use a variety of shapes and lines.
- You are not restricted to the variations of activities shown here.

(1+ Players, Ball, Hoops and Cones Needed)

### (a) Stepping Stones

The children should move from one step to the next. Try walking on tip-toes or jumping with both feet.

### (b) Jump/Jumping Lines

When the children reach the jumping lines they should try to jump as far as they can from the baseline. Try to encourage the children to improve their distance each time they take part on the activity circuit.

### (c) Balance Beam

The children walk along the balance beam with one foot in front of the other. Encourage them to hop when they can walk no problem and even try to get them to walk backwards.

### (d) Squiggly Line/Running Line

Encourage the children to run along the line as quickly as they can. The children may run with arms outstretched, for example like a plane. Pretend that the line is a tight rope and practice balancing skills.



### (e) Hop/Frog Prints

The children run with both feet together along all the prints. Try hopping along the frog prints on one foot and then the other. If the circuit has different animal prints, encourage the children to keep their feet on the prints and move like animals. Children could also be invited to make the sounds of animals.

### (f) Slalom

When the children reach the slalom course they should jump alternatively from side to side of the middle line. Persuade the children to pretend that they are skiing, with both feet together and knees bent.

### (g) Skip/Foot Prints

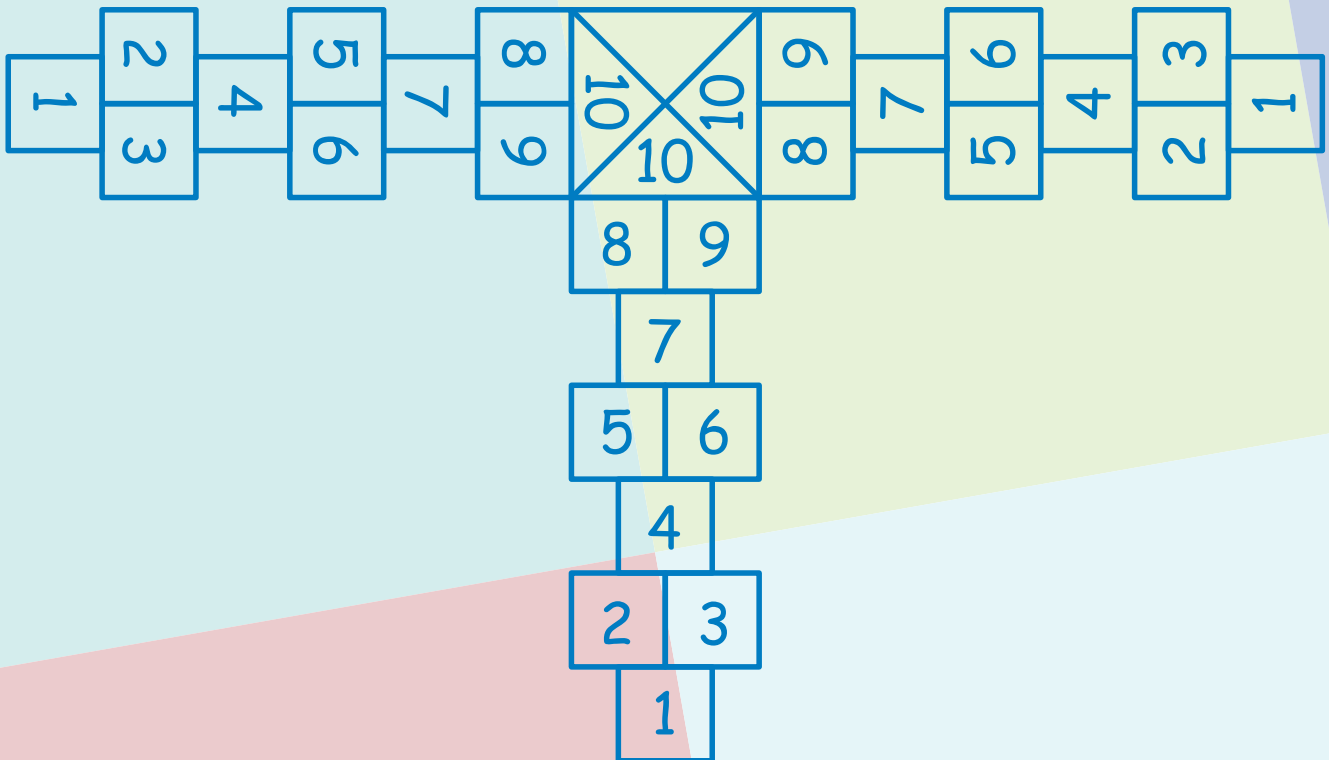
The children skip along the footprints pretending that they have a skipping rope circling their arms as they skip.

To make this activity circuit more challenging;

- On the stepping stones, get the children to move from stone to stone anyway they want i.e. hop, jump & twist etc. but they cannot use the same movement twice.
- On the jump section try getting the children to do two legged jumps getting them to use their arms. Alternatively get them to turn sideways and jump between the lines bringing their legs up.
- On the balance beam encourage them to walk backwards or even get them to hop along the line.
- At the hop section, encourage the children to leap frog or walk on their hands and feet.

As a variation, try bouncing a ball or even place obstacles along the course - for example beanbags - which children have to avoid by jumping over them or running around them. This should be done in a follow the leader fashion.

# Hopscotch



## How to Put Down This Marking

- Squares; 30cm x 30cm.
- Center Square 60cm x 60cm divided into four triangles.
- Number stencils 15cm x 15cm.
- Starting from centre square mark squares outwards on three sides Paint edges in different colours.

Individual games may be played on all three hopscotch markings at the same time.

## (a) Hopscotch (1+ players, beanbag)

### Principle

The first player throws the beanbag into square no. 1. The player moves along the grid using one foot in single squares and two feet in double squares until they reach the number 10. The player turns around, hopping on one foot, and returns to the start in the same way, picking up the beanbag when they reach it. The beanbag is then thrown into no. 2 and the moves repeated until the player has reached no. 10.

### Rules

- The beanbag must land within the square. Should it land outside the grid, on a different square or on the line of the square, it is considered a misthrow and the player must wait their turn again.
- When the player is moving through the grid they must not land on the lines or outside of the grid. Should they do either of these they must return to the

beginning and wait for their next go.

- The player cannot put their foot in the square where the beanbag is.

### (b) Claiming Hopscotch (1+ players, beanbag)

#### Principle

As for hopscotch (see (a) above) . In addition to the above, however, once a player has got to 10 on the grid they can claim a number for their own. No one else can put their foot in this number when moving through the grid and should they do so they must go back to the beginning and await their next turn.

### (c) Search-A-Round (2+ Players, Three baskets containing different items eg beanbag, small balls etc)

#### Principle

Three small teams (~3 members) can play this at any one time, with each team having a designated hopscotch area. An additional pupil acts as a Caller. The caller should write a list of numbers from 1-10 and against each number write down a readily available item. The three baskets could be placed a set distance away from each hopscotch area from which each item must be collected. On the Callers instruction the players must retrieve the item from their basket and place it on the relevant number until all 10 squares are filled. The first team to collect all 10 items is the winner.

#### Rules

- Each team starts on the number one of their hopscotch area and must begin collection from that point each time.
- Once the item has been placed on the relevant number, a member of the team may ask the Caller for the next item to be placed on the next number.
- Team members must collect item in sequence and the next player cannot collect an item until their teammate has placed the item on the correct number.

### (d) Relay Hopscotch

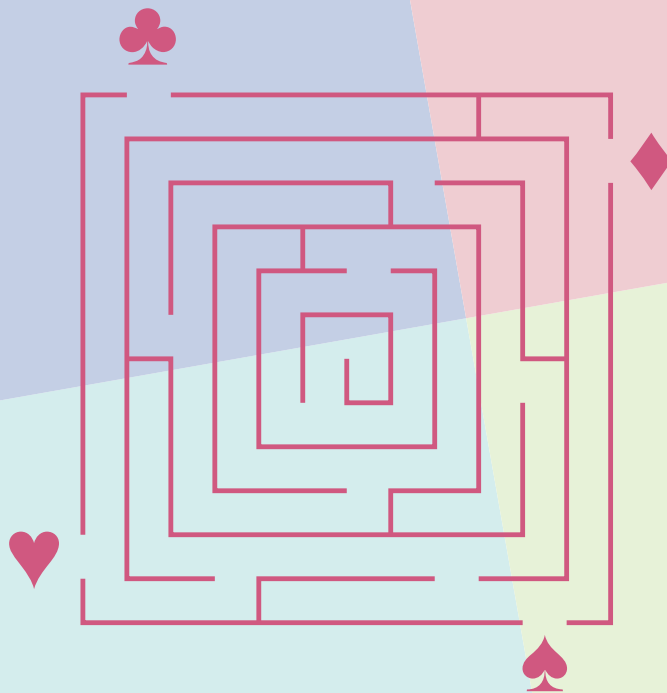
#### Principle

This is similar to the game outlined in section (c) above. In this game however, each member of the team in turn must run to their basket and retrieve an item and bring it to the top of the hop scotch grid (by hopping) and place it at the number 10. Then they must return back down the grid and touch the hand of their teammate before he/she goes.

#### Rule

- The teammate cannot go until the previous runner has touched their hand.
- The runner must not touch the lines of the hopscotch grid. Should they do so, they must return to no.1 and begin again.

# The Maze



## How to Put Down This Marking

- A variety of lines, the size of which are determined by the space available.
- Four different colour shapes indicate each entry point to the maze.

### (a) Crazy Maze (Up to 4 Players, Beanbags Needed)

#### Principle

Place a number of items randomly in the maze. The players each select an entrance to the maze which becomes their home base. The aim is for the players to collect as many items as possible from the maze and return them to their home base. The player with the most items at wins. Ensure that players change starting positions at the beginning of each game. The game may be adapted by adding more items and also by making teams where players must take turns in retrieving the items on the maze.

#### Rules

- Only one item at a time may be collected from the maze.
- Players cannot step over or reach across the lines to collect the items.

### (b) Wolf and Rabbits (Up to 5 Players, No Equipment Required)

#### Principle

One child volunteers to be the Wolf. The Wolf stands in the centre of the maze. The other players are Rabbits, and they each stand at one of the entrances to the maze. The aim is for the Rabbits to cross the maze without being caught by the Wolf. When a Rabbit is caught they become the new Wolf and the game continues. Alternatively the Wolf can continue until all Rabbits are either caught or have successfully crossed the maze. The game may also be played without a Wolf whereby Rabbits must cross the maze as quickly as possible. The winning player is the first to exit the maze.

### Rules

- Players cannot step over the lines.
- Players cannot pass one another out in the maze. Both must choose a different path.

### (c) **Collect the Treasure** (2+ Players, Treasure eg Beanbag and a Blindfold are Required)

#### Principle

Place the Treasure in the centre of the maze. Ask the children to work in pairs. One member of the duo is blindfolded (or closes their eyes very tightly). The blindfolded player must journey through the maze by verbal commands given by their partner. For example two steps forward, turn left. The aim is to guide the blindfolded player through the maze, to collect the treasure and bring it back to their partner. Adaptations to this game may include making four teams where each team has a player entering the maze blindfolded at a different site. The non-blindfolded partner gives instruction but each takes turn and the first one to instruct their teammate to the treasure wins. Once the children are happy with being guided by their partner, it may be possible to place obstacles in the maze.

#### Rules

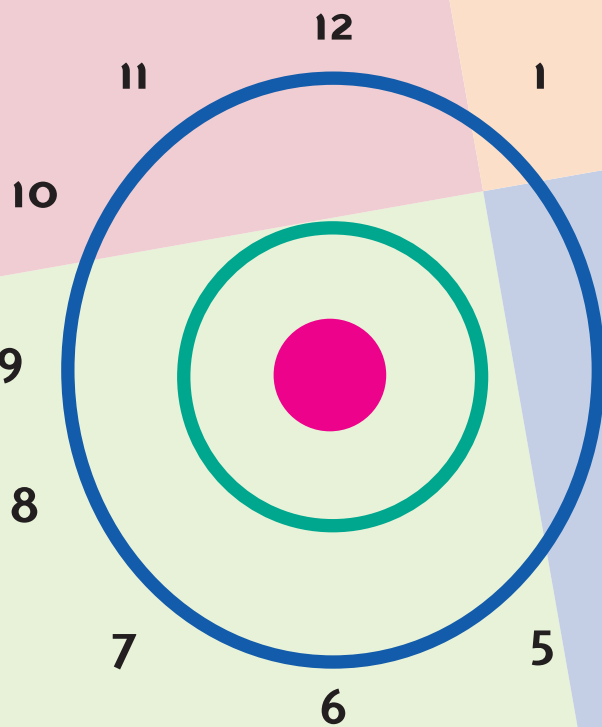
- The player calling the instructions stands outside the maze and cannot touch the blindfolded player.
- Blindfolded players may not cross over lines and should they do so they should be guided back to the start of the move.

**It should be noted that children at play are not playing about; their games should be seen as their most serious minded activity.**

**Michel Eyquem de Montaigne**

French Author

# The Clock



## How to Put Down This Marking

- 2 > Outer circle 3m in diameter
- 3 > Chalk in centre point (1.5m from outer circle) and draw inner circle
- 4 > Generate third circle by putting it midway between inner and outer circles

## (a) Cat and Mouse (12 people)

### Principle

One person stands on each of the numbers of the clock. To begin, the number 12 is the mouse. The cat is always the person 2 people away from the mouse to the left i.e. to begin with the cat is no. 2. The mouse must run in and out of all the other people until he/she return to the number 12. The cat must chase the mouse in a similar fashion trying to catch him/her before they return to their starting position.

### Rules

- > If the mouse gets home without being caught, he/she gets to name the next mouse.
- > If the cat catches the mouse before he/she gets home, the cat gets to name the next mouse.
- > Both cat and mouse must run in and out of the others players when running.
- > The other players must keep their hands down by their sides and not try to obstruct either the cat or mouse.

## (b) Target Game

### Principle

Divide the children into four groups and get them to stand at 2m back from the clock in four distinct points. Draw a line with chalk which they cannot pass. Award points 12, 20, 30 etc. to the different circle and also to the bullseye in the centre. Each child on each team gets three throws of the beanbag and the team has to add up their points to determine the winner.

### Rules

- Points are awarded when the beanbag lands within either the first or second circles or the bullseye.

**Play is often talked about as if  
it were a relief from serious learning.  
But for children, play is serious learning.  
Play is really the working of childhood.**

**Fred Rogers**

Host of the longest running public television children's show in the US

# Traditional Games

## (a) Prison Wall

- Two parallel lines are drawn across the middle of the designated area about one metre apart and this is known as the Prison Wall.
- One player stands between the lines and may not go beyond them.
- The other players have to run across the lines without being touched. (alternatively you can get the prison guard to throw beanbags at the other children providing they are encouraged to throw from the waist down)
- If they are touched they must join the prison guards on the wall.

## (b) Farmer, farmer, may we cross your Golden River?

- One pupil is named as the farmer and stands in the middle of the designated area of the playground while the others stand about 10 metres away. The players call out, farmer, farmer, may we cross your golden river?
- The farmer replies, choosing a colour, You may not cross my river unless you are wearing something BLUE.
- The players who are visibly wearing this colour (even if it is only part of a garment) can cross the river in safety.
- Those players who are not wearing the colour have to run across the gap without being caught by the farmer.
- If a player is caught, he or she must help the farmer.
- The last person to be caught becomes the farmer in the next game.

## (c) 40/40

- Similar to hide and seek except the seeker has a base to which the players must return from their hiding places without being seen by the seeker.
- The seekers role is to spot the players and touch the base, stating 40/40 I see .... before that person reaches the base.
- Once a person has been caught they must sit out until all players have been caught.
- The first to be caught is the seeker in the next game.

## (d) The Hunted

- In this game all players seek one person. Everyone hides their eyes and counts to a particular number while one person goes off to hide, aiming to find an especially difficult place.
- The person who is hiding is able to change hiding place throughout the duration of the game. Care must be taken not to be seen, as being seen means being caught.
- Whoever catches the player who is hiding can hide in the next game.



(e) **Human Pretzel** (no limit on participants)

- Two people close their eyes.
- The others hold hands in a circle and twist themselves over and under through each other without dropping hands.  
The two people open their eyes and are challenged to untangle the group.

(f) **Snatch the Bacon**

- Team A lines up side by side opposite team B who line up in the same way. Teams facing one another should be 20m apart.
- A soft object, beanbag, jumper etc is placed in between the two teams.
- A captain is selected on each team and these will start the game.
- Captain from team A shouts GO and the two captains run towards the middle and try to retrieve the object and return to their side again.  
Whoever returns to their side with an object and without being caught gets to go again and can choose who they would like to run against the next time.

(g) **Team Game** (even number of players + 1 caller)

Team A lines up opposite team B sitting on the ground with approximately 1/2 m between players. Each opposing pair gets a number from 1 to ? depending upon the number of players. The caller picks a number and the pair with that number must get up and run right round their team and go back to their sitting position before their opposing number.

# Skipping Games

The following games involve using a 14ft rope that will require two turners. Try to ensure that turners are replaced frequently. The following games can be used to enable the pupils to acquire the necessary skills for skipping games. At any time when a pupil is having difficulty leaving the rope, encourage them to continue skipping until they can jump out. There is no limit to the number of participants in these games.

## (a) Under the Moon

- Turners turn the rope towards the skipper.
- Skipper stands close to one of the turners.
- As the rope passes in front of the skipper and brushes the floor, rotating up and away from her or him, the skipper runs under the moon i.e. the rope.
- The skipper then continues running around the turners in a figure of eight to run under the moon again.
- Encourage skippers to enter and exit the rope on a diagonal.

## (b) Over the Stars

- Turners turn the rope away from the skippers.
- As the rope clips the floor and starts moving towards the skipper, the skipper jumps over the stars i.e. the rope.

Once these two skills have been acquired a number of games can be played.

## (a) Follow the Leader

- Pupils follow one another through the rope taking turns.

## (b) Twisting and Turning

Before entering the skipping rope the pupils set themselves challenges such as;

- Hopping 10 times on their left foot.
- Turning around 180 while skipping.
- Turning around 180 while skipping on one foot.
- Touching the ground in-between skipping.
- Entering one at a time, they must try not to have two skippers in at the same time so the first in must leave quickly so as not to be caught by the new skipper coming in.
- Two skippers holding hands for 20 skips.

### (c) Co-Operative Jumping

- Two players turn the rope while the other players line up to jump.
- The first player jumps once, runs out and takes the end of the rope from one of the turners.
- The player he/she take it from goes to the end of the line.
- Meanwhile the second player has to jump twice, run out and take the rope from the other player who has been turning it, relieving that player to go to the end of the line.
- The third player jumps three times and runs out and so on....
- If a miss occurs, the next player begins over again, jumping once and so on.

### (d) Vote for DeValera

- One pupil starts by jumping into the turning rope and skips singing the tune below. At the key time in the tune they invite a new skipper to join them skipping and then again at the key time in the tune they exit themselves and the new skipper starts the tune again.

Vote, vote, vote for DeValera,  
In comes, ? (name another skipper)  
at the door Ay Oy,  
? (The new skippers name) is the one  
who is having all the fun  
And we don't need ? (the original skippers name)  
Anymore Ay Oy.

### (e) Postman

- One pupil starts by jumping into the turning rope and skips singing the tune below.

Early in the morning at half past eight,  
I heard the postman knocking at the gate,  
1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8,9,10,  
Postman, Postman drop your letter,  
Lady, Lady pick it up and out you go.

## (f) Girl Guide

- One pupil starts by jumping into the turning rope and skips singing the tune below. The pupil who is skipping must do the actions while skipping.

I am a girl guide dressed in blue,  
These are the actions I must do,  
Salute to the Captain, Bow to the Queen,  
Twist right around and count to fifteen,  
1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8,9,10,11,12,13,14,15.

## (g) Teddy Bear Teddy Bear

- One pupil starts by jumping into the turning rope and skips singing the tune below. The pupil who is skipping must do the actions while skipping.

Teddy Bear, Teddy Bear, Turn Around  
Teddy Bear, Teddy Bear, Touch the Ground  
Teddy Bear, Teddy Bear, Climb Upstairs  
Teddy Bear, Teddy Bear, Say your Prayers  
Teddy Bear, Teddy Bear, Turn out the Light  
Teddy Bear, Teddy Bear, Say Goodnight

# Laying Your Own Playground Markings

## Step by Step Guide

### Get Commitment.

Arrange a meeting of the board of management or parents council to get commitment for the project.

### Decide a Budget

Decide on a budget. It is cheapest for playground markings to be painted down by parents, staff or members of the local community.

### Observe the children at play

Observe what games are already being played in the yard, ask the children for ideas for games. You are not limited to the ideas presented in books. Visit other schools with markings and ask which games work best.

### Measure and design your yard

Measure your yard and using the ideas from the children and other sources plan your yard.

### Test out the games

Do a 'dry a run', by chalking down the planned markings. This will give you an idea of which games are most popular and where each game should be positioned.

### Finalise Design

Decide on the final design for your playground and using the playground markings stencils available from your local health promotion office and the tips below create an exciting and colourful playground.

### Workshop

Contact the Health Promotion Department for a playground markings workshop to be delivered to the pupils and teachers. Contact details are on the back page of this booklet.

## What is in the Pack?

### Stencils:

- Letters A - Z in uppercase
- Letters a - z in lowercase
- Cards suits
- Numbers 0 - 9
- Footprints

These basic shapes will help you paint down the markings contained in this booklet as well as allowing you and the children to invent and design games yourself.

### Instruction Cards:

These cards give step by step instructions on how to use the stencils to paint down certain markings for example:

Maze	Activity Circle
Twister	Hopscotch
Clock	Compass

Please see the poster 'Get a Life, Get Active-Playground Markings and Other Playground Games' for pictures of the above markings. These stencils are designed to be used to chalk down the markings, after which you paint in the chalk outlines. Using the stencils with paint may cause the paint to 'bleed' outside the boundary of the stencil, ruining the shape of the marking. Please note you may need to draw some of the markings in free hand for example the squiggly lines in the activity circle marking and the outline/boxes for the hopscotch marking.

## Who can use the stencils?

- Teachers
- Other school staff
- Caretakers
- Secondary school students

## Using the Stencils

### What type of paint should I use?

When buying paint ask about area of coverage per tin. Divide this by half to allow for tarmac absorption. You can also use spray cans (Plastikote Industrial upside down marking paint is also ideal. Each can cover 4m<sup>2</sup> approximately). These paints can be purchased from any good hardware shop or paint supplier.

You can generally get any colour mixed from a colour card.

Always make sure that the paint is exterior quality.

Avoid pastel colours and go for primary bright colours. If using tinned paint do not try to mix secondary colours yourself from the tins. Industrial paints do not mix like artists colours and you will end up with a brown mess.

The type of paint used for playground painting should be non toxic and water based. Modern weather resistant (outdoor) acrylic emulsions are also suitable. Weathercoat paint will naturally erode with time, but can be maintained and is safe for children to use under supervision.

## How do I prepare my tarmac surface?

Ensure that the surface is dry.

Use a brush to thoroughly clean the surface.

Remove any loose material from the area to be painted.

Use safety tape to cordon off area to be painted.

## How do I paint the tarmac surface?

- Tarmac is porous and often uneven and textured. If brushing on paint use a short stabbing motion to get paint into crevices. It is important that the first coat covers as much as possible of the area.
- It will take 2 - 3 coats of paint to provide sufficient cover.
- Do not paint on wet or damp surfaces.
- Allow time for paint to dry between coats.
- Never pour paint from the tin onto the surface and try to spread it around, it does not work.
- Do not remove safety tape until paint is dry (about 12 hours).
- Look out for useful shapes and objects in the school that might be used as templates for layout.
- Be confident, these areas work as an informal space.
- Have a small tin of black acrylic paint in case you want to make corrections.
- If you think you need to make a correction wait until the paint is dry and then brush over with black paint and start again.

## What colours should I choose?

Using complimentary colours will make the playground a vibrant environment for the children to play in.

Using colour this way adds a professional touch to the overall design.

Complimentary colours are opposite each other on the colour wheel.

Examples of complimentary colours are: red & green, blue & orange and purple and yellow.



## How do I draw a circle?

To draw circles use a piece of string. Get an assistant to hold it at the centre point and tie the chalk at the other end. For a 3m circle, distance from centre point to chalk = 1.5m.

When drawing the clock make sure all circles have the same centre point.

For drawing small circles e.g. for paw prints, use the lid of the tin of paint as a stencil.

**Be Active**

**Be Healthy**

**Be Happy**



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# Notes

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Revised by  
Health Service Executive South  
March 2009

ISBN: 1-874218-39-0

Reference Number: 05-04-0018

Copies of this resource are available from:  
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A PDF version of this Resource is available on the HSE  
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