



Recess Activities

Ideas for Indoor and Outdoor Recess

1. **Back to Back** – Instruct the students to find a partner who is about the same height as them. Ask them to face back to back and lock arms. While their arms stay locked, the partners should try to sit down on the ground, ending with their legs out straight, and then stand back up together. Try this with larger groups of four, eight, or even the whole class.
2. **Balloon Volleyball** – Split the students into teams and play volleyball with a balloon. You can either use something as a “net” or simply try not to let the balloon touch the ground.
3. **Beanbag Toss** – If you don’t have cornhole boards available, set up something in the recess areas for kids to take turns tossing the bags into. This could be as simple as a bucket that is placed 10 feet away or using painter’s tape to mark the desired area.
4. **Boardgames** – Break out the boardgames that are already available in the school. With the right number of players and enthusiasm, board games can be a blast.
5. **Card Games** – Card games a great way for students to practice following the rules, problem-solving, and taking turns. Try facilitating a game of Uno, War, Go Fish, or Kemps.
6. **Collages** – Keep a stash of old magazines for students to use for cutting out images and gluing them together to make a creative collage. Suggest they make a vision board, or a collage of all the things they like, be creative with it.
7. **Directed Drawing** – Give kids a step-by-step drawing tutorial and see if they can follow along to draw the object/animal on their own. You can search YouTube for directed drawing tutorials for kids. You can get creative with drawing and facilitate activities such as drawing objectives with their eyes closed or playing a game of Telestrations. Telestrations combines the game Telephone with illustrations. Each student writes down a word before passing it to the next person in the circle who has to draw it. That student will then cover up the original word and pass it to the next person to guess what they drew. This pattern continues until the papers return to their starting positions.
8. **Four Corners** – Designate each corner of the room to a number 1-4. One student stands in the middle, with their eyes closed. The rest of the students are given a few seconds to choose one of the corners to stand in. The person in the middle calls out one, two, three or four. Any students standing in the corresponding corner are out of the game. Encourage students to move quietly and work cooperatively. Play until there is one student left.
9. **GoNoodle** – Put on some fun, interactive videos to get the students moving around and engaging with each other. There is even a channel made specifically for indoor recess.



10. **Heads Up Seven Up** – Choose seven students to stand at the front of the classroom. All other students close their eyes and put their heads down. The seven students will quietly walk around the room and tap one of their classmates. If a student is tapped, they raise their hand in the air. Once seven hands are in the air the facilitator says, “Heads up seven up!” The seven “tagged” students must then guess which of the seven others tapped them. If they guess correctly, they take their place. If not, their “tapper” remains in up front.
11. **Jenga or Chairs** – These are both cheap, simple games that require students to take turns, be patient, and come up with a strategy to keep the tower standing tall.
12. **Minute-to-Win-it** – There are endless Minute-to-Win-it challenges that are simple to create, but exciting to play. This is another activity that can be played in teams to work on teamwork and cooperative play. Here is a link to a Pinterest board that has over 400 challenges: <https://www.pinterest.com/playpartyplan/minute-to-win-it-games/>
13. **Musical Chairs** – Arrange a circle of chairs or other place markers, depending on the setting. Find some upbeat music to start and stop as the students walk and dance around the circle. When the music stops, they have to find a place marker. Last student to do so is out. Remove a place marker and continue each round until a winner is crowned.
14. **Play-Doh** – Children love being creative with something as simple as Play-Doh. Think about adding some fun, easy-to-find items into the dough such as beads or shapes. Rolling pins and cookie cutters can also facilitate even more creativity. Home-made (even scented) Play-Doh is easy to make: <https://www.thebestideasforkids.com/playdough-recipe/>
15. **Stack Cups** – Cup-stacking is a very simple game that can be very entertaining to children. They can work independently or with each other to stack the cups into a pyramid and unstack them back together. Make it competitive and try separating them into teams.
16. **Twister** – An easy, classic game that is always fun, challenging, and silly.
17. **Watercolor Painting** – Throw some newspaper down and let the students be creative with washable watercolor paints. This can be a quiet activity that keeps them calm and engaged.
18. **Yoga** – Lead the students through a 10-15 minute yoga routine as a quiet, relaxing way to release some of their energy and get them ready to return to class. Cosmic Kids Yoga is a great resource that has yoga lessons made specifically for kids. They use stories, music, and characters to make yoga fun and engaging.

Sources:

Mulvahill, E. (2019). *40 Sanity-Saving indoor recess ideas*. Retrieved from <https://www.weareteachers.com/indoor-recess-ideas/>

Scholastic. (2020). *10 Indoor recess ideas*. Retrieved from <https://www.scholastic.com/teachers/articles/teaching-content/10-indoor-recess-ideas/>

