



**The Play at Home Playbook: Powered by Playworks**

*Created on 3.19.20*



### About this Playbook

At Playworks, we believe every child should experience safe and healthy play every day. Playworks' evidence-based programs have been proven to get kids moving, while teaching them social-emotional skills. Now more than ever, these skills are essential to helping kids across the country combat stress and anxiety and successfully navigate the uncertainty and change associated with the COVID-19 crisis.

The games in this guide can be played anywhere, but we have assembled them for kids who may be playing at home due to school closures in mind. In these settings, the challenge is not just to introduce games kids will love, but also to ensure that children can play in the space safely and in accordance with all CDC guidelines to help prevent the spread of coronavirus.

Making playtime run smoothly often starts with game rules, without making games any less fun. In the following pages, you will find the rules of games that require little to no equipment, can be played with one child or siblings, and can be led by families, teachers, caring adults, and peers.

For more than 24 years, Playworks has helped schools and youth organizations through on-site staffing, consultative support, staff training, and most recently, online learning. We are a mission-driven nonprofit committed to the power of play.

This Play at Home guide is accompanied by resources available online. Visit [www.playworks.org/PlayatHome](http://www.playworks.org/PlayatHome) for more games and resources.

Play on,  
The Playworks Team

*Most games can be played inside or outside. CDC recommendations for interaction include: play with groups of ten or less, stand at least 6 or more feet apart from each other, wear gloves if sharing an object or give everyone their own object, if possible, or clean hands thoroughly before and after play, clean and disinfect equipment frequently and thoroughly. For the most up to date guidelines visit [cdc.gov](http://cdc.gov).*



## Beans on Toast



**# of people to play:** 2+

**Best for ages:** 5+

**Equipment needed:** None

**Setup/Teaching Time:** 5 Minutes

### Before You Start

- Choose one person to lead the game and remind the group to focus on playing safely

### Set Up

- Find somewhere to play that allows everyone to have some space to move
- The leader should stand in front of the group so that they are visible to everyone

### How to Play

- The leader's job is to call out different types of beans. Each bean will have an action associate with it. When the bean is called out, the group does the action for that bean. The goal is to follow the directions as quickly as possible and



without making any mistakes. If you are able to go the longest without making a mistake, you get to be the new leader.

- Teach the various beans one at a time. Practice each one and add in new beans until you have a list of 3-4 that the group knows. Here are a few to start with:
  - String Bean - Stand straight and tall with your hands together over your head
  - Chilly bean - Shiver like you're out in the cold
  - Dancing Bean - Show one of your best dance moves
  - Green Bean - Run in place as fast as you can
  - Red Bean - Stop running and freeze
- The leader should call out the beans and mix up the speed and order. Example: "String bean, Green Bean, Red Bean, Red Bean, Chilly Bean"
- If at any point someone does the wrong action they should step out and sit next to the leader.
- Aside from the various beans, the leader can also call out "Beans on Toast." When you hear "Beans on Toast," fall to the ground as quickly (and safely!) as you can.
- The leader will watch for the last person to fall to the ground. If you're the last one on the ground, step out of the game, sit next to the leader, and help them come up with new bean ideas.
- As you play, add in more beans, create your own beans and actions, and try to trick the group any way you can!

### **Challenge ideas**

- What creative beans and actions can you come up with?
- As the leader, can you trick everyone all at once?
- How many commands can you follow before making a mistake?

### **Game Variations**

- Instead of sitting out when a mistake is made, have players perform an action, such as 5 jumping jacks, to re-enter the game



## The Big Cheese



**# of people to play:** +3

**Best for ages:** +5

**Equipment needed:** None

**Setup/Teaching Time:** 3 minutes

### Before You Start

- Practice the call and response of “I am the Big Cheese”, with all players responding “You are the Big Cheese”.
- Introduce the 3 different movements: Cheddar Cheese (hands circled in front), String Cheese (arms stretched overhead), Stinky Cheese (waving hand in front of nose)

### Set Up

- All players stand in a straight line, in a semi-circle or circle so you can see everyone and identify who’s made which sign. Choose who will be the first “Big Cheese”



### **How to Play**

- The leader begins each round by saying “I am the Big Cheese!” and the other players respond “You are the Big Cheese!”.
- The leader then counts “1...2...3!” On the “three,” players pick one of the 3 predetermined movements to show (Cheddar, String or Stinky Cheese). At the same time, the Leader shows one of the 3 movements.
- Players who make the same movement as the leader are recycled (or out).
- The object of the game is for players to stay in the game by doing a different sign than the leader. The last player standing gets to be the next “Big Cheese.”

### **At-Home Accommodations**

- Play sitting down if space is limited indoors.

### **Challenge ideas**

- Play the game while standing on one leg!
- Challenge the players to come up with more cheeses and associated actions.

### **Game Variations**

- Students can complete an action (ex: 5 jumping jacks) to re-enter the game rather than sitting out
- Connect game to what kids are learning in class (plant cycle, larva cycle, etc)



## Huckle Buckle Beanstalk



**# of people to play:** 3+

**Best for ages:** 5+

**Equipment needed:** A small unique object to hide (beanbag, marker, etc.)

**Setup/Teaching Time:** 5 minutes

### Before You Start

- Remind everyone to be fair and honest during the game - especially when the object is being hidden.
- Remind the person hiding the object to remember where they put it!

### Set Up

- Decide on a starting area for each round. This could be a spot in the room such as a couch or your desk if in a classroom. This is where everyone will stand while the object is being hidden.
- Choose one person to hide the object first.



### **How to Play**

- To begin, have everyone in the starting area put their heads down and close their eyes.
- One person will take the object and hide it in plain sight somewhere in the room. The seekers shouldn't need to touch, rearrange, or open anything in the room to find the object.
- Once the object is hidden the hider can return to the starting area and let everyone know they can begin searching.
- The goal of the game is to find the hidden object as fast as you can and keep it a secret from other players.
- When you find the object, don't give away its location - don't point at or pick up the object. Simply make your way back to the starting area. Once you are back at the starting area, say "Huckle Buckle Beanstalk!"
- Keep playing until everyone has found the object. Then, choose someone new to hide the object. Make sure everyone gets a chance to hide it!

### **At-Home Accommodations**

- Play in a specific room or throughout the house.

### **Challenge ideas**

- Can you hide your object in a spot no one can find?
- How quickly can you find the object?

### **Game Variations**

- Allow the object to be hidden out of plain sight - in a box, under a pile of clothes, etc.
- Have multiple people hide an object then race to see who can find someone else's object first.





### I see, I see (Brain Break)



**# of people to play:** 5+

**Best for ages:** 3+

**Equipment needed:** No equipment needed

**Setup/Teaching Time:** 5 minutes

#### **Before You Start**

- Make sure players know to not make any physical contact with each other.

#### **Set Up**

- Designate an appropriate play area with clear boundaries.

#### **How to Play**

- Players begin walking around the designated area (use movement modifications to make this more playful: examples include a runway walk, slow-mo walk, zombie walk, etc.)
- When the leader says the words “I See, I See”, the players freeze. After the players freeze, they will ask the leader, “What do you see?”
- The leader will then say, “I See \_\_\_\_\_”.



- Whatever the leader says, the players act it out in the designated area.
  - An example dialogue/sequence for the game:
    - Leader: “I See, I See!!”
    - Players: “What do you see?”
    - Leader: “I see a superhero flying in the sky!”
    - Players then act like superheroes flying in the sky.
  - After the players have successfully acted, the leader will then repeat the phrase, “I See, I See” and the game will continue with new actions.

### **At-Home Accommodations**

- Play sitting down if space is limited indoors

### **Modifications for Social Distancing**

- Have players standing/sitting in certain spots of the designated area. Players cannot wander from that spot or move closer to each other.

### **Challenge ideas**

- Challenge players to be really silly with their actions. Their goal can be to make the other players laugh! The player with the silliest action gets to be the new leader.

### **Game Variations**

- Connect the game to animals you see at the zoo, characters you see on tv, or anything players are interested in!



## One Step Back



**# of people to play:** 2+

**Best for ages:** 5+

**Equipment needed:** A tossable object like a ball

**Setup/Teaching Time:** 2 minutes

### Before You Start

- Have all players stand in a circle, or an equal distance apart.

### Set Up

- You'll need a ball or tossable object, and some space for everyone to spread out.

### How to Play

- Start with a small circle--each person standing an arm's length apart. The leader starts the game by passing the ball to the person next to them. When each person gets the ball, their job is to pass it on to their neighbor.
- Once the ball makes it around the circle without anyone dropping it, the leader says "One step back!" and all players take one step back.



- Then, everyone passes the ball around the circle again. If the group successfully passes it all the way around without dropping it, the leader says “One step back” and everyone takes one step back--making the circle even larger.
- This continues until the ball is dropped, at which point we say “Good job, nice try!” and the group returns to the center to try again.

### **At-Home Accommodations**

- You can use any tossable object to play this game. Balls work well outdoors, but if you're playing indoors, try using a soft object such as a balled up sock!

### **Challenge ideas**

- Try playing this game while standing on one foot.
- Add throwing challenges to the game. For example, only throw with your non-dominant hand, or throw under your legs.

### **Game Variations**

- Play “soccer style” and kick the ball on the ground instead of tossing it. If the next person has to take more than one step to receive the pass, start over!
- Play “football style” and punt the ball with your foot instead of tossing it. If the next person drops the punt, start over!
- Instead of taking just one step back each round, the leader can choose to say any number up to 10. All players will take that number of steps back!



## Popcorn



**# of people to play:** 1+

**Best for ages:** 5+

**Equipment needed:** 1 ball

**Setup/Teaching Time:** 1-2 Minutes

### Before You Start

- Get a ball or soft throwable object and a few people to play with (you can also play this game on your own!)

### Set Up

- Find an area with space for your group to make a circle - preferably with a high ceiling. Playing outside works great, too!

### How to Play

- One person starts the game by throwing the ball in the air, clapping one time, and then catching the ball.
- Once you've tried it one time, pass the ball to the person next to you in the circle so they can try. Continue this all the way around the circle, giving everyone a turn.



- If you drop the ball or don't clap the correct number of times, you were unsuccessful and that's okay.
- When it gets back to the first person, check in with everyone. If you successfully clapped and caught the ball, move up to Level Two. If you were unsuccessful, stay on Level One.
- Level Two means that you'll try to clap two times before catching the ball. Level Three means three claps, Level Four means four claps, and so on.
- Each time the ball comes to you, try the level you are on. If you're unsuccessful, stay on the same level and try again when the ball makes it back to you.
- The goal of the game is to see how many claps you can work up to and still catch the ball each time.
- If you're playing on your own, just work your way up and see how many claps you can get to!

### **At-Home Accommodations**

- Ball up a sock or crumple up a piece of paper to use as a ball.
- Play outside for more space.

### **Challenge ideas**

- How many claps can you do?
- How quickly can you get to \_\_\_# of claps?
- What other actions can you do while the ball is in the air? Spin around, clap behind your back, etc.

### **Game Variations**

- Give everyone a ball and race to a certain number of claps.
- Partner up and pass to your partner. They'll try to clap before they catch the ball.



## Rock, Paper, Scissors Stretch



**# of people to play:** 2

**Best for ages:** 6+

**Equipment needed:** None

**Setup/Teaching Time:** 3 minutes

### Before You Start

- Make sure everyone knows how to play Rock, Paper, Scissors!
  - Rock - make a fist with your hand. This is more successful than Scissors.
  - Paper - hold your hand out flat. This is more successful than Rock.
  - Scissors - make a scissor shape with your first two fingers. This is more successful than Paper.
  - To play, chant “Rock Paper Scissors Go!” while gently placing a closed fist on your open palm. On “Go!”, reveal your choice of Rock, Paper, or Scissors.

### Set Up

- Identify an open space where both participants will have room to stretch out their legs.



### How to Play

- The goal of the game is to stay balanced without falling over. Try to stay balanced longer than your partner!
- Start out by facing your partner. Play a game of Rock Paper Scissors.
- Each time you win a game of Rock Paper Scissors stay where you are--you don't need to move your feet!
- Each time you lose a game of rock paper scissors stretch out by one foot length.
  - One way to do this is to simply take a step back with your back foot, keeping your front foot in the same spot. Each time you lose a game, your back foot goes further back and your front foot stays in the same place!
  - To more precisely stretch out the same distance each time try this: swing your front foot behind your back foot and touch your toe to your heel. Leave that foot there and slide your new front foot up to your partner's toes.
- Keep playing Rock Paper Scissors and stretching out after each round! The game goes until someone falls over, holds onto something for balance or can't stretch any further.

### At-Home Accommodations

- Consider moving furniture to make sure each partner has enough space to stretch.

### Challenge ideas

- How far can you stretch?
- Can you play a perfect game without ever having to stretch out?

### Game Variations

- Play with 3 people at once. Stretch out for each person who beats you in Rock paper Scissors. For example, if two people play paper and one plays Rock, the person who played Rock would take two steps back!





## Playworks Play At Home Playbook

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This Playworks Play at Home Playbook is proudly supported by our incredible funding community.