

GUIDE TO BACK*POCKET GAMES

TO KEEP YOU SANE
WHEN THINGS DON'T
QUITE GO THE WAY
YOU HAD PLANNED

by Jody Livingston of The Longer Haul @
<http://thelongerhaul.com>

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It's all about
being MacGyver

"Can you tell I
have had a van break
down a time or two?"

What you will find in this book will save your ministry (and life someday). We have all been in situations where things went wrong. Your bus breaks down on the way to camp. You finish teaching early (okay, maybe that one does not really happen often). Several parents are late picking up their teens after an event. One thing is certain, if you don't give teens something to do...they will find something to do. Usually, it will not be something you would have preferred.

Okay, so in a perfect world, these activities **would** be tucked deep in the back pockets of your mind. Then you could pull them out whenever you had the transitions, downtime, (van breaks down), weather goes sour, or just one of those days that wears you down. But...if they won't stay in your head, then put them in the back pocket of your shorts or backpack (or on your smart phone)— wherever the next best place is for easy reference. Most of all JUST HAVE FUN!

Make every moment count, point your students to Jesus and make a difference in a student's life for the gospel's sake. It is my sincerest hope that you will stay in this amazing calling of Student Ministry for the longer haul! If at any point you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me. You can best reach me on twitter ([@jodylivingston](https://twitter.com/jodylivingston)). If you would like to reach me in private you can always email me at heyjody@thelongerhaul.com.



Change Three Things

Kids line up in pairs across from each other. They “study” their partners for 15 to 20 seconds. Both turn around and change 3 things about their appearance. Then turn back around, re-facing each other, and try to guess what is different.

[For example: Take off watch, shirt backwards, untie one shoelace.]

“You can also have one person leave the group and have them guess who left.”

Who Moved?

Select one person to be “It.” “It” looks carefully at the poses of each person in the group, then turns around. One predetermined person changes their pose in the group while the others try to stay still. The person who is “It” then tries to guess who in the group moved.

Who is Leading?

Everyone stands or sits in a circle. One player turns around while a leader is selected. The player then turns around and tries to find the person who is leading the group in crazy antics, like arm waving, head shaking, etc. The leader will keep changing movements which all others follow. The guesser can be in the middle or walk around or sit in the circle. Once the guesser selects the correct leader (s)he rejoins the circle and the leader becomes the guesser.

Step on It

The kids stand in a circle with one person standing in the middle with their eyes closed or blindfolded. Place something on the floor such as a coin, paper clip, etc. The kids in the circle try to direct the one in the middle to step on the object.

Elf Hide and Seek

One player is chosen to be “it.” They look around and think of a spot that a tiny elf could hide in. The other players try to guess the spot. They can ask questions about the hiding place that can only be answered with a “yes” or “no.” If they are way off the person who is “it” can say, “cold” or if they are close “warm.” Whoever guesses the hiding place gets to be “it” next.

“It is also really fun to have everyone sneak away while the person in the middle is trying to tag people...not that I have ever done that, because that would be mean.”

Quiet Crossing

Select one person to be “the tagger.” “The tagger” then closes his/her eyes and stands in the middle of the circle of sitting players. Players number off. “The tagger” calls out two numbers. Those numbers (quietly on tiptoe), try to cross the circle without getting tagged by the blindfolded player (a.k.a. “the tagger”). Once a player is tagged (s)he becomes the next tagger.

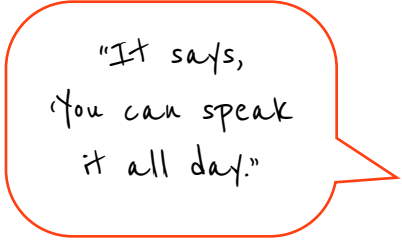
Sort

Ask everyone to form a line and organize themselves in various ways: alphabetically, according to age, hair color, birthdays, height, grade, shoe size.

Try this without talking (or texting, tweeting, etc.) also!

Who Has It?

Players form a circle. Select one person to be “It” and turn his/her back to the group. One player in the circle is then given a coin, pebble, or other small object. “It” then stands in the middle and watches as the other players pass or pretend to pass the coin from hand to hand, behind their backs and in front. “It” calls “Stop” when they are ready to guess who has the object. The player who is caught with the object becomes the next “it.”



“It says,
you can speak
it all day.”

Practice Pig Latin

Pig Latin Rocks! Simply take the first letter of the word and put it at the end and add “ay.” “Ouy-ay anc-ay peaks-ay ti-ay lla-ya ayd-ay!”

Find a Partner

"This is not a
'dating game.'"

The goal of this game is simply to "find a partner." The game begins by everyone looking around the room and catching someone's eyes. The two of them join up as partners and keep staring at each other while other partners join up. Keep changing the criteria for joining as partners.

[For example: Hold up a number of fingers (and possibly yell out) between one and five]

Find another partner who has the same number. You can also do same height, same color of hair, same shoes, etc. If someone cannot find a partner, they are out. Keep playing until you have a winning couple.

"This is also a
great 'on-stage'
game to play with

What Are You Doing?

The game begins with one person calling out another person's name and asking, "What are you doing?" The other person responds with "I'm..." and makes up something to do. The person who asked the question has to do what the person who answered says. Person 2 then asks someone else, and so on and so on...

*For Example: "Hey Jody! What are you doing?"
"I'm taking my socks off and putting them on the outside of my shoes."
Then you would take off your socks and put them on the outside of your shoes.*

ABC Game

Have kids form a line or a circle. Have someone pick a topic to talk about. Have another student pick a letter. Start with the first person saying one sentence about the topic—the sentence must begin with the letter that was chosen. The next person must continue the story. Try to make it through the entire alphabet and back to the original letter without messing up.

For example:

Topic— candy; Letter— H

"Hello, do you have any candy?"

"I wish I did!"

"Just go to the store and buy some"

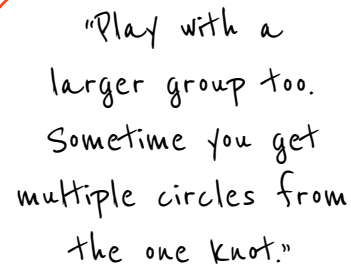
And so on and so on and so on...

"Be sure to stand at a safe distance when watching this one."

High 5 (or 10)

Partners stand facing each other at arm's length. Give each other a "high 5" (touch palms in the air). Then both partners drop their hands, close their eyes and turn around in place 5 times. Without opening their eyes they try to high 5 each other again. This is great to watch too!

Knots



"Play with a larger group too. Sometime you get multiple circles from the one knot."

Seven or eight players stand in a circle and reach into the middle with both hands. In the middle they grab hold of someone else's hands (not both hands of another person) with each hand. Without letting go, players untangle themselves to create a circle. They can step over, under or twist, but no let go. Usually, players can untangle into a circle.

This is My Nose

Players are in a circle. One player is in the center. The player in the center goes up to a player and points to a body part or article of clothing and says the name of a different body part or article of clothing.

*For Example: Points to his nose and says, "This is my knee."
The player must do the opposite and point to his knee and say, "This is my nose."*

This is way more confusing than it sounds. When a player makes a mistake he changes places with the center or is out. This is also a great game to play on stage.

Listen Harder!!!

Tell the group that if they are very quiet they will be surprised at all the sounds they might hear around them. Ask them to be very quiet for a minute. Then ask what they heard. They should be able to list a dozen things. Clocks, cars, AC air blowing, birds, etc. Ask them to be quiet again and challenge them to identify more sounds.

"Being cool,' is probably not the best common trait to use on this one...even though I'm sure you ARE very cool."

Who is in My Club

The leader picks a player who has something in common with him/her (such as shoelaces, shirt color, height, etc.). The chosen player joins him/her and the group gets one chance to guess what it is they have in common. If they guess wrong, another player is chosen to join the club who also has the common trait. They guess again. If wrong, one or more appropriate players can be chosen. When the guess is correct another leader is chosen.

"Make sure you have plenty of room for them to run around on this one."

Gotcha!

All players place one hand behind their back where it must stay. The object is to try to tag another player's hand (behind their back) while preventing anyone from touching yours. Players yell "gotcha!" when they succeed and may continue playing. Players who are tagged are out. Keep playing until only one player remains.

Opposites

Four players stand in front of the room. Three players must do just the opposite of what the lead player does. If the leader sits, the others must stand. If the leader puts their hand on their head, the others put their hands on their foot, maybe put their head in their hand, or maybe stand on their head. It is always interesting to see the different interpretations of what is opposite.

"If you are broken down on the side of the road, everyone blames you for not getting gas sooner, and you decide to play this one...don't be surprised that the story may be about you. It is probably not a 'happily ever after' one either."

Group Story

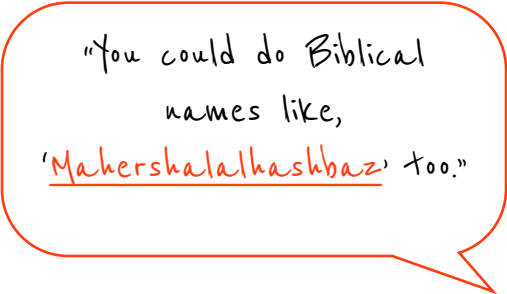
One player starts the story, but stops after a few sentences. Players each take a turn add a few sentences at a time, making up the plot as they go. Keep the story going as long as you want and as long as interest holds. Sentences should be said quickly so the story doesn't drag.

You Decide/Would you Rather

Tell the group you will be asking them to make a decision. If they agree with the first choice they should move to the right side of the room, if they agree with the second choice they should move to the left side of the room. Ex. "Would you rather...be rich or famous. Drive a truck or a sports car? Eat surf or turf? Be an "A" student or be popular?"

Four Standing Alone

Game begins with all players sitting. Anyone can stand up any time they want to, but cannot remain standing for more than 5 seconds. The aim of the game is to have exactly four standing at one time. The number can be varied. This takes time to get the hang of.



"You could do Biblical names like, 'Mahershalahashbaz' too."

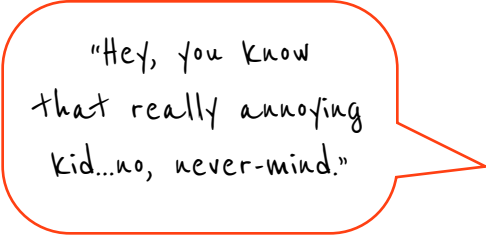
Spelling Backwards

A word is called out by the leader who points to someone. Player must spell the word backwards on the first try. Player can be eliminated or receive points...or not.

Word Trace

One person slowly traces a three-letter word on the back of their partner who tries to guess the word. If the guess is correct, the second partner traces a word. After they have both guessed correctly, they find new partners. Up your game and try YES, Jesus, Mahershalahashbaz...or even pictures instead.

Cops and Robbers



"Hey, you know
that really annoying
kid...no, never-mind."

Players (the robbers) sit in a circle. One player leaves the room and a "cop" is chosen. The player returns to figure out who the cop is. When the cop winks at a robber, the robber is out and must lie down. A dramatic death or delay is always fun. The cop continues to wink at robbers until discovered or until everyone is out. If the cop is discovered, he leaves the room next and another cop is selected.

Hot Potato

Players pass an object along from person to person while the leader's back is turned. When the leader yells "stop," the player holding the object is out. The winner is the last player.

Going To Sally's House

Tell the kids that we're all going to Sally's house. Choose kids and tell them they can go if they bring certain items to Sally's house. Your role is to tell them what they can or cannot bring. The secret is that they can only bring objects with double letters.

For example: You can bring a kitten, but not a cat.
Also call going to the moon, going through the green glass doors, etc.

“Wouldn't you like to go on a real cruise...like if you had real vacation days?”

Going on a Cruise

...or whatever location you would like. This game is the same as going to Sally's House, but instead of double letters use the first letter of each person's first and last name.

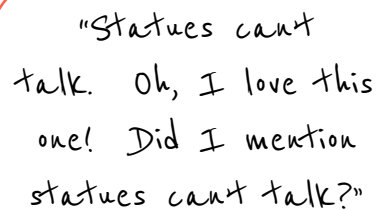
“Hi I'm Mean Robert, (what? You can have a Robert, Bob, Rob, Robbie, and Bobby...why not a Robert?) and I'm going on a cruise...I'm bringing monkeys and bubbles.”

Huckle Buckle Bean Stalk

Players leave the room or turn their back and close their eyes. “It” hides a predetermined object in a tricky spot, but in plain view. The others hunt for the object. They **should not need to move anything to find it**. When a player sees the object they say, “*huckle buckle bean stalk*” and sit down quietly. The game continues until everyone has found the object. The first player to find the hidden object hides it next.

Johnny, Johnny

Have the students repeat what you do. Hold one hand up so your palm is facing you. Point to your pinky with the other hand and say, “*Johnny*.” Do that for each finger, but say, “*Whoop*” as you slide between your first finger and your thumb. Immediately do it backwards so you end up on your pinky. The final thing is crossing your arms. Most of the kids will get the Johnny part right, but they won’t cross their arms at the end. Keep doing it and recognize the ones that get it right.



“Statues can’t talk. Oh, I love this one! Did I mention statues can’t talk?”

Statues

Tell kids that you are looking for a statue of anything (car, things you do at a football game, tiger, etc.). They have 30 seconds to think about it then “freeze!” Remember that statues can’t move or talk!

Look Down, Look Up

Everyone standing circle shoulder to shoulder. When the leader says, “Look down” everyone looks down, when the leader says, “Look up,” each person must look directly up and make direct eye contact with another person and hold it. If you are looking at one person and they are looking back at you, then both of you are out. If you do not make eye contact with anybody you are still in the game. The object is to be the last two people, or last person in left in the group.

Partner Catch

A player throws an object such as a shoe or a wadded up piece of paper or a hat, etc., to two partners who catch it together, at the same time. Then challenge them to catch it without using their hands. Continue throwing until they get good at it.

"This is not a
'dating game either.'"

Wrong Number

Have a player stand in each corner of the room, each taking a different number from 1-4 and holding up the appropriate number of fingers. A "caller" has their back turned to the play area. The rest of the players join a number player. The caller calls out a number and those players that joined that number must go to the center and stay. The other players then switch to another number player. Another number is called and so on. The last player left is the next caller.

"Seriously, don't
use the church van
or bus for this one."

King of the Mountain

The object here is to get as many people as possible on a hill....if there is no hill, a piece of carpet square, paper, church van (ok, maybe not the church van), etc. Allow groups to challenge each other to compete to see who can get the most people!

Scavenger Hunt

Look but don't take

Find things of a specific color

Find things that are flat

Things that start with A or D

Who can find 5 things first?

With teams of five or six, each player can be responsible for remembering just one thing and telling that thing to the leader.

"Or, use the first chapter of 1 Chronicles...well, on second thought..."

The Tibetan Memory Trick

One person is chosen to be the reader and another player volunteers to go first. The reader recites sentence one and the player repeats it. Easy enough. Then the reader reads sentence two, which adds something to sentence one. Still easy. Most players find it gets difficult by sentence four or five. A slip up or pause and the player is replaced by another, who begins with sentence one. The player who gets the farthest wins. Here are the sentences...

1. One hen
2. One hen, two ducks
3. One hen, two ducks, three squawking geese
4. (add to above) Four fresh fish
5. Five dancing porpoises

6. Six pairs of red socks
7. 7,000 rock and roll singers
8. Eight huge trombones
9. Nine glasses of goats milk
10. Ten talkative DJs on W570 talk radio

LET'S PLAY...

"On a warm day outside, use a cup of water when playing Duck, Duck, Goose' and make it Drip, Drip, Drop."

SIMON SAYS
CHARADES
FOLLOW THE LEADER
TAG
7-UP
RELAY RACES
MOTHER MAY I
20 QUESTIONS
THUMB WRESTLING
DUCK, DUCK, GOOSE
I SPY
RED LIGHT, GREEN LIGHT

...and yes these work with teens...sometimes even better!

Thank You So Much!

Putting this eBook together was no small task. I hope you find the information in this eBook as helpful throughout the years. If you would like to share it please feel free to do so by directing them to <http://backpocketgames> so they can sign up for updates to the blog and receive their own free copy.

If at any point you have any questions regarding anything in this guide please do not hesitate to contact heyjody@thelongerhaul.com or [@jodylivingston](https://www.instagram.com/jodylivingston). Thank you for all you do for teens!

