

African Games

The Jumping Circle (Mali)

[Materials needed: six feet of rope and a beanbag.]

Tie the beanbag to the end of the rope. Players form a circle around one player who is chosen to be It. The person in the middle slowly swings the beanbag under the children's feet, close to the ground. The children try to jump over the beanbag as it passes under their feet.

Players who fail to jump over the beanbag step out of the circle. The last player left in the circle wins.

Catch the Lendu (Congo)

[Children play this game to imitate the hunters catching the lendu, a small forest antelope having sharp pointed horns. Materials needed: sticks (rolled-up newspaper) and a net (an old sheet or large cloth).]

Have several players stretch a net across one end of the playing area. Other players pretend to be hunters and beat the ground and bushes with sticks to drive the "lendu" (played by one of the children) toward the net. The lendu tries to escape by dodging the hunters and by attacking them with make-believe sharp horns.

If the hunters capture the lendu, they wrap it in the net and carry it to the village (a predetermined spot on the playing field). If the players fail to catch the lendu within a specified time period, the lendu wins the game.

Loop the Shuttlecock (Ghana)

[Equipment needed: a shuttlecock or badminton birdie and long sticks with a loop of stiff rope or wire on the end.]

Draw two lines 10 or 12 feet apart on the playing area. Divide players into two even groups of four or more each. One team, the Throwers, is given the shuttlecock, and the other team, the Loopers, receives the sticks. Teams line up behind their respective lines.

The first player on the Throwers team throws the shuttlecock as high and as far as possible toward the Loopers. A member of the Loopers who is near the path of the shuttlecock shouts "It's mine!" and tries to pass the loop over the shuttlecock while it is still in the air.

If the shuttlecock falls short of the Loopers' line, the next player on the Throwers team throws it. If the Loopers miss the shuttlecock three times in a row, they lose. If they succeed in looping it three times out of ten good throws, they win. If the Throwers fail to throw the shuttlecock across the Loopers' line three times out of ten, they lose.

Loopers and Throwers trade sides at the end of each game.

Crocodile Rides (Ghana)

[Players should wear old clothes for this race.]

Mark a line in the dirt to indicate the crocodile "pond."

Pair players off and have them decide who will be the "crocodile" and who will be the "rider." "Crocodiles" lie on their stomachs and race toward their "pond" by wiggling and propelling themselves with their elbows. "Riders" walk beside their partners, urging them on and watching to see that they use only their elbows and stomachs to slither toward the "pond." The winners are the first to reach the "pond."

Jumping Game (Liberia)

Children form a circle with one child, who is It, in the middle and begin singing a familiar rhythmic tune, such as "Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star." The child in the center hops from one foot to the other, in rhythm with the music, and extends the leg that is in the air with toes pointing out. The child who is It hops toward someone in the circle and extends a right or left foot. The player that It hops to must respond by pointing the same foot toward It. (If It extends the right foot, the player must extend the right foot.) If the player makes a mistake, the two exchange places. If the player points the correct foot, It jumps to another player.

Clap Ball (Cameroon)

[In Africa children use an orange or a gourd as a ball or make a ball from rolled-up socks.]

Divide children into two teams of equal size. Draw a line down the middle of the playing area and line the players up parallel to the line and about three feet back. Toss the ball into the playing area, where the players try to catch it. Players may not cross the line or step on it.

When a player catches the ball, the other players clap their hands and stamp their feet one time.

The catcher immediately throws the ball up in the air for someone else to catch. Players must remain alert and attempt to catch the ball if it falls near them and clap when someone else catches it. The faster the game goes, the more fun it is.