

Camouflage

Materials: none

Procedure: (Awaken Enthusiasm) This game is a quick activity, wonderful for hikes and just fun. It requires a bit of explanation - but worth it. Play in a dense young forest, with lots of ferns and ground cover and fallen logs.

- 1) Explain to the children that this is a predator and prey game. There will be one squirrel (I usually pick a squirrel as they are diurnal and common) who will be the prey, and the rest of the students will be ermine hunting the squirrel. Ask for a volunteer to be the prey. Everyone else is a predator. Tell the predators, that good hunters must be able to conceal themselves while stalking prey.
- 2) In this game, the predators will attempt to hide closer and closer to prey without being seen. The game is divided into three rounds. To play, the prey must stand in one spot and cannot take a step or crouch down, but is free to turn 360°, while the predators remain hidden close by.
- 3) Play begins when the prey counts to 40, during which time the predators hide. While counting the prey must close its eyes *and* plug its ears. When finished, the prey will open its eyes and carefully begin looking for the predators. They can turn but not take a step or crouch. The predators remain as silent and still as possible. If the prey locates a predator, it simply points and describes the predator that they have found. "I see a blue pants and a red shirt behind that log." The leader can help the prey at this point, "Peter, that's you." Once a predator, has been spotted, they are out of the game and can stand off to the side.
- 4) Once the prey feels that they have identified all the predators that can be seen, the leader will announce that round two is ready to begin. The prey will close its eyes plug its ears and, this time, count to 30. During this, the predators will attempt to find a new hiding spot closer to the prey. Once the prey has completed the count it will again look for predators.
- 5) For the final round, the prey only counts to 20, looks for the predators and then once they feel that they have found all that they can. The prey calls out, "STAND UP PREDATORS!" The predator closest to the prey wins the game and replaces the prey in the next round.

Hints, tips and tricks:

Let the predators know that if they find a good hiding spot close to the prey in the first round, they don't have to move between rounds. And if a lot of predators are found in the first round, I generally let them join in the following rounds. I also moderate how long the prey has to look for predators, it is best to keep the rounds moving along quickly. I let them look thoroughly and then start the next round. Some prey will try to look, then look again and then again.

I have two favourite moments in this game. The first is at the start of the game. The prey begins the first round, generally surrounded by children and after counting opens its eyes to an empty, silent forest. My second favourite moment happens at the end, when the Prey calls out, "Stand up". Suddenly, out of nowhere, a whole gang of children will appear.