

“Place a jelly bean in front of each child. Say: When I say ‘go,’ roll your jelly bean across the room using only your nose!”

## Quick Games = Better Learning

The following games are designed for children, but with some adaptation, several of these games could be a lot of fun with youth! All the games are excerpted from *Wiggle Tamers* (Group, 1995) and *Fidget Busters* (Group, 1992) by Jolene Roehlkepartain. As she explains in the books, when a class takes a break for a structured, movement-filled game, kids get their wiggles out and have more focus and attention on the lesson.

You can see all Jolene’s books at [booksbyjolele.com](http://booksbyjolele.com). Wiggle Tamers and Fidget Busters are out of print, but they have been made generously available for free download [here](#). (Special thanks to Jolene and John Roberto.)

## 8 Games for Sunday School or Youth Group

### 1. Balloon Grab (suggested for preschool)

*You’ll need 17 balloons: four yellow, four green, four blue, one orange, and four red.*

- Inflate the balloons. Place all the balloons — except for the orange one — in the middle of the room or field. Keep the orange balloon near you.
- Say: I’m going to name a color. If you see a balloon that color on the ground, grab it and run all around with it. If you can’t grab one, follow someone who has that color balloon. Then when I name another color, everyone is to drop their balloons and grab the color balloon I named. Again, if you can’t grab one, follow someone who has that color balloon.
- Start by naming yellow. Then after a minute or so name a different color. Repeat the activity five or six times. End by naming all the colors.
- Then say: Orange! Grab your orange balloon and hold it high. Say: Now follow me as we go back to our lesson!

### 2. Broken Dishes (suggested for preschool)

*You'll need a paper plate for each child.*

- Give each child a paper plate, then have the children skip around the room while holding onto their plates. Whenever you say, "Broken dishes," have the children drop their plates and shout "uh-oh!" Then have children pretend to clean up the mess. After they pick up their plates, let them continue to skip until you call out "Broken dishes" again.
- Repeat the activity three or four times. Then say: Let's set the table back at our lesson to find out what's cooking.
- Have children take their plates back to your lesson area to place neatly on the floor or table before you continue with the lesson.

### **3. Jelly Bean Roll** (suggested for K-3)

*You'll need a bag of jelly beans.*

- On one side of the room, have the children kneel side by side in a line. Place a jelly bean in front of each child.
- Say: When I say "go," roll your jelly bean across the room using only your nose. Remember, you can't touch the jelly bean with your hands. Ready? Go!
- Allow kids several minutes to roll their jelly beans.
- Then say: Let's roll our jelly beans back to our lesson where I'll trade a clean, yummy jelly bean for your dirty one.

### **4. Peanut Butter** (suggested for mixed age groups)

- Say: It's time for the Peanut Butter Game! When I say "go," hop around the room. Whenever I say, "peanut butter," stick to the people closest to you no matter how many there are. Then, when I say "jelly," unstick yourselves and hop around the room again. Ready? Go!
- Play four or five rounds.
- Then say: Let's sit down now so we can stick to our lesson.

### **5. Lost in the Blizzard** (suggested for preschool)

*You'll need a blindfold for each child.*

- Toss a blindfold to each person. Say: Here, catch!
- Ask children to spread out around the room, then blindfold them. Explain that everyone is lost in a snowy blizzard and can't see. However, children can yell for help and find other children in the blizzard by following the sounds of their voices.

- Tell children that you don't want anyone left stranded in the blizzard, so as soon as they find another child, they should hold hands and try to link up with more children. (Help hesitant children find the others.)
- When all the children have linked up together, say: We all found each other! Good! Now let's take off our blindfolds and see what we can find in the rest of our lesson.

### **6. Scripture Pop-Up** (suggested for K-3)

- Find a simple Bible verse - or one you're studying - and assign each child a different word from it. If you have a lot of children, give several children the same word.
- Have the children mix themselves up and crouch down. As you read the verse, children should each jump up when they hear their word. Then have them quickly crouch down again.
- Reread the verse a number of times in several ways - fast, slow, in a high voice, in a low voice. Finally, read the verse and have kids pop up and stand in a line - in order like the verse.
- Then say: Now let's all pop back to our lesson.

### **7. Fill Noah's Ark** (suggested for grades 4-6)

*You'll need three empty margarine tubs, about 75 slips of paper and three markers or pens. You'll also need snacks, such as animal crackers, Teddy Grahams or fish crackers.*

- Form three teams. Have them line up on one side of the room. Give each team about 25 slips of paper and a marker or pen. At the other side of the room, place an empty margarine tub for each team.
- Explain that each team should fill its tub (which you call Noah's ark) with as many different animals as the team can name. Team members take turns writing an animal's name on a slip of paper and then running to the team's Noah's ark to deposit the slip. Team members can help each other think of animals; however, teams can have only one runner going at a time. When a runner returns, another child may run to the ark to drop in an animal's name.
- Play for about five minutes. At the end, count the number of animals in each ark, discarding any duplicates within the ark. Announce the winning team by awarding them the animal crackers, Teddy Grahams or fish crackers. Have them serve the other children, then let everyone munch the goodies.
- After the snack time, say: Now that we've filled up the ark and filled up our stomachs, let's fill up our minds with knowledge from our lesson.

### **8. Beach Ball Bounce** (suggested for grades 4-6)

*You'll need two beach towels and a beach ball.*

- Throw a beach towel to a person on one side of the room; throw another beach towel to a person on the other side of the room.
- Form two equal-size teams by having kids get with the beach towel-holder closest to them. Have team members surround their towel and hold it taut.
- Then give one team a beach ball. Have that team use the taut towel to toss the beach ball to the other team. That team should try to catch the ball with its towel. See how many times teams can toss the ball back and forth without dropping it.
- Start out with teams close together, then move farther apart.
- Then say: We had a ball with that activity. Now let's have a ball with our lesson.

## Find More Games

There are over 200 games in *Wiggle Tamers* and *Fidget Busters*. The books are out of print, but they have been made generously available for free download [here](#). (Special thanks to Jolene and John Roberto.)

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*Jolene Roehlkepartain is a writer and an educator. She has written more than 30 books including *Doing Good Together*, *Parenting Preschoolers with a Purpose*, and *Spark Student Motivation*. See her books at [booksbyjolele.com](http://booksbyjolele.com). Her books have been translated into a number of foreign languages, including Chinese, Hindi, and Bahasa Indonesian, and are sold internationally.*