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# Breakaway Camp Principles for Running Games

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## Breakaway Kids Camps

***“Our mission is to provide a fun environment where relationships are built and the gospel is shared so that lives are changed eternally.”***

Breakaway Kids Camps are Interdenominational Christian Holiday Camps for Kids located 2 hours south of Sydney, NSW. Australia.

The camps are held at Fitzroy Falls Conference Centre – Ryans Lane Fitzroy Falls, NSW Australia, during the January School Holidays. There is a Junior Camp for Primary Schoolers (Years 3-6) and a Senior Camp for High Schoolers (Years 7-12). There are also Summer and Winter Camps for Underprivileged Children. We aim to provide opportunities for young people to develop mentally, physically, socially and spiritually in a healthy natural environment.

The camp team consist of Christian men and women who relate well to young people and who care for their well-being. They give their time on a voluntary basis

### INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the Breakaway Kids Camps “Principles for Running Games” Manual. This Manual has been put together so that you can be better prepared for Breakaway Camps and more aware of your roles and responsibilities. It has lots of ideas for what to do and how to do it.

We all know games are fun. But when they are run by an unorganised, unprepared, non-confident leader – they can be embarrassing.

We have collated some thought provoking information in our “Breakaway Principles for Running Games” manual. In this manual, we aim to equip you with everything you need to keep kids entertained and to provide a quality program.

Check out our Breakaway Games Book (<http://www.breakawaycamp.org.au/Resources.htm>) for a list of awesome games that I know work for today’s young people.

Enjoy,

- Andrew Barrs ([andrew@breakawaycamp.org.au](mailto:andrew@breakawaycamp.org.au)) –

## Gaming Workshop

The most important key word to understand when relating to Young People today is **RELATIONSHIP**. Our task at Breakaway Camp is to “Help Young People Fall in Love with Jesus.” This can be done in many ways: -

- Being Real in our own Faith
- Proclaiming the Gospel always ("Preach the gospel always, use words only if you must." – St Francis).
- Being Fun, Energetic and Exciting.
- Creating a safe space where the young people can get together and invite their friends.

Games are an important part of our strategy to reach the young people at Breakaway. Games can be fun, energetic and exciting. Regular, good quality games also provide a safe space where the kids can trust us enough to invite their friends.

The concept of “Safe” does not just mean “freedom from injury,” it also includes the idea that the kids would “trust that the group and its activities will be quality each time we come back.”

But what makes a good game? What are the techniques of leading a good game? How do we make our games quality each time?



## Principles for Running Games

### RELATIONSHIPS

Today’s kids conduct relationships comfortably and regularly through technology (SMS, MSN, Facebook and email). They are used to short grabs of information such as television and video clips. They probably don’t know who Paul Keating is but they know who Barack Obama is (which highlights the influence of US culture. Btw – Paul Keating was the Prime Minister of Australia in the late 80’s – 90’s). Though highly suspicious of consumerism, they are prone to it, unwittingly, because of a need to conform through image. They probably have more disposable income than many adults! For today’s kids, truth is generally based on experience, not tradition or theory. They are highly individualistic and yet tribal. Lots of them grow up alone while their parents are at work or not in the house at all. That may be why they crave a genuine experience of community but often don’t know how to stay committed to one.

Understanding this, how do we meet their need? **We provide an experience that lets them connect with God and His church.** The first principle, then, is to understand what the kids are into. How do we do this? We ask them! And we find out what is popular in their world.



Some kids are active and some are not. As we grow to know them, and they us, we will discover what they are passionate about. Is it football? Tennis? Golf? Or cricket? Is it dolls and girly things? Is it the Wii or PS2? Is it skateboarding? Surfing? Reading? D & D? Facebook? The list goes on. As each generation comes through and as the kids age, fads come and go and interests do too.

So we need to know what they are passionate about. We can then possibly build an activity night around a popular passion. Imagine a skateboarding night? Or a surfing weekend?

Often kids don’t want to speak up about what they want. So how else can we know what they enjoy? Statistics! Kids will always pick and choose which activities appeal to them most (Is it a night at Youth Group? Or is it young Jack’s birthday party?). As we note which activities they attend and which ones they don’t, then our program can be built upon what works and what doesn’t. Thus we already know that a wet and slippery Bouncy Castle is popular and so is just hanging out together.

Games are for the enjoyment of all. Therefore "involvement" of all is vital for the success of a game. Games are best when there is no winner or loser - only competitors having fun.

This also means that leaders must participate in games and not watch from the side. Leaders are an integral part of all the games. It is challenging for a kid to compete against an adult. And it is exciting to have a popular adult on “your side.” What better way to build relationships than crawling through the mud with a team of kids?

## RESPECT

As leaders, it is important that we earn the kids respect. Many kids are sceptical of any authority that operates top-down because, for them, respect is earned through relationship. Authority doesn't work.

Most of them already know that their teachers and parents are not empowered to enforce discipline. Instead, kids today want coaches and mentors. And they abhor a false emphasis on style and presentation, preferring an honest and gutsy presentation that's 'real'.

Our aim must be to understand, imbibe and function within the world of the young people, integrating and identifying with them, while still remaining adults, in an adult world, with age-bought wisdom. We cannot be what we are not. We must not act childish, or try to function as a teenager. We must identify without losing our distinctiveness as an adult. See “Incarnational Youth Ministry” chapter below.

## MOTIVATION

There must always be an achievable goal in every game. For example: -

- Knocking the other person off the pillow fight log
- Capturing the Flag
- Winning the most points in the Photo Hunt.

Often the goal is a personal one (pillow fight) and often it results in team success (Photo Hunt) but there must always be a clear, achievable and desirable goal.

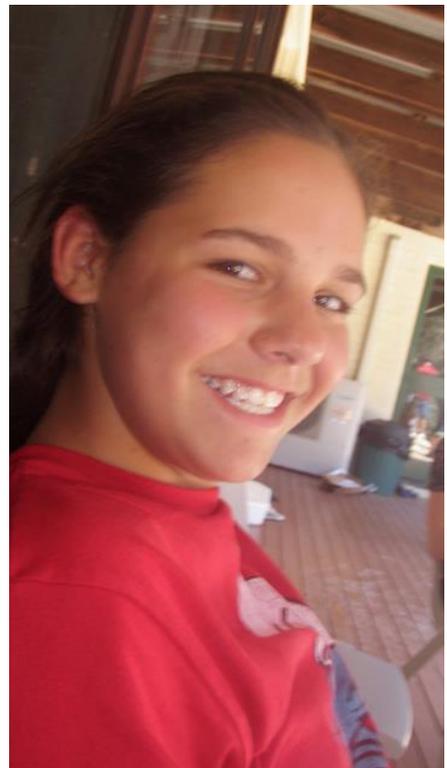
Some games result in team points producing winners and losers. This serves to engender competitiveness but may also serve negatively for some kids. Some kids may consider themselves "losers." Do not allow this attitude to foster. Give such a child an achievable activity to win.

When running a game that could result in losers, ensure that the activity itself is fun (such as running around town with a camera doing bizarre challenges). This way, the losers will still feel that they have enjoyed their night and their self-esteem is not knocked. I am not really a fan of games that have the potential to demolish kids self-esteem (eg. practical jokes).

What about prizes? Prizes are not necessary all the time. Often the activity itself is reward enough. Prizes can actually cause dissension. Prizes, however, can be a great motivator when used at the right time. If you are going to offer prizes, ensure that: -

1. You have enough for everyone (maybe some less special prizes for second place etc.)
2. They are not expensive.

So when is the right time for prizes? Not very often. If you have prizes every week, then the kids will expect prizes every week and they lose their motivational value. Use prizes only when you really want volunteers to come up front for something (and you need the extra motivation). Minties are fantastic motivators.



## TEAM GAMES

If you are leading a team, it is important to hype up your team even if they are coming last. Your team is the best - no matter what. While team unity and enthusiasm is important, do not put down individuals in opposing teams. Encourage those who are not athletic and give the quiet members of your team positions of importance in the games. Share the captaincy or goalkeepers' position around.

I have seen team games go really bad when leaders have the wrong attitude. This happens when the leader starts to become too competitive or begins to scold the kids or even if the leader doesn't participate. Rather we should always be positive, praise the kids when they do a good shot – laugh with the kids when they screw up. And laugh at yourself. Humour is always a good salve.

## CREATIVITY

I have been doing Youth and Children's ministry for over 20 years. Does this mean I know it all? No! Kids change and things that work one year will not work the next.

God is a very creative God and he is constantly placing really good ideas in our minds as to what we can do with the kids. This does not mean that we should do totally wild and out there activities each week, but we must be open to trying new things.

Sometimes ideas don't fly. Don't get depressed about it. We will probably not hit the mark every time. Some ideas can be reviewed and improved and tried again another time.

Many years ago, I thought “Supper Puppets” were going to flop for the teenage kids. How wrong I was – so we work on it and we grow it and we do it again next time – Woo Hoo.



## Practical Tips for Leading the Games

It’s always best if the person leading the game is running a game they know well or enjoy. That way their enthusiasm and energy passes onto the kids who are playing.

When leading the game, there are a number of principles to be aware of: -

### BE ENTHUSIASTIC AND CONFIDENT

If you look like you are going to enjoy the game, then the kids are likely to come into the game feeling positive too.

### PRESENT A CLEAR ACHIEVABLE OBJECTIVE

Let them know what they are supposed to achieve and how it is to be measured. Ensure it is achievable but not too achievable else the game will be over in about two minutes.

### BOUNDARIES AND RULES

Every game has the potential for disaster. Therefore, it is important to clearly identify any boundaries and rules. If people go outside the boundaries, then there must be consequences (eg. Time out from the game for a while). If rules are broken, then there must also be consequences.

### EXPLAINING RULES

Use the microphone if necessary. If there are rules involved then they must be clearly articulated to the kids. If necessary (or complex), give the rules to the kids on a card as they play the game.

Keep It Simple (KISS). Do not over complicate the explanation of the rules. Don’t just verbally describe the rules, but show them how it works (eg. “Caroline, come up the front and show us how you would capture someone from the other team.”)

Today’s kids are quick. I’ve heard it said that an adult has 13 words or less to communicate an idea before they switch off. This comes from the media and technology. Five second grabs. Their entertainment never stays still.

Teaching rules to kids can be very frustrating when they keep talking. The explanation can go longer than the game itself. Don’t get frustrated – the kids are often showing their excitement by talking about each piece of information you give about the game. This is good. But there are a number of techniques you can use to overcome this: -

- Be positive - don’t get angry.
- Increase the level of discipline but keep it appropriate. 1/ Name the kid who is talking. 2/ Tell the kid who is talking to stand up. 3/ Send the kid to the back of the room if they continue to talk.
- Avoid sending them *out* of the room because then they will never hear the rules.
- Do not accept questions until the end. Tell kids to put their hands down until then.
- Remember... when you are out the front, you are in charge – not the kids. AND FINALLY...

- Your Game = Your Rules. I love a game that I call Shazaam and I can explain the rules for Shazaam. Some kids might know the game as BANG – but as it is my game, we will follow my rules.

## SAFETY

As the leader of the game, it is your responsibility to: -

1. **Assess what potential disasters may occur during the game** (eg. kid could break their leg).
2. **Assess how likely these disasters may happen** (while running in an unfamiliar, rough, slippery and dark area, it could happen).
3. **Put in place actions to mitigate the risk** (carry a mobile phone, first aid kit and include a qualified first aider in the team. Ensure the kids wear appropriate shoes. Encourage kids not to run in the dark).

## BE CONSISTENT

If you are leading the game, there is nothing worse than being accused of being “unfair.” You cannot favour one team over another. If you enforce a rule against one side, then you must always enforce that rule. If you are not consistent, then there will be arguments. Avoid inconsistency at all costs – it is the best way to ruin a game.

## BE ORGANISED

There is nothing worse than a good idea being let down by poor execution. If there are props to be purchased; tools to be prepared; leaders to be prepped for a role, then ensure that everything is organised before the activity.

A running sheet of the event is a good idea. Often it is essential. Good communication about the game prior to the event is a good idea too.

Never be afraid to ask for help from other leaders who may know the game better or have more experience than you.

## GAMES WITH A LESSON

I love games that have an in-built spiritual application within it. Again, the games must always follow the same structure as described above. That is: -

- Must engender appropriate relationships not destroy them
- Achievable Objective
- Appropriate Motivation
- Fun
- Safety First

But you must also become aware of what the message is that you need to present. The message must be obvious whether it is communicated through the game or through the debrief afterwards. Don't let the game subvert the message. Conversely, don't let the message subvert the game.

## Incarnational Youth Ministry

What on earth is that? Let me explain... The central fact of the incarnation is that while we were still sinners, Christ came to save us (Rom. 5:8). He did not wait for us to find Him. He did not wait for us to ask Him to save us. He took the initiative to come to us. So, too, we must make the initiative to go to where young people are, and make the effort to understand them and the world within which they function. Incarnational Youth Ministry makes Jesus our role model.

Notice, however, that in taking on human form, Jesus did not relinquish His divinity. Neither can we ever fully become young people again. In fact, that would not be incarnational. Our aim must be to understand, imbibe and function within the world of the young people, integrating and identifying with them, while still remaining adults, in an adult world, with age-bought wisdom. We cannot be what we are not. We must not act childishly, or try to function as a teenager - our bodies and minds will not allow this, in any event. The level to which we can identify with young people will be determined by the specific situation we find ourselves in, but the fact remains that we must identify without losing our distinctiveness as an adult.



This will require us to go to the places they frequent, such as skateboarding parks, beaches, small group sessions, and shopping malls. We cannot wait for the sinners to come to us; we must go to them (cf. Luke 14:23; 7:34).

This does not mean that we condone everything that a young person might do (cf. 1 Cor. 13:6). Jesus, again, is our model. He practised "accepting without approving," in the examples of his meeting with the Samaritan woman

at the well (John 4:1-30), His acceptance of and banqueting with Zacchaeus (Luke 19:1-10), and his wonderful restoration of the woman caught in adultery (John 8:1-11). Notice that he always urged them to "go and sin no more" (John 8:11), but always did so from a context of love and acceptance of the intrinsic worth of the person. We would do well to love unconditionally, as Jesus did.

People crowded around Jesus because he met their needs - physical, emotional, spiritual, relational and financial. Jesus often began by meeting a felt need, even asking the question, "What do you want me to do for you?" (Matt. 20:32; Mark 10:36, 51; Luke 18:41). We cannot be content to say, "Be warm and well fed" (James 2:16). We must "show our faith by what we do" (James 2:18), proactively caring for young people's real needs.

Jesus was the "friend of sinners". As we see Him interacting with people, He didn't use every social occasion to attempt to evangelise people. Neither did He coerce or cajole people into the Kingdom. He didn't use some gospel formula like "Two Ways to Live." Although the conversion of people was always at the forefront of Jesus' mind, he did not fill every contact with people with evangelistic battering. Instead, he concentrated on building relationships. This is a good model to adopt.

This form of evangelism is called Incarnational Evangelism. It is when we go into the world of the young people and just hang with them – showing interest in what they are interested in and building relationships. When a relationship of trust and respect has been built, then we have permission to share our faith with the young people.

Often, people will not respond to the gospel. Sometimes this will break our heart, as people refuse to accept our Lord as their Saviour. Jesus understands this. When the rich young ruler came to Him, Jesus "loved him", yet let him go away (Mark 10:16-22). We must also be prepared to allow young people to choose for themselves.

Jesus had fun. He came "that we might have life to the full" (John 10:10). Young people like fun. They like life. They need to see a Jesus who is fun. We miss a lot by reading the Bible through serious eyes. Many of Jesus' parables include more than a hint of a smile.

**Think:** Meditate on Romans 5:8 and how it could relate to John 17:18 and John 20:21

## Games Workshop

Now it is time to put it into practice. Check out the following and choose a game.

You have ten minutes to prepare then lead this game. One game each.

At the end of the game, we will review how you led it. First you will let us know where you felt your strengths and weaknesses were.

Octopus
<b>Goal</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The octopus's goal is to capture all the fish</li><li>• The fish's goal is to elude capture and be the last one swimming.</li></ul>
<b>Materials:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• None</li></ul>
<b>Rules:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Players (fish) are at one end of the oval, inside defined limits. The octopus lives in the ocean inside the limits.</li><li>• The octopus tells the fish that they can cross the ocean by calling out "Octopus!" At this signal the fish try to cross over to the other side.</li><li>• Players need to cross over to the other side.</li><li>• Players who are touched by the octopus must stop moving and become tentacles of the octopus.</li></ul>

Partner Tag
<b>Goal:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• To avoid becoming IT</li></ul>
<b>Materials:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• None</li></ul>
<b>Rules:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Partners stand scattered over play area, inside arms linked, outside hand on hip.</li><li>• Runner reaches safety by hooking on to an arm, thus securing a partner. The other partner must drop off to be chased.</li><li>• If caught before reaching safety, then the runner becomes IT.</li><li>• If the runner is constantly evading the chaser, the supervisor can call "Switch!" which means that now the runner is the chaser.</li></ul>

Roll Ball
<b>Goal:</b>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Roll the ball through the legs of an opponent thus scoring a goal.</li></ul>
Materials: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• One Ball</li></ul>
Rules: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Two teams line up facing each other, about 2m apart. Each players legs are astride, with the feet touching the team member next in line.</li><li>• The aim of the game is to roll the ball through the legs of an opponent. This has to be done quickly, as the opponent tries to stop it with his hands and throw it back.</li><li>• The ball must be rolled underarm, and the feet of the shooter must be kept on the ground.</li><li>• The winning team is the one with the greatest number of 'goals' within a given time.</li></ul>

<b>Fastest Game in the World</b>
Goal: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Last Man Standing</li></ul>
Materials: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• None</li></ul>
Rules: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Everybody spreads out in the room at a distance from everyone else.</li><li>• When the leader shouts "GO!" everyone is "in" and tries to catch everyone else out.</li><li>• The last one standing is the winner.</li></ul>

<b>Skin the Snake</b>
Goal: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• To be the first team to skin and then dress the snake.</li></ul>
Materials: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• None</li></ul>
Rules: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Divide the groups into teams.</li><li>• The group is in a straight line.</li><li>• Each player puts their right hand forward as if they were shaking a person's hand. Put left hand through own legs behind to shake hands with person behind you.</li><li>• Last person in the line lies down, everyone else backs up to be able to lie down also.</li></ul>

- When whole group is lying down, first person stands up, and walks forward over all the other people until "Snake" has skinned itself.

### **Crows and Cranes**

**Aim:**

- To get everyone onto your team.

**Materials:**

- None

**Rules:**

- Divide the children into two equal teams. Name one team crows, and the other cranes.
- Line the two teams up four or five feet apart facing each other.
- Flip a coin, and if it comes up heads call crows. Upon calling crows, the crows must turn in flight with the cranes after them. If any of the crows makes it to the safety zone he is free. If he is touched he switches teams.
- Flip a coin, and if it comes up tails call cranes. Upon calling cranes, the cranes must turn in flight with the crows after them. If any of the cranes makes it to the safety zone he is free. If he is touched he switches teams.