



Team Builders

Raccoon circles

This activity was shared by author and teambuilding guru, Dr. Jim Cain. For more great ideas to build unity, community, connection and teamwork, visit www.teamworkandteamplay.com

- Individual
- Pairs
- Small group
- Whole group

Uses: Great for problem solving; team building; reviewing and reflecting. To have fun!

Resources: Raccoon circles – numbers will depend on activities chosen and numbers of young people.

Time: 20 minutes plus.

What is a Raccoon circle?

A raccoon circle is a loop made out of one inch nylon tubular climbing webbing, which is very strong and safe to use. This tubular webbing does not stretch; is extremely strong; comfortable to hold and can be easily washed. Fifteen feet of webbing forms a loop large enough to work with twelve adults or fifteen children. You could use one large circle or many smaller circles.

What to do:

These are just four of our favourite raccoon circle activities but there are many more to choose from. You can download an online edition of the Guide for Facilitators, by Dr. Jim Cain which gives you dozens of different activities that you can try out with raccoon circles. Go to: www.teamplayandteamwork.com

1. **Pass the knot:** Teams race to pass the knot once round the circle (clockwise). When they have done this they raise their raccoon in the air to show they have finished. Once they have found a way to do this efficiently, up the challenge by going once clockwise and once anti-clockwise. Up the challenge again by creating different patterns of revolutions e.g. twice clockwise, once anti-clockwise and twice clockwise!
2. **Believe it or not:** Groups pass the knot until one person shouts stop. Whoever the knot is closest to is the speaker. They have to tell the group something about themselves, which might be the truth or it might 'knot'. The rest of the group has to decide if the speaker is telling the truth. You can play as many rounds as you want, the speaker can be the one to shout "stop" for the next round. This is a safe activity that allows team members to disclose as much or as little as they want.
3. **Pizza throw:** Throw the raccoon into the air and catch it without letting it drop, a bit like throwing pizza dough. Easy? Now throw in the air and clap your hands before you catch it!
4. **Inside out:** Begin with the raccoon circle on the floor and the whole team standing inside the circle. The challenge is for the team to work out how they can get the entire team outside the circle safely, by going underneath the raccoon circle, without using their hands, arms or shoulders. Teams should plan what they are going to do then try out their plan. It is useful to have quick debrief about how they worked as a team. Teams can show other teams what they did to meet the challenge.

Make it different:

- There are many different ways to use raccoon circles; use the downloadable handout for ideas, or even get the book.

Points to make:

- Without labouing the point, at the end of each activity draw attention to 'how' the group was working. E.g. once the group have completed the 'Pass the knot' activity, ask them how it felt to be the first group to finish/last group to finish? What does this mean for the way we work together as a team?

Reference material:

- The Book of Raccoon Circles. Dr Jim Cain and Dr Tom Smith have worked together in the adventure-based learning field for many years. This book collects together the best activities for creating community, building a unified team and actively learning together.

