



7 TIPS

On Organizing Large
Groups of Kids in a
Physically Active Setting



1. Have Creative Ways to Divide Groups Into Teams

There is nothing more frustrating than dividing groups of children into teams. Friends want to stay together, and certain children don't want to be on the same team with certain kids — sometimes it can really become a real struggle! These “group dividing” tips will make life so much easier and allow for more productivity.



2 GROUPS

1. Have the group partner up.
2. Have one child sit and the other one stand.
3. Now, make all children who are sitting one team, and all children who are standing the other team.



3 GROUPS

1. Line up children and have them number off 1-6 and ask them to remember their numbers.
2. Have 1's go in one area, 2's in another area, and so on.
3. Ask 1's and 6's to form one team, 2's and 5's to form another, and 3's and 4's to form another — you now have 3 teams.



4 GROUPS

1. Take a deck of playing cards and pass out a card to everyone.
2. Group teams by suits.

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2. Quiet Kids Down Quickly With “Attention Grabbers”

Have you ever tried to calm down a group of children, only to find you're getting nowhere? You may find yourself yelling louder and losing the battle of getting everyone to quiet down.

The best solution is to have some fun and simple techniques to immediately get their attention and quiet the group.

Here are three techniques that are extremely effective:

1. **Countdown:** Hold up one hand and count down from five, while getting quieter with each number: “5, 4, 3, 2, 1.” Have the children join in and take your time.
2. **Clap Once, Clap Twice:** Say loudly, “Clap once if you hear me, clap twice if you hear me.” Model the claps, and children will quiet down.
3. **Eyes:** Say loudly, “1, 2, 3 eyes on me!” and have the children respond with “1, 2 eyes on you!” Repeat until everyone has settled down.



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3. Organization Starts With You

Sometimes the frustration with how your organization is running might be a direct reflection on you. I know this is difficult to hear, but take a moment to be completely honest with yourself.

After some reflection, if you find you need to adjust your organizational skills, here are a few tips that will help you get started.

Jennifer Dawn, the creator of the Best Planner Ever, offers 3 killer tips for powerful daily planning, which I've summarized below. I've used these simple tips myself and can attest to their power — they will help you step up your organizational skills, and with that, everyone in your program will follow.

IDENTIFY YOUR PRIORITIES

If you jump into your daily (or weekly) to-do list, without prioritizing, you'll usually be left at the end of the day feeling more stressed and like your to-do list is longer than before. To feel centered and as effective as you can be, you must identify your priority tasks.

How do you know what's a priority? You need actionable goals with a clear vision, which will help you more easily identify your daily priorities and non-priorities alike. This will make everyday planning simple, straightforward, and easy.

STOP THRIVING ON "BUSY"

Being busy can be a real rush sometimes — narrowly-met deadlines, endless emails, piles of paper needing attention, the frantic race to a meeting. The problem is working in this manner rarely means you're effective and over time that constant "rush" just becomes major stress.

Instead, when you sit down to plan your day, focus on being effective, not just busy. Look at your to-do list for the day and ask yourself, "Is this just busywork, or am I actually moving forward?"

EVERYTHING IN ONE PLACE

If your plans, calendars, and "to-do" lists are all over the place, so are you. Shuffling through lists or clicking through app after app to find what you need can wreak havoc on your focus, productivity, and mental health. Taking just a few minutes to consolidate your plans, goals, and calendar in one place will save you time, improve efficiency, and help you live each day on your terms.



4. Find a Simple Plan or Guide to Follow

Have you ever invested a lot of money into a curriculum or program and then discovered what you thought was simple, ended up being extremely difficult for your staff to implement?

It is a huge decision deciding on a program that best fits your organization. There are many options out there to choose from — so how do you determine the right one?

Here are 3 important things to consider when deciding on a physical activity program:

- 1. IT NEEDS TO BE EASY TO UNDERSTAND** Lessons need to be simple and clear. In order to make it less confusing, the program should only need minimal or no equipment.
- 2. IT NEEDS TO BE SIMPLE TO IMPLEMENT** The line staff who will be implementing the program may not have experience working with large groups of children in an After School setting. That's why the physical activity program needs to be a simple, step-by-step guide that makes it incredibly easy for anyone to effectively run the program.
- 3. IT NEEDS TO TARGET ALL AGES AND ABILITIES** The biggest mistake programs make is implementing physical activities that cater to athletic children. The children who need it the most feel intimidated and end up having a negative experience being physically active. This is why the physical activity program must be all-inclusive and non-threatening, yet challenging enough for the athletic children to enjoy.

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5. Enthusiasm is Key

Children can read you like a book. They know it if you (or your line staff) sincerely want to be with them and have their best interest as a priority. On the other hand, they also definitely know if someone is just putting in time for that paycheck.

Shaping young minds and exposing them to all the wonderful experiences that After School Programs have to offer is such an important responsibility – and your staff’s attitudes are a direct reflection on how the children in your program will respond to it. And while enthusiasm is contagious, it must start with your staff.

Here are three crucial tips that will help staff stay motivated and enthusiastic:

1. **EMPOWERMENT.** Hold staff accountable but let them manage their children. Micromanaging will only result in dissension and is a sure-fire way of deflating enthusiasm. Make it clear when and what staff will be evaluated, but in the meantime, let them do their job that you clearly defined for them.
2. **SUPPORT.** Let them know you are there for them. If they have any questions or need support in any way, you are there to listen and help.
3. **PROVIDE PROPER RESOURCES.** If you provide training without the proper resources to implement what was taught, staff can become frustrated. Always make sure your staff has the proper resources to let them do their job effectively.

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6. Add Variation to Your Program

Boredom can be a big problem in an After School setting. Reasons can vary from not being sufficiently challenged to not feeling motivated by an activity, down to simple lack of variation within the program. It's important to provide a variety of activities in order to "mix-it-up." New and exciting activities make participation much more inviting.

Here are three tips to help bring more variety into your program:

- 1. PURCHASE RESOURCES THAT CAN BE USED IN MULTIPLE WAYS.** For example, indoors or outdoors, large or small groups, limited or unlimited spaces, and for all ages and abilities. You will get the biggest bang for your buck if you take all these factors into consideration.
- 2. ASK YOUR STAFF.** Explain to your staff that you want variation in the program and ask for feedback – their input may provide some insight you didn't consider. Plus, if they're asked to provide input, the percentage of buy-in is high which results in a better program.
- 3. THINK OUTSIDE THE BOX.** Most programs look at physical activity time as "sport time." The biggest misconception is believing that physical activity and sports are one in the same. They are not. Not all children are athletic, but EVERY child deserves to have a positive experience being physically active. So be sure to look into programs that don't only offer the "cookie-cutter" sports experience.



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7. Grab Their Attention with Brain Teasers

A sure way to eliminate confusion and get children focused on the task at hand is by starting the day off with brain teasers. Brain teasers often require thinking or moving in unconventional ways with given constraints.

Here are 3 physically active brain teasers guaranteed to provoke interest and help you gain children's undivided attention:

THUMB & INDEX FINGER CHALLENGE

1. Everyone gives a "thumbs up" with their right hand.
2. Everyone points their left index finger.
3. On the signal "go," the children will simultaneously switch their right hand to pointing the index finger and their left hand giving a "thumbs up."
4. Continue to repeat the signal ("go"), allowing the children to continue to switch "thumbs up" and "index finger" pointed on each hand.
5. Start slow and speed up as everyone gets more familiar with the movement.

REACTION CROSSOVER

1. Everyone has their hands on their temples (just above their ears).
2. On signal ("1"), everyone quickly moves their right hand and touches the left knee, and back to the temple (practice this a few times).
3. On signal ("2"), everyone quickly moves their left hand and touches the right knee, and back to the temple (practice this a few times).
4. Now mix it up by yelling out a "1" or "2" and the children must move the hand to the knee that fits that command.
5. Start slow and speed up as everyone gets more familiar with the movement.

REACTION "CLAP"

1. Everyone has their hands on their temples (just above their ears).
2. On signal ("1"), everyone claps their hands, touches their knees, and then back to the temple (practice this a few times).
3. On signal ("2"), everyone claps their hands, touches their knees, claps AGAIN, and hands back to temples (practice this a few times).
4. Now instructor mixes it up by yelling out a "1" or "2" and the children must clap the appropriate amount of times, move the hands to the knee and return to the temple the amount that fits the command.
5. Start slow and speed up as everyone gets more familiar with the movement.



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Thanks!

We're so glad you requested these 7 ideas to organize large groups of kids (and decrease frustration and increase productivity). I'm confident they'll help to jumpstart your After School program in the right direction.

Frustration trying to increase physical activity in your After School Program can needlessly cost you time and peace of mind. Together we can fix it.

That's why we have an exclusive offer to help defeat your frustration, organize staff, and increase productivity – a free professional development training (valued at \$1,000).

This training will provide your entire staff with a simple, easy-to-implement physical activity plan that will quickly organize, motivate, and engage any number of children in your program.

Schedule a friendly chat with us so we can learn more about your program and help you find the training that best fits your needs.

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About Us

“We make it easy to organize, motivate and engage large groups of kids to move and learn, with an innovative, multipurpose activity kit system that transforms attitudes about physical activity.”

Skillastics was founded to change the world of physical activity.

We wanted to create positive experiences around physical activity for kids while making life easier for you and your staff with simple, easy-to-implement activities that allow for maximum participation in a fun, high-energy atmosphere.

And since our start in 2002, we've helped dedicated directors and coordinators just like you in over 25,000 educational settings easily motivate kids to move, learn, and have fun, and we look forward to helping you do the same.

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