# Instructions for Cooperative Games

Amoeba Tag

Assign two players to be "it." Together they hold hands and chase the other players. When the pair catches another player, they all stay together as a trio. If the trio catches another player (making a group of 4), they can stay together or split into two pairs. The amoebas continue in this manner, splitting off into even numbers, or linking with more players. The game continues until no players are left on their own.

Ball Bounce

Have the children hold and stretch the edges of a parachute or large sheet. Place a ball in the center. Show the players how to gently flap the parachute or sheet up and down so the ball bounces. Count out loud to keep track of how long the children can keep the ball going without it bouncing away. Add more balls to make the game more challenging.
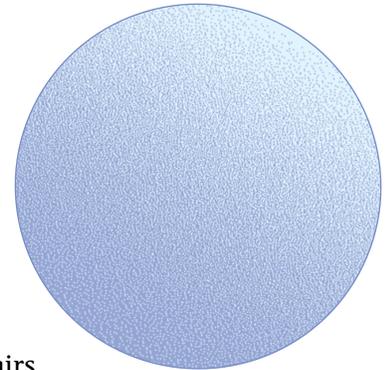
Cooperative Musical Chairs

Set up two lines of chairs back to back, as you would for traditional musical chairs. Have one chair fewer than the number of children playing. Put on some music, and invite the children to dance or march around the chairs. Stop the music, and tell everyone they need to find a seat—even if it is a shared seat. Remove a chair each time you stop the music. As fewer chairs are available, children typically cooperate to make room for everyone. In this version of the game no children are eliminated. Continue playing until the children lose interest.

Dragon Tail

Have the children form one long line or train by holding onto the waist of the child in front of them. The child in the front will be the dragon head. The last child in line will be the dragon tail. The children in between are the dragon's body. Attach a colorful scarf or streamer to the dragon tail. The goal of the game is for the dragon head to catch the scarf flapping behind the dragon tail. The children who are part of the body have to work together to help the head grab the tail and to help the tail stay out of reach of the head. This can be very confusing, but lots of fun. The main goal for the game is to keep the dragon in one piece, with no children letting go.

Musical Hugs

Play some energizing music or sing a fast-paced song. Invite the children to skip around the room or outdoor area. Stop the music, and tell children to team up and hug another player. Play the music again, and invite the children to skip around again alone or with their hugging partner. Stop the music again, and tell the children to hug two other people—forming trios. Continue playing with larger and larger groups of huggers.

Name Ball

Have children stand in a large circle. One child starts by saying his name and then gently passes a small, easy-to-grip ball to the child to either his right or left. The child receiving the ball must then say her name as she catches the ball. The process continues around the circle until all of the children have said their names. Once all of the children have had a turn, have them call out the name of the person to whom they're tossing the ball.

Sharks in the Water

Use masking tape or chalk to mark off a large square on the floor. The area inside the square is a safe island, and the area surrounding the square is the ocean. Start the music, and invite children to "swim" around the island. Stop the music, say, "The sharks are coming," and encourage players to hurry to the safe island. At the end of each round move the chalk or tape lines to make the island smaller and smaller. The children will have to work together to make sure everyone has a place on the island where they are safe from the sharks.

You can find many additional cooperative games and variations on those listed here in multiple resources. Here are three good sources for further information.

Web site

www.childcarelounge.com/Caregivers/playtogether.htm

Books

Cooperative Games and Sports: Joyful Activities for Everyone, 2nd ed., by Terry Orlick (Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics, 2006).

Great Games for Young Children: Over 100 Games to Develop Self-Confidence, Problem-Solving Skills, and Cooperation, by Rae Pica (Beltsville, MD: Gryphon House, 2006).