

Jessica Swale

**drama
games**
FOR CLASSROOMS
AND WORKSHOPS

Foreword by Max Stafford-Clark

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Rubber Chicken!

A fast-paced, team-building warm-up game that gets a group going quickly.

How to Play

Ask the players to stand in a circle. Explain that you are all going to shake your right hands up in the air eight times, whilst counting loudly and quickly – ‘8, 7, 6, 5, 4, 3, 2, 1!’ Then you are going to repeat this with your left hand, then right leg, then left leg. The counting needs to be fast and loud, and the shaking needs to be vigorous and energetic. As soon as you have done all four limbs from 8 to 1, repeat the shaking and counting from 7 to 1, then 6 to 1, and continue until you finally shake each limb once, counting, ‘1, 1, 1, 1!’ Then everyone shouts ‘Rubber chicken!’ and shakes their whole body like a rubber chicken!

The Aim of the Game

The aim is for the whole group to complete the routine vigorously and enthusiastically as a team. The game also builds their energy levels and gets them moving.

You can easily replace the phrase ‘rubber chicken’ with a word that means something to your group, the name of the play you are rehearsing, or your theatre company or school, to give a feeling of group solidarity and positive energy!

Players	Age	Time	Skills
Any number	6+	3	Movement, Teamwork, Energy

Greyhound Race

A quick circle game that encourages everyone to get moving and get involved by mimicking a sports crowd, and the sport, simultaneously.

How to Play

Ask the players to stand in a circle. Explain that they are at the greyhound races and, to everyone's excitement, the greyhound is going to race around the track right under our feet! When you say 'Go!', the dog will be let out and will run as fast as it can in the designated direction (to your left or right). As the imaginary dog passes under your feet, you must jump as high as possible to let it past. You must watch as it whizzes round the circle, and the louder you cheer, the faster it will go!

On your shout ('Go!'), each of the players then jumps up in the air in turn, as quickly as possible, to allow the greyhound to pass underneath them. Give a running commentary as 'the sports commentator' to enliven the game, and to help the players imagine the dog as it is running past:

He's coming round the final bend, he seems to be slowing down, maybe if we cheer louder he'll run even faster, look at the sweat pouring off him, he's almost there, a little bit faster... and he's done it!!

When playing with older groups you can pass the 'commentator' role to a responsible player. Once the greyhound has done several rounds, you can announce that it has won.

The Aim of the Game

The aim is for the players to work as a team to create the idea of the moving greyhound. Everyone needs to participate and jump up – if one person doesn't jump, the whole race will slow down. By encouraging cheering you can also stretch the players' imaginative skills and increase the feeling of teamwork, as they encourage each other to jump quicker to help the greyhound win!

Players	Age	Time	Skills
10+	6+	5	Energy, Teamwork, Coordination

Friendly Follower

A three-stage trust game that builds a feeling of confidence between partners.

How to Play

Ask everyone to find a partner, let's call ours Esme and Ali. There are several stages of the game, each of which builds on the last to demand a higher level of trust between partners.

For the first task, Esme must close her eyes and let Ali take her hand. Ali's task is then to lead Esme around the room very slowly, ensuring that Esme is safe and does not bump into anything or anyone else. After several minutes ask them to swap over and repeat the exercise.

For the second task, repeat the first activity but instead of holding hands, Esme's only contact with Ali is fingertip to fingertip (ask them to use their index finger only). Ali must walk slowly enough that Esme can follow safely without losing contact between their fingertips. Then ask them to swap over.

The third part of the game is the most challenging. Hopefully, by this point, the partners will have begun to trust each other. This time there is no physical contact between them. Esme must lead Ali purely by the sound of her voice. She needs to give clear vocal instructions and maintain a constant stream of words, either commands or encouragement, in order to make sure Ali knows where she is at all times. Esme must pay particular attention to other players leading their partners about in the same space. Ali needs to listen extremely carefully for the sound of Esme's voice and ignore the other voices giving instructions.

The Aim of the Game

The aim is to build trust within each pair. This is a useful game for the early stages of rehearsal, when people do not know each other very well, as it helps to forge partnerships and friendships amongst strangers.

Variations and Extensions

Some facilitators choose to make the game more challenging by setting chairs through the space as obstacles. If playing with a relatively large group (say fourteen or more), then the other players are usually obstacle enough, but you may wish to adapt the game to suit your own situation.

Warning: It is imperative that this game is carefully supervised and played with mature players only. It is inadvisable to play it with a very large group, as you may be unable to monitor the players closely enough to ensure the safety of every individual.

Players	Age	Time	Skills
Any, in pairs	10+	10	Awareness, Teamwork, Familiarity

Death by Chocolate

An improvisation game in which players have to adapt their scenes to feature a random death... during performance!

How to Play

Split the groups into teams of four or more. Give each team the title of a scene which they now have five minutes to prepare. Their scene must not be longer than one minute, and it must have a beginning, middle and end. It is useful to carry a list of inventive scene titles with you, some suggestions might include:

The Shock under the Bed
The Queen's Secret
Harry Potter and the Goblet of Ribena
Nightclub Nightmare
Gone with the Window Man
What's in the Well?
The Other Side of the Door
Journey into Space
The Magic Toy
The Secret of the Seventh Sea
The Stolen Booty

When five minutes are up, choose a team to go first. Explain that, at some point during their performance, you are going to shout out 'Death by...' followed by a random word; e.g. toothpaste, cotton wool, orange juice, banana split, sofa, bedpost, jelly, guitar, etc. – the less dangerous the object, the harder the challenge and the more amusing the performance! If you prefer, rather than shouting out, you can put the object words on cards and allow an audience member to pick one without looking. This adds a little more mystery and tension.

Their task is to incorporate a death by that object within the scene, before their one minute is up. They must incorporate it naturally as part of the action; someone cannot suddenly keel over dead with no explanation. The scene must then reach a conclusion by the time you reach the end of the minute.

Do not tell the group that you are playing ‘Death by...’ at the beginning of the game. Wait until they have created and rehearsed their scenes, or they will plan a death into their stories!

The Aim of the Game

The aim is to help the players learn to react spontaneously to whatever is thrown at them during a scene. They cannot plan the death, as they don’t know it is coming, or at least what it will be, so they have no choice but to improvise it during their performance. This helps them learn to think on their feet, and to cope with unplanned events during performance.

+ List of scenes and ‘Death by...’ categories

Players	Age	Time	Skills
4+	10+	20	<i>Imagination, Teamwork, Spontaneity</i>