



# ALL CATCH CHALLENGE

*Students reflect on strategies to overcome challenges based on their experience with the All Catch activity.*

## OBJECTIVES

- Students will practice strategies to work through a group challenge
- Students will develop successful strategies to use when they encounter a challenge

## MATERIALS

- Lots of balls (plan for about two per person)

## TIME

30 min

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## LESSON INTRO

This challenging activity will get students considering both how they respond personally to a challenge, and also what group behaviors, skills, and strategies can help a group be successful. You may see the group grapple with frustration, collaboration, communication, sharing ideas, taking direction, etc...

## LESSON STEP BY STEP

1. In advance, collect a large number of balls, or soft tossable items. This is possibly the hardest task, to get your hands on a large number of balls, or soft tossable items. Balloons won't work because they must have tossability. Ask your PE teacher for tennis balls, or students can create "tossables" from bunched up plastic grocery bags wrapped in duct tape.
2. Explain to the students that the activity they are about to do is a challenging one! Ask students to notice what the group does—and what they do personally—to get through a challenging situation.
3. Give one ball to your group.
4. Instruct your group that every time you say "GO," whoever is holding a ball must toss it in the air at least a foot above the head of the tallest person.
5. All balls must be caught by a person other than the one who tossed it.

6. The initial rounds are always very quick and simply performed. But, as soon as the group possesses more than one ball for every two people, things start to get more interesting.
7. For every successful round (every ball tossed is caught,) give your group one new ball.
8. Whenever one or more balls are dropped during an attempt, the task will resume from one ball again. This is a tough penalty, but this parameter quickly galvanizes the group to focus carefully, and avoid 'risky' solutions. To be honest, however, it's very hard for a group that just failed at an attempt of 25 balls, to start over at one. So, in these circumstances, I typically return them to an agreed challenging mid-point in the activity.
9. Challenge your group to perform the task with as many balls as possible.
10. Encourage your group to plan, collaborate and focus.
11. Remind them of the rules as needed:
12. Every ball (held by the group) must be tossed simultaneously when you say "GO"
13. The balls must travel at least one foot above the head of the tallest person in the group
14. Every ball must be caught by someone other than the person who tossed it. Formulate one or more important, open-ended questions that will provoke comments and responses on the topic of communication such as:
  - Three words that come to mind when you think of communication?
  - What is the most important concept/skill in good communication?
  - Why is good communication such a challenge for people?
  - What social issues do you connect with positive or poor communication?
15. Write the questions or topics on separate pieces of chart paper in bold marker. Post the charts on the wall or on desks so that all students have ready access to them.
16. Give each student a different-colored pencil or marker (or a set of sticky notes).
17. Explain that students will silently read, write, and respond to the posted questions about communication. Review and post the group agreements:
  - Everyone is writing and responding throughout the designated time period and remains silent the entire time.
  - Everyone is responsible for 1) writing a comment, 2) reading others' comments, and 3) writing a response to at least two comments on every chart paper.
  - No one should sit down until the time period is over. If you have moved through all the questions, go back to read and comment on the ideas you missed.
  - Opinions must be freely expressed and honored. No personal attacks are allowed.
  - Comments should be thoughtful and further the discussion.
18. Allow 10 to 15 minutes for the rotations. It's helpful to walk around, read, and gently point students to interesting comments. All writing and responding is done in silence.

19. After the time has elapsed, form students into pairs to work on finding patterns.
20. Assign students pairs to a poster. Most likely, there will be several pairs at each poster. Students should read through all the postings, search for patterns and themes, and record those patterns on a piece of paper. This part takes about 5 minutes and is not silent.

## VARIATIONS

1. Multiple Work Stations: If you've got a large group, divide into smaller groups of 8 to 12 people. Challenge each small group (workstations) to develop a strategy that can successfully catch the most number of balls.
2. Long Distance All Catch: Increase the distance over which the balls must travel before caught.
3. Hands-On Challenge: For a greater challenge, suggest that only people's hands (as distinct from any other part of their body) are allowed to touch the balls (this will prevent the creative use of clothing, legs, etc.)
4. Soft Tossables: Substitute balls with a variety of soft tossable items, eg rubber chickens, koosh-balls, beach balls, beanie-babies, ping-pong balls, etc. The challenge will be equal to the level of diversity you introduce with these items.
5. Limited Time: Place a time limit on the group, but remove the need to return to the start (one ball) with each unsuccessful attempt.

## FACILITATOR TIPS AND NOTES

1. For some people, catching a ball can be an intimidating task, especially if they have to perform it in front of others. Well, this task will involve a lot of catching in front of others, but this will not be your group's focus...
2. Be okay with the messy group process of learning. Allow students to struggle through, self-correct, and then reflect back on their responses. Try not to manage the process, but let students learn as they go, the goal being to provide moments of self-reflection and growth afterwards.

## REFLECTION & WRAP UP

1. Spend time drawing out learning on the skills and behaviors that students used productively, or unproductively.
  - At what point did the task become challenging for you? The group?
  - What was the most challenging part of this activity for you? (catching the ball, frustration that people weren't trying, the group not agreeing on a plan, etc...)
  - What did you, or the group, do to solve these challenges? What *could* you have done?
  - Did your skills improve with practice, or by something else?
  - Did your group decide something that was critical to your success?
  - What else contributed to your success?
  - What strategies did you find helpful that would apply elsewhere?

2. Keep a list of skills and behaviors that helped the group succeed. Pull this out for future challenges so that students can be reminded to use these strategies again.
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## NOTES

- **Source:** [www.playmeo.com/activities/team-building-problem-solving-activities/all-catch/](http://www.playmeo.com/activities/team-building-problem-solving-activities/all-catch/)
- **Educational Standards:** CASEL: Self Awareness, CASEL: Self Management, CASEL: Social Awareness, CASEL: Relationship Skills, P21: Creativity and Innovation, P21: Critical Thinking and Problem Solving, P21: Communication and Collaboration, P21: Flexibility and Adaptability, P21: Social and Cross-Cultural Skills, P21: Leadership and Responsibility, CCRS: SL2: Integrate and Evaluate Information