

# Reindeer Games

*Active Learning Stations  
Integrating Movement, Academics, and  
Holiday Fun*



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# Reindeer Games?

*The thinking behind this packet...*

As a teacher, I seek ways to make the holiday season fun and meaningful while also keeping a lid on my classroom management! It's not easy. I can remember days when my students were so overcome with excitement that I literally found myself counting the number of minutes remaining until I could say goodbye until the New Year!

Recently on my blog, I've been posting some of my tips and techniques for managing student energy during the holiday season. One of my recommendations was to engage students in as many movement-based activities as possible.

It got me thinking about the Action Based Learning Labs I've seen in several local schools and the movement-integrated learning centers I learned how to create back in my college days. I had an excellent Physical Education professor (Deborah Smith) and she was a strong advocate for "movement education"- P.E. that was much more focused on building physical skills and raising activity levels than playing competitive games/sports. All of the lessons she modeled were highly engaging and resulted in success for everyone, regardless of fitness level or athletic ability. I remember thinking that if P.E. had been more like her class when I was young, maybe I wouldn't have hated it so much! (A girl can only get pegged with a ball so

many times before she develops a negative association with all things "P.E.!")

One of our "big projects" was to create an integrated learning center that combined academic content with movement-based skills. I remember spending an entire night in my parents' garage painting a shower curtain to look like the Wild West. (A backdrop was one of the project requirements.) Students who visited my center threw bean bags at painted cacti with numbers on them that matched the sums of math problems, tossed and caught a ball to corresponded with the # of syllables in "western" vocabulary words, etc.

These kinds of movement-based learning experiences are not just "for fun." A growing body of research tells us that students are more engaged, retain more academic content, and are generally happier and healthier when they are invited to move while they learn.

So, here's my little Christmas gift for you: a set of movement stations that integrate academic skills. I think it would be a fun and worthwhile way to end the holiday season with your students!

Note: Dr. Smith now is a managing editor over at [www.pecentral.org](http://www.pecentral.org) (in addition to teaching at Clemson University.) Several of these games were inspired by activities listed on that site. Check it out- it's full of goodness! (I especially love the lessons that fall in the "integrated" category.)

Best wishes and enjoy!

- Susan

# Set-Up Considerations

**Option 1- An “empty” room.** Clearly, you will need a lot of open space for your “reindeer games.” Is there an open room, stage, or gym you could reserve for these activities? If so, that’s ideal. If not, that’s OK! Keep reading.

**Option 2 - Outdoor play.** Fresh air and sunshine help young minds and bodies grow, so completing these games outside would be quite nice (weather permitting.) Cool weather would be fine- body movement will help keep the children warm. However, if your weather is very cold or rainy, you will have to go with Option 3.

**Option 3- Inside your classroom.** This, too, is do-able with some pre-planning. The best plan for an “inside the classroom” games event is to push most of your furniture to the perimeter of the room, opening up a large space in the middle. Your students can help with this- even young children can move their own chairs. Think carefully about the game choices that work best for you inside your classroom and plan your space accordingly.

**Student Clothing-** It is wise to let parents know in advance that your students will be participating in movement-based learning activities if you want students to wear appropriate clothes. Tennis shoes are a must, and if your games will be held outside, layers of clothing are preferable to one heavy coat.

**Teamwork Helps-** There is a fair amount of set-up involved in pulling together these Reindeer Games. You will need to gather materials, prep. your stations, prepare cards, etc. It would be a fair amount of work for one teacher to do alone. That’s why this would make a fantastic grade level activity! If 4 teachers from one grade level worked together to set up these games, each teacher could take 2 or 3 stations to prep. and then the entire grade level could play the games throughout the course of a day.

Alternatively, if you teach in a school with lots of parent support or local volunteers, you could recruit them to set up the game stations for you. Many hands always make much lighter work!

**Model First:** It is very important to tour students through all the games, demonstrating and explaining briefly, before you let them move independently through the stations. It’s also great to have an extra adult help supervise if you have any volunteers who might be willing to assist.

# The Reindeer Games:

**Reindeer Hop:** Hopping + Spelling. Children hop from letter to letter on an alphabet mat to spell words from a word list.

**Blizzard Training:** Math facts + jumping/ evading a soft object. The reindeer avoids snowballs while answering math questions. This game builds dexterity while also keeping minds sharp- just what good drivers need!

**Dasher's Reindeer Laps:** Math (Patterning and problem solving), running/walking + fine motor. Reindeer need a lot of stamina to fly around the world on Christmas Eve! This game gets the heart rate up and builds cardiovascular endurance.

**Comet's Long Jump:** Measuring distance + jumping. Students will start from a standing position and will jump as far as they can. Then, they will use a tape measure to find the distance jumped and record it on a data sheet.

**Packing Santa's Sleigh:** Pulling and balance + reading OR math (money.) The "reindeer" help "Santa" load his sleigh with toys.

**Blitzen's Skip Counting Blitz:** Throwing and catching + skip counting. Students toss a soft ball back and forth as many times as they can while skip counting.

**Prancer's Trampoline Workout:** Jumping and cardio + facts. Having children bounce on a mini-trampoline is a great workout! Asking them questions while they bounce exercises their mind, too.

**Dancer's Vocabulary Vibe:** You know a child really understands a word when he/she can "act it out." Challenge your little "reindeer" to work together to make up dances that "show" what they know.

**Donner's Alphabetic Dash:** Quick Sprints + A-B-C Order. This is a fun game that combines A-B-C order, cup stacking, and quick movement.

**Rudolph's Red Nose Challenge:** Throwing at a target + mental math. (Can be modified and made more mathematically challenging for older students.)

# Reindeer Hop

*This game integrates spelling with hopping. Kids hop from letter to letter on an alphabet mat to spell words from a word list.*

## Materials:

ABC mat- A large classroom carpet with alphabet letters works wonderfully for this game. Or, you can laminate letter cards and tape them to the floor with clear packing tape.

Spelling “deck” of cards students need to practice

Set up: Prepare a “deck” of index cards- each card should have 1 spelling word written on it. Prepare “mat” where students will hop. Make sure it’s not something they can slip on when hopping. (A small area rug is usually too “slippery.”)

Directions: Instruct students to work in pairs and take turns selecting a word card.

Student 1 chooses a card and follows these steps:

- 1- Say the word out loud.
- 2- Spell the word out loud.
- 3- Hop the word (by hopping from letter to letter) while holding the card to double-check. Say the letters out loud. Hop on one foot when traveling and then land on 2 feet when you reach the letter you need.
- 4- Give your partner your card and hop the word again, saying the letters out loud, so your partner can check.

Student 2 checks Student 1’s spelling during the 2nd hopping session. Then they switch roles.

Academic Connection: This is straight-forward spelling review. You can choose words commonly misspelled at your grade level, sight words, etc. You can also create a challenge deck for your advanced spellers.

Recommended Number of Students: 2 (1 team) per ABC mat.

# Blizzard Training

*Sometimes reindeer have to fly through terrible weather when pulling Santa's sleigh. This game builds dexterity while also keeping minds sharp- just what good drivers need!*

## Materials:

Bucket or box to hold snowballs

15- 20 Small Snowballs (white socks rolled up into balls- adult socks make nicer sized balls than child socks)

Math fact cards

Set up: There isn't much set-up for this game. Just choose an area where other kids won't get hit with "snowballs"- a few feet in front of a wall is the best spot. You need the bucket of snowballs and math fact cards. That's it!

Directions: Instruct students to work in pairs and take turns acting as the "reindeer" and "caller."

The reindeer stands in an open space and assumes the position of a skier. (Knees slightly bent, arms pretending to hold poles.)

The "caller" selects a math fact sheet and stands next to the bucket of "snow."

After making sure the "reindeer" is ready, the caller calls a math fact "8+3" and then picks up a snowball to throw **at the feet** of the reindeer. The reindeer has to 1) Answer the math fact and 2) Jump to avoid the snowball at the same time.

\*It is important that students throw the snowball below the knees of the "reindeer." That should be a hard and fast rule.

The caller should not throw the next fact/ball until the student correctly answers the math fact.

After the caller has emptied their bucket, both students collect the "snowballs" and refill the bucket. Then they switch roles.

Academic Connection: Math fact practice! Addition, subtraction, multiplication, or division- depending on your students' needs. You can assign each student a fact family to work on if you wish.

Recommended Number of Students: 2 (1 team) per bucket of snowballs.

# Dasher's Reindeer Laps

*Reindeer need a lot of stamina to fly around the world on Christmas Eve! This game gets the heart rate up and builds cardiovascular endurance.*

## Materials:

Pony Beads in shallow bowls (multiple Christmas colors- red, green, white, gold, silver, blue)

Elastic or pipe cleaners (on which to string beads)

Set up: Find a place where children can do “laps.” Around the perimeter of the room? Around the playground? Up and down a hallway? For each “lap” completed, students earn 1 bead to mark their progress. They stop after each “lap” and use the beads to create a patterned bracelet or necklace. If the laps are “long laps” (such as around a track or gym) then the students should stop and string a bead after each one. However, if the laps are “short laps” then they should complete several before stopping to collect beads. (You can decide how many.) \*This is a nice one because students can return to it as they complete other games with time remaining and earn extra beads.

You will also need to prep the beading activity. If you are going to have the children bead on elastic string, you will need to tie a bead to one end (to avoid beads falling off) and plan a way for students to add their name. (Inserting their bead necklace into a labeled zip-lock bag works well.) If you will bead on pipe cleaner, you will want to twist one end to keep beads from falling off. Usually, a small piece of masking tape with a student name written on it will work nicely as a name label with pipe cleaners.

Directions: Show students the path they need to run/jog/walk for 1 lap. Instruct them to complete one lap and then stop briefly to add a bead to their necklace/bracelet. You might also want to require that the beads be threaded in a pattern.

Academic Connection: There are several options:

1- Patterning- Build into the beading process.

2- Problem Solving with Beads- You can do all kinds of math problem solving with beads. For the youngest children, you can simply have them count their beads. Older children can engage in more advanced problem solving. Assign each bead a value (red = 2, green = 1, white = 3, etc.) and then have them write and solve a number sentence based on the beads in their bracelet. To beef up the math, you could even have some pre-made bead patterns at the beading spot and have each child solve 1 problem between laps.

Recommended Number of Students: 2 (1 team) to 4 (2 teams)

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# Comet's Long Jump

You will need a soft surface or grass for this “long jump” game. Students will start from a standing position and will jump as far as they can. Then, they will use a tape measure to find the distance jumped and record it on a data sheet.

## Materials:

Data sheet (See next page)

Tape measure

Spot makers (garden stakes work well outside, sticky notes work well inside)

Set up: Prepare a “long jump area” that is free from obstacles. If you are inside, make sure there is nothing students could injure themselves on (such as furniture.) A carpeted area is best. If you are outside, choose a grassy area or a mulched playground area. Set a “starting line” with string or tape on the ground.

Directions: Instruct students to work in pairs and take turns.

1. Student 1 will stand at the starting line and jump as far as they can. \*If you are outside and your students can handle it, you can let them get a running start as long as they jump before the starting line. Just like the Olympics!
2. Once they land, student 2 will make Student 1's landing position. (At the point closest to the starting line.)
3. Student 1 will then use the tape measure to measure the distance while student 2 assists.
4. Student 1 will record his/her own jump distance on the class data sheet.
5. Students switch roles and repeat for a total of 3 jumps each.

Academic Connection: At a basic level, this game helps students work on their measurement skills. It's good practice for learning to use and read a tape measure.

Adding data to the chart is also good academic work. Once the games are over, the teacher can use the class data for a variety of purposes- graph the results, find the shortest and longest distances, find the class mean, median, mode, etc. Older students could be required to do this math work on their own.

Recommended Number of Students: 2 (1 team) per jumping area and tape measure.



# Packing Santa's Sleigh

*In this game the reindeer (child #1) practices helping Santa (child #2) take toys from Santa's Workshop (hula hoop or rug) and pack them in his sleigh (empty box or clean recycling bin.)*

## Materials:

Toys (simple, unbreakable toys such as stuffed animals, plastic toys, etc.)

Scooter- Ask your P.E. teacher to borrow the square kind with handles

\*Alternative: If you don't have a scooter or need to play the game outside on a soft surface, students can both gallop with the student in front pretending to be the reindeer and the student in the back pretending to be Santa.

Rope- *Reins* You need about 6 feet of rope- (mid-weight- not too heavy but not string!)

Word or Sentence Cards OR price tags

Empty box big enough to hold toys

Set up: Set up the toys in the "workshop" area (on a small rug, inside a hula hoop, etc.) and place an empty box at least 10 yards away. Provide a small scooter and rope (about 6 feet long) for each pair of children. (So, if you will have 1 team doing this station at one time, you'll need 1 scooter and 1 length of rope.)

Directions: Children will take turns playing the part of "Santa" and "Reindeer." Santa sits on the scooter while the Reindeer pulls him (slowly!) from the workshop to the sleigh and back again. Each time Santa arrives at the workshop, he selects a toy before the Reindeer pulls him back to the sleigh to deposit the toy. The rope represents the reins- Santa holds both ends of the rope and the Reindeer pulls the sleigh by putting the center of the rope around his waist. After each trip from sleigh to workshop and back to sleigh again, the children should switch spots.

Academic Connection: Reading - Use gift-wrap ribbon to tie a tag onto each toy. For early childhood grades, the words could say something like, "This is a brown bear." For more challenging reading work, type up a paragraph describing the story of the toy or a description of a child (in the class) who will receive it (pretending, of course.)

Math- You could also integrate math. Label each "toy" with a price tag. If you use coin values, students can use mental math to find the \$ total at the end.

Recommended Number of Students: 2 (1 team)

# Blitzen's Skip Counting Blitz

Students toss a soft ball back and forth as many times as they can while skip counting.

## Materials:

Soft, squishy ball - A hard ball can be difficult to catch. For this game, it's best to use a ball or bean bag toy that has some "give" so that students can get a better grip. (A traditional bean bag is too small.) A fluffy, ball-sized stuffed animal works too. Skip-counting cards (see next page.)

Set up: Provide students with skip counting cards. You'll need one for each child. Mark the spots where your students should stand while they toss the ball. (About 3 feet apart for younger children, farther for older children.)

## Directions:

Students will stand on their spots and toss the ball back and forth to each other- hopefully without dropping it! With each catch, they skip count: 2-4-6-8-10, etc. Depending on the age of the students, you can have them count by 1s, 2s, 5s, and 10s or engage in more challenging skip-counting (3s, 4s, 9s, etc.)

\*Students might not need the skip-counting cards. However, if they are working with more difficult skip counts (such as 3s or 4s) they might need to practice first.

Academic Connection: Skip counting is an important skill for mental math. It also helps with multiplication facts.

Recommended Number of Students: 2 (1 team) per soft ball.

## **Count By 1:**

1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5 - 6 - 7 - 8 - 9 -  
10 - 11 - 12 - 13 - 14 - 15 - 16 -  
17 - 18 - 19 - 20

## **Count By 2:**

2 - 4 - 6 - 8 - 10 - 12 - 14 - 16  
- 18 - 20 - 22 - 24

## **Count By 3:**

3 - 6 - 9 - 12 - 15 - 18 - 21 -  
24 - 27 - 30 - 33 - 36

## **Count By 4:**

4 - 8 - 12 - 16 - 20 - 24 - 28 -  
32 - 36 - 40 - 44 - 48

## **Count By 5:**

5 - 10 - 15 - 20 - 25 - 30 - 35 -  
40 - 45 - 50 - 55 - 60

## **Count By 6:**

6 - 12 - 18 - 24 - 30 - 36 - 42 -  
48 - 54 - 60 - 66 - 72

## **Count By 7:**

7 - 14 - 21 - 28 - 35 - 42 - 49 -  
56 - 63 - 70 - 77 - 84

## **Count By 8:**

8 - 16 - 24 - 32 - 40 - 48 - 56 -  
64 - 72 - 80 - 88 - 96

## **Count By 9:**

9 - 18 - 27 - 36 - 45 - 54 - 63 -  
72 - 81 - 90 - 99 - 108

## **Count By 10:**

10 - 20 - 30 - 40 - 50 - 60 - 70  
- 80 - 90 - 100

# Prancer's Trampoline Workout

*Jump! Jump! Jump! Having children bounce on a mini-trampoline is a great workout! Asking them questions while they bounce exercises their mind, too.*

## Materials:

Mini-trampoline- Many P.E. teachers have mini-trampolines. If not, you can solicit your students' parents and see if you can borrow one or two for this station.

Quiz cards OR "Educational" music and player

Set up: Once you have secured your mini-trampolines, the main prep work is to prepare your quiz cards. You need cards that your students can read aloud. They could be pictorial for younger children (what time does the clock show?) or verbal for older kids , "What is the capital of Oregon?"

Only you know what "facts" your students need to practice.

Alternatively, you could let children jump while listening to educational songs and singing along (such as math rap, letter sound songs- "Who let the letters out?" etc.)

## Directions:

Give students a safety lesson on proper use of the mini-trampoline. They need to remain in the center of the trampoline and bounce- no tricks, no jumping on the edges, and only 1 student jumps on 1 trampoline at a time.

If you only have 1 trampoline, your pairs of students will have to take turns. If you have 2 trampolines, they can jump at the same time (but only if you use educational music instead of quiz cards.)

Academic Connection: It depends on 1)The number of trampolines and 2) What you choose to ask on the quiz cards. If you play music instead, the songs you select will influence the academic content.

Recommended Number of Students: 2 (1 team) per trampoline.

# Dancer's Vocabulary Vibe

*You know a child really understands a word when he/she can "act it out." Challenge your little "reindeer" to work together to make up dances that "show" what they know.*

## Materials:

Vocabulary Word Cards- (See next page for suggested words and add your own!)

Optional: music source- If you want to allow students to create a dance to music, I suggest choosing an upbeat instrumental piece that can be played over and over.

Set up: Open space and word cards are all you need for this game.

## Directions:

Show students how they can select 8 vocabulary words and then create a dance that demonstrates the meaning of those words. \*You will need to model the process of using key words to come up with a dance. It helps to choose at least 2 words from each category and then create a variety of movement phrases that illustrate their meanings.

Academic Connection: Reading and word meaning.

\*It would be fun to let students show each other their dances at the end of the games. :-)

Recommended Number of Students: 2 (1 team) to 4 (2 teams)

# Dancer's Favorite Words

## Direction Words:

Up  
Down  
Left  
Right  
Diagonal  
High  
Low  
Over  
Under  
Through  
Around  
Behind  
Above  
Below

## Action Words:

Jump  
Skip  
Leap  
Hop  
Fly  
Lunge  
Glide  
Soar  
Stretch  
Twist  
Bend  
March  
Sway

## Describing Words:

Quickly  
Slowly  
Sharp  
Round  
Loose  
Tight  
Heavy  
Light  
Tense  
Relaxed  
Long  
Short  
Tiny  
Huge

## Body Parts:

Arm  
Leg  
Hand  
Foot  
Hip  
Head

Shoulder  
Elbow  
Stomach  
Knee  
Spine  
Neck  
Fingers

# Donner's Alphabetic Dash

*This is a fun game that combines A-B-C order, stacked cups, and quick movement.*

## Materials:

Plastic cups with word labels (if you have 2 sets of different words, the children can play at the same time and then switch cup stacks.) \*1 word per cup

Timer for each child

## Set up:

2 tables (or desks pushed together) at least 5 yards apart.

On one table you should stack the cups labeled with words to be alphabetized (use words appropriate for your students. You can write the words directly onto the cups with a permanent marker or attach a sticker label.)

The 2nd table should be empty.

## Directions:

Each child starts with a stack of cups. They start the timer, pull out one cup, race over to the next table, and set it down so the word is displayed. They repeat this step with each cup, arranging them in a row in A-B-C order as they go.

When they finish, stop the timer and check their work. (It's helpful to provide an answer key.)

If they have extra time, they can try again to "beat their time."

Academic Connection: Alphabetical Order

Recommended Number of Students: 2 (1 team)

# Rudolph's Red Nose Challenge

*Can you hit the target? Try tossing Rudolph's "extra" noses into the bucket and find out!*

## Materials:

Empty bucket (summer beach size)

Container of red pom poms (in various sizes) for each child

"Throwing line" taped to the floor.

Optional: timer

## Set up:

You need a container of red pom poms for each student.

Tape a line to the floor to serve as the "throwing line."

Place the bucket (to catch the thrown pom poms) at least 3 yards away (or farther.)

## Directions:

Students stand with their toes on the "throwing line" and toss the red pom poms (as fast as they can) into the bucket.

Optional: You can introduce a timer to provide an "outside enemy."

## Academic Connection:

Simple Counting: Students count their total number of noses that made it into the bucket.

Value Counting: Large pom poms get 1 point, medium pom poms get 2 points, little pom poms get 3 points. Students add up their total score.

Higher Math: Students calculate their percentage of noses that hit the target, collect data to graph the # of small, medium and large noses that land inside the bucket, etc. You math teachers can think of some good stuff too! :-)

Literacy Option: You can have students say something each time they toss a pom pom. For example, if you're working on letter sounds, you can tell students to choose a letter and say a word that begins with that letter's sound each time they toss a pom pom.

Recommended Number of Students: 2 (1 team)



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I hope you enjoy these "reindeer games!" If so, stay tuned to [www.wonderteacher.com](http://www.wonderteacher.com) - I plan to post these kinds of movement-based learning station ideas periodically throughout the year. (Sign up for the newsletter and "like" WT on Facebook to make sure you don't miss any.)

If this document was helpful to you, I'd love to hear about it! (And if you have any good ideas or tips to pass on, please let me know.)

You can contact me at my email: [sbantone@bellsouth.net](mailto:sbantone@bellsouth.net)

Don't forget that [www.pecentral.org](http://www.pecentral.org) is another great site for locating movement-based learning ideas.

Thanks for visiting Wonder Teacher!

Warmest Regards,  
Susan Antonelli

