

# Noodle Mania: Team Building with Foam Noodle Pool Toys

with Chris Cavert, Ed.D.

Presented at the DuPage County Institute for PE, Health & Drivers Ed, 2014

Thanks for joining me for this workshop. Below you will find a description of each activity presented (with a few more bonus activities) at the Institute day. Please contact me if you have any questions about the activities. Have Fun!! Chris

Resources mentioned at the workshop:

- *50 Ways to Use Your Noodle* by Chris Cavert & Sam Sikes ([www.doingworks.com](http://www.doingworks.com))
- *50 More Ways to Use Your Noodle* by Chris Cavert & Sam Sikes ([www.doingowrks.com](http://www.doingowrks.com))
- *Noodle Mania* by Chad Triolet ([www.noodlegames.net](http://www.noodlegames.net))
- *Noodle Madness* by Chad Tiolet ([www.noodlegames.net](http://www.noodlegames.net))

**Noodles** (During the session we used the 4-inch slices of noodles – we called them “chips” and mid-size noodles. The mid-sized noodles end up to be half the size of a standard pool noodle purchased from a big-box store in the Spring and Summer. [Stay away from the dollar store noodels, they do not last very long.] Noodles are easy to cut with a serrated bread knife.)

## **Clap Together** (from *50 Ways to Use Your Noodle*)

Needs & Numbers: Slices of noodles (the larger 4 inch diameter) cut approximately 1 ½ inches wide. Any number can play if you have lots of noodle chips.

Directions: Start with 2 slices places together like two pieces of bread for a sandwich. Toss this “sandwich” in the air, clap your hands and then catch the sandwich without letting any of the slices touch the ground. If successful, add one noodle slice to the sandwich, toss it up, clap and catch. The challenge is to see how many slices you can toss and catch without letting any touch the ground. Note: If your sandwich “sprays” to the ground, you can pick up as many as you had before the spray – you don’t need to start over from 2 slices.

## **Personality Press** (from *50 More Ways to Use Your Noodle*)

Needs & Numbers: The larger slices of noodles (described above). The challenge is to press noodle slices between you and a partner. Start by pressing two slices together between dominant hands. Then, partners take turns adding one slice at a time from the pile on the floor – slices are slipped in between the person’s hand and the slices already in the press. Each time a person adds a slice to the line of slices, he or she verbally shares something about him or herself. This is, of course, intended to be a get-to-know-you activity. Also, be sure to count the slices as you go so when they “go” you can start over at what you had. You could also change up partners after slice collapses. (Challenge: Press a number of slices – you diced – between foreheads. Pairs go down to the floor, both do a push-up, then stand back up without losing the slices.)

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### **My Letter(s)** (new activity for noodle slices – traditional roots)

Needs & Numbers: Noodle slices (4 inch diameter, 1 ½ inches wide – the smaller size works also) with letters (I use a Scrabble letter set as my template) on them or use index cards with letters, or a magnetic letter set. Plays well with 6 to 12 in a group – the more players in the group the longer the sharing will last (use only one noodle slice for up to 24 players).

Directions: Players choose one or two letters from the set that start a word or words that describe themselves. Then circle up so players can take turns sharing descriptors with the group – if they choose. If time, you can go around and see if players remember the descriptors by using the letters as reminders (easier to remember with a hint).

### **Letter Opener** (from *50 More Ways to Use Your Noodle*)

Needs & Numbers: Noodle slices (4 inch diameter, 1 ½ inches wide – the smaller size works also) with letters (I use a Scrabble letter set as my template) on them or use index cards with letters, or a magnetic letter set. Any number can play if you have enough lettered slices.

Directions: Have each player choose a vowel and a consonant from the letters slices. Then, give the players 6 minutes to use their letters to form as many words as possible – this means mingling around with others in the group to form words. Each player is challenged to keep score of how many words they are a part of – however, most of the time players simply forget to count, simply getting caught up in the fun (but, some players do count!!). Give bonus points for longer words.

### **Poppers** (I first saw these in the book *Achieving Fitness* from Project Adventure – pa.org)

These are small “C” (or “D”) shaped foam noodle pieces we pinched between the thumb and index finger – they “popped” out of our fingers and into the air. Easy to make: Get a foam pool noodle (buy a nice solid noodle – avoid the dollar store type noodle, they won’t last long). Using a serrated bread knife, cut a slice of noodle 1 ½ to 2 inches thick. Lay this slice down and cut it in half – two poppers ready. Cut more. (You can also buy a set of poppers at: [www.pa.org](http://www.pa.org))

### **Pop-Warm Up**

Use poppers independently. Pop them up in the air and try to catch it. Pop it out in front of you and go after the catch. Try some creative trick-pops and catch it. Show others your trick. Partner Up – pop and catch with a partner. One popper, then try two – each person pops across to the partner. Group pop. Work with a group to “all-pop” and catch. Go for least amount of drops. How do you problem solve to no drops.

### **Pop-Mingle**

(Prep: Using a permanent marker, write a vowel on one side of the popper and a consonant on the other side.) Play: After picking up a popper, players raise a hand when ready to share with someone. Find someone else raising a hand then share a trait related to one of the letters on

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the popper the person is holding. After each person shares, trade poppers and go off to share with someone else.

**MIGRATION** (from *Portable Team Building Activities*, by Chris Cavert due in Spring 2014)

Needs & Numbers: You'll need about 50 to 60 poppers for a group of 10 to 20 players – the more poppers you use the longer the activity will take.

Directions: The first time I tried this activity was with a group of high school students attending a leadership camp. Since one of the program goals was to help them prepare for working together throughout the coming school year, my facilitated objective for Migration was to simulate a long term project/task and help them discover some of the aspects (and emotions) involved. The activity objective was to move, only by popping, the poppers (the grasshoppers in my story needed some help with their long journey) from point A to point B – which was about 50 yards. It was a timed event.

I set out all the poppers on the ground behind a long line in the sidewalk – point A. I showed everyone how to properly pop the poppers. This is done by holding the popper as shown in the picture and then squeezing the index finger and thumb towards each other – the poppers most natural reaction is to launch itself, with a pop, away from the hand. I gave everyone time to practice before beginning. When everyone had the idea and knew where they needed to end up – point B – I gave them five minutes to devise a plan before I started the time for the migration.

As with any new activity, I never really know what will happen (in fact, as we have learned in adventure education, even if we have done an activity 100 times we are bound to see something new). In this case it was an interesting discovery – at least for this group. What I observed could be interpreted as how each person in the group was use to, or liked, working on a long (time consuming) task. The group made a plan to just form a line across the width of the sidewalk they were on and pop as they go – simply bending over to pick up a popper and pop it along the course. Soon after the plan was put into action I heard someone say, “This is going so slow, I just want to get one across to the end!” This participant (P1) then proceeded to pick up one of the poppers and popped this one (only) until it across the point B line. P1 continued this process popping only one at a time until it crossed point B, then went back to pick up another from the crowd of poppers. Some of the other participants were now sitting down at this point with the main crowd of poppers and continued to work, popping away. The sitters kept at it, talking amongst themselves as they popped. Two participants eventually broke from the sitting group gathering about a dozen poppers and worked by themselves to move their number forward – they were mostly “duck-walking” down the sidewalk, popping. Then about five other participants worked together to move a couple dozen poppers – some were bending down and others were squatting as they stayed together talking and popping. The five remaining sitters continued to slowly “sweep” the poppers left behind by the others in front of them. Another

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interesting dynamic of the activity – even with all these different styles of working, everyone in the group finished at the same time.

During my observation (as I pointed out to the adult leaders and the group members) it was easy to see what each of the participants needed – at least for a long-term type of task. One needed immediate success and was willing to work on her own to get it. Two were after success faster than most but were willing to sacrifice some time for more productivity. Five worked together, stuck with it, socialized a bit and moved a good number of poppers. The remaining five were willing to stay engaged, but conserved energy by sitting down – they were not focused on the speed of the task, they were more interested in, what I like to call, socially tasking. With this information we were able to debrief this experience and make some transferable connections to their future work together.

So, I found this an interesting activity as a way to explore how individuals in a group take on a long-term task. Metaphorically, to some degree, a group can experience their working needs. This could give them ideas about how to delegate long-term task assignments in the future.

### **Noodle Partner Tag** (from, *50 Ways to Use Your Noodle*)

Needs & Numbers: You'll need one mid-size noodle for every two players. Plays well with 12 to 24.

Directions: Partner up players and be sure that each pair of players has one noodle. The player with the noodle will be IT – all the ITs move to the center of the playing area. The objective of the game is for the ITs to tag their partners and only their partners – everyone else will just be the way (but this is good for the partner who isn't IT). After the game begins, the ITs find their partner to tag – tags are only legal if made below the waist. If a legal tag is made, the tagger sets the noodle at his or her partners feet as the partner (the new IT) turns around in place two times before picking up the noodle and then seeking out his or her partner to tag back. Each game should last about 90 seconds – take a quick break/rest and go again if you have time (and the group is up for another).

### **Circle Drop** (from *50 Ways to Use Your Noodle*)

Needs & Numbers: You'll need one mid-size noodle for each player (this is a standard long pool noodle cut in half). Plays well with 10 to 24 if you have a good open space to work in.

Directions: Create a large open circle with all the players about three feet from each other. Have each person hold the noodle up in front of them vertically with one end of the noodle on the floor and the other end being held up by an index finger of choice. The objective is to move together as a group (one noodle to the right) with every player leaving his or her noodle – taking the finger off of it – and then “catching” the next noodle to the right with the same index finger used to hold up the original noodle. The challenge here includes the group working together to move over, at the same time, one noodle without letting any noodles drop (or the

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least amount of noodles dropping). If this is too easy, have the players move over two noodles with the least amount of drops.

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## **Circle Toss** (variation of Circle Drop)

Set this one up just like Circle Drop above, but instead of setting the noodles down on the ground, each player tosses his or her noodle straight up in the air. Before starting the activity I always give my groups the opportunity to practice different ways to toss up noodles. I also like to have participants share their tossing ideas with others, and practice these. In the end, each person chooses his or her own tossing method to use during the challenges.

## **Noodle Walking** (from *50 Ways to Use Your Noodle*)

**Needs & Numbers:** You'll need a noodle (half of a standard pool noodle) for every player. Works well with 10 to 24 players (really, any number can play if you have the noodles and space).

**Directions:** Pair up players (a group of three can work if needed). The challenge for pairs is to walk together in a single file line with a noodle pressed between them – this being the ends of the noodle touching each person, one touching in the back the other touching in the front. Essentially the noodle is somewhat parallel to the ground (with a little bend). If you have some “stuff” you can set up a little (safe) obstacle field area that pairs have to work their way through. The idea is to walk around without holding on to the noodle or letting it drop to the ground. After pairs get the hang of it, bring two pairs together to make fours (this is where the player in the front of the line gets to use his or her noodle). After fours, go to eights and so on until, ultimately the entire group could be noodle-linked together (maybe in a circle formation and completing a 360 degree movement together?).

## **Noodle Knot** (variation of the Human Knot)

If you know the Human Knot activity (if you don't you can find it with a quick internet search), try it with using noodles as an extension of each player's hands. This makes for a little more room to maneuver while playing – a nice lead in to the traditional Human Knot.

## **Noodle Partner Tag** (from *50 Ways to Use Your Noodle*)

**Needs & Numbers:** You'll need one mid-size noodle for every two players. Plays well with 10 to 24 – more players, in my experience, make it too challenging for tags to take place.

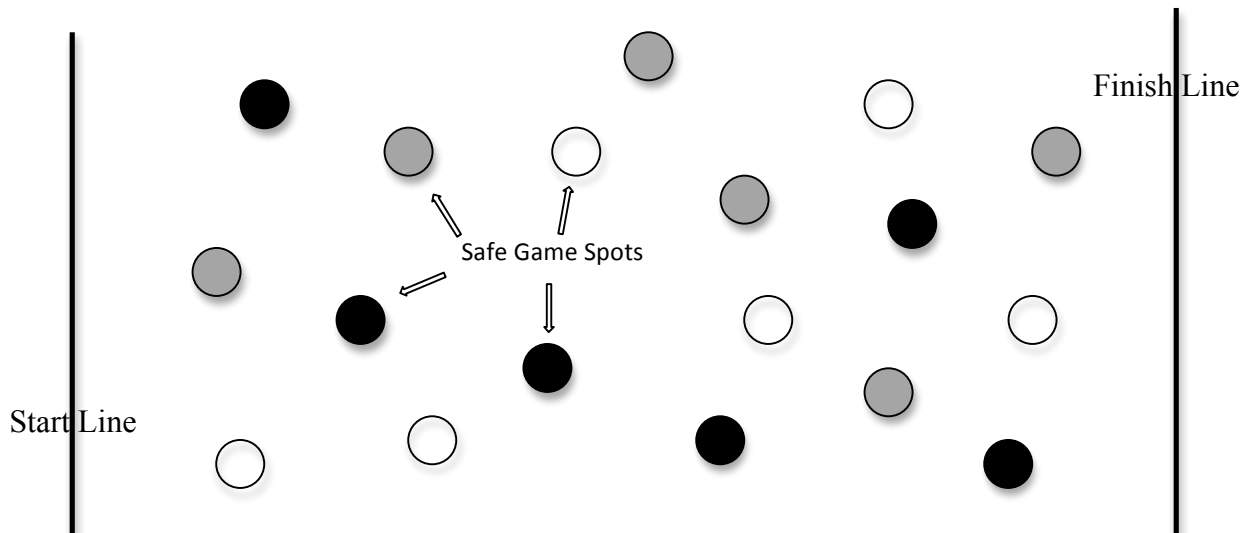
**Directions:** Partner up players and be sure that each pair of players has one noodle. The player with the noodle will be IT – all the ITs move to the center of the playing area. The objective of the game is for the ITs to tag their partners and only their partners – everyone else will just be the way (but this is good for the partner who isn't IT). After the game begins, the ITs find their partner to tag – tags are only legal if made below the waist. If a legal tag is made, the tagger sets the noodle at his or her partner's feet as the partner (the new IT) turns around in place two times before picking up the noodle and then seeking out his or her partner to tag back. Each game should last about 90 seconds – take a quick break/rest and go again if you have time (and the group is up for another).

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**Planet to Planet** (This is a new one we worked on together. Lots of good ideas shared, so below is just a brief outline of the idea. Let me know how you can use this one. Thanks to my new friend Michael for the great name on this one.)



**Set Up:** The basic set-up above is for 12 to 16 players divided into 3 teams of equal size (or close to it). The start and finish lines can be lines on the floor, webbing lengths, or even masking tape.

**Needs & Numbers:** You'll need at least 20 noodle slices – the four-inch size – for each team. These will be the Space Ships (or Flying Saucers) to keep the theme of the name. As noted for the above set-up, it plays well with 12 to 16. If you have more players set out more spots, and bring in more noodle slices.

**Directions (so far):** There are three teams in the set up above (however, I will be emphasizing that this is an “all-group” effort for total points), a White team, a Gray team, and a Black team – as denoted by the color of the spots. Each team has 20 noodle slices and team members can only step on their colored spots. The objective is to move the Space Ships from the starting “Star Base 1” to the finish area, “Star Base 2.” Some rules we discussed:

- Space Ships must be tossed with a “Frisbee” motion so they fly through the “space.”
- Players can stand anywhere on a Star Base with a Space Ship but must be standing on an appropriate team spot when in possession of a Space Ship while in space.
- Players can move from planet to planet through space (moving to their team’s planets) as long as they do not have any Space Ships in their possession.
- A Space Ship is safe if it travels from player to player through the air – if it drops to the ground it is “lost in space” and cannot be rescued.
- For each team, there can be no more than 5 Space Ships on any one of their planets and 5 must start at Star Base 1.
- Include containers on Star Base 2 – if a ship “flies” into a container it’s worth more.

What else can work with this activity? Let me know!!