

# Games Gone Wild: 14 Boredom Busters for Your Next Outdoor Adventure

**No batteries necessary! Outdoor fun at its simplest just needs found objects and plenty of imagination**

06-08-2011 // Kate Hofmann

In this era of portable electronic devices of all shapes and sizes, you need never be without entertainment at your fingertips. But ask yourself—or your kids—this: What if the batteries ran out while you were outdoors? Or what if (gasp!) you simply **left it all behind *on purpose* and ran out the door with empty pockets?** Could you stave off boredom and even have a little fun?

**Here are some survival strategies that just might save you.** These games require nothing more than what you can easily find outside—along with a healthy dose of creativity.



## Inside Games—Outside

On the beach, in the woods, or even in an open field, you can find everything you need to play some common “inside” games.

- **Tic-Tac-Toe.** Grab a stick and play a round by drawing in the sand or soil.
- **Checkers.** Draw a checkerboard (8 by 8 squares) on the ground and collect 12 stones, shells, acorns, or other small objects to use as “checkers” for each player.
- **Pick-Up Sticks.** To play, simply gather an assortment of twigs and drop them in a pile.

Forgot the rules for some of these games? Here's how to play **Pick-Up Sticks** and **Checkers**.

Just as an outdoor picnic can transform a basic meal into something exciting, games you know well will seem all new—and extra fun—when played outside.

## Active Games

Of course, there are countless running-and-jumping games best played outdoors.

- **Hopscotch.** Use a stick to draw a hopscotch board in a dirt patch. Then hop to your heart's content.
- **Follow the Leader.** Explore up, down, and all around a natural area, giving each person a chance to lead.
- **Hide-and-Seek.** Check out the best places to hide outside with this winner of a game.
- **Tag.** Burn off all kinds of energy with your favorite variation of traditional tag. For a fun sunny-day version, play shadow tag: stepping on another player's shadow counts as a tag.
- **Tossing Games.** Designate a target: a tree or rock, a series of circles drawn on the ground, or a hole you have dug. Then toss pine cones or other objects from a distance, earning points for each hit.
- **"Pooh Sticks."** On a bridge, drop sticks into the water on the upstream side. Then run to the downstream side to see whose stick emerges first.

For more active outdoor games, visit our **outdoor game center!**

## Memory Games

Collect a variety of small natural objects (leaves, pine cones, stones, sticks, bark, acorns, shells, etc.). Lay the objects all out on the ground.

- **Add Up.** Give players a chance to study the collection carefully. Then cover it with a handkerchief or jacket. How many of the objects can the players recall and name?
- **Take Away.** After players study the collection, have them close their eyes while you remove one (or more) objects. Can they name the missing object(s)? Guessing Games hone players' observation skills and questioning strategies with outdoor versions of these classic time-fillers.
- **I Spy.** Choose something easily visible to all and say "I spy, with my little eye, something (blue, or round, or that begins with the letter 'C')." Players take turns guessing until the object is identified. 20 Questions. Again, choose something in the environment around you. Players ask yes or no questions to determine what it is you have in mind.

## Invented Games

Perhaps best of all, let nature inspire you to make up a new game on the spot. Use whatever you find around you and let your creativity loose. Perhaps you'll make a giant-size board game, with players themselves moving along squares in a path you draw on the ground. Perhaps you'll invent a new version of tag or a jumping game or a tossing game. Whatever you create, it's sure to be memorable and one-of-a-kind.

Citation: <http://www.nwf.org/News-and-Magazines/National-Wildlife/Outdoors/Archives/2011/Wild-Games.aspx>

## Be an Animal Detective

Want to solve another wildlife mystery? Miss Sally knows there's no better way to learn about animals than to watch what they do. Put your heads together and no matter what the weather, you can pick up clues that you can use!



### What you need

- patience

### What you do

1. Tell your child that you're going to be animal detectives, find an animal and follow it quietly. You will gather "clues" about the animal for as long as you can.
2. Take that red cardinal, for example, who landed on the compost pile and picked up a piece of dried grass. Once you and your child have spotted him, be detectives. Watch him look all around to make sure no one is paying attention to him (except you!). Then notice where he flies off to. The inside of a tree or thick shrub, maybe?
3. Ask your child to guess what the cardinal is doing with the grass? Is it spring? Could he be building a nest? Wait quietly to see if he comes out again for another twig or dead leaf. Perhaps you can walk over to that area carefully and check out your theory.
4. Then your child might see a squirrel—another creature to investigate! As you watch and follow the squirrel, whisper to your child about what the animal is doing. While it's rustling in some leaves, ask your child what the squirrel might be looking for. Then if you approach and it freezes—ask why it might do that (in hopes you will not see it). Then watch it run under a car, creep out and race up a tree — again why? Chattering, it waves its tail, then eventually jumps onto a power line and out of sight.
5. Even then your investigations aren't over. You and your child can recall all of the things you saw the animal do. And you can guess at the reasons behind the behaviors. For example: "The squirrel ran up the tree, maybe it was trying to get away from us!"

There are as many mysteries as there are animals!

### Some more fun animal detective facts to share:

- To be a good animal detective, listen carefully because you often hear an animal before you see it. Move slowly and quietly.
- Try to recognize individuals and just watch what that specific ant or pigeon does.

- Sometimes try watching your animal from a distance. That way it goes about its normal business without worrying so much about you.

Citation: <http://www.nwf.org/Wild-Animal-Baby-Explorers-TV/Parents-and-Teachers/Miss-Sallys-Activities/Animal-Detective.aspx>

Bring the wild into your kids' afternoon snack with this fun orangutan sandwich. For more recipes as well as games, crafts and wildlife information check out [Wild Animal Baby](#) (Ages 2-4), [Big Backyard](#) (Ages 4-7) and [Ranger Rick](#) (Ages 7-14) on National Wildlife Federation's Kids webpage.

## Orangutan Snack

A sandwich that smiles back? Your child will eat this one up!



### What you need:

- 1 slice of whole-grain bread
- red and yellow food coloring
- carrot slivers
- 1/3 cup of hummus
- 1 banana
- 4 raisins

### What you do:

1. Trim the crust off a slice of bread to make an oval.
2. Add 3 drops each of red and yellow food coloring to 1/4 cup of the hummus to make it orange. Mix well.
3. Spread the orange hummus over the bread, leaving a round space at the bottom for a snout. Cover this space with the uncolored hummus.
4. Stick on banana slices for eyes. Then add a raisin in the center of each eye for pupils.
5. Use two more raisins for nostrils and carrot slivers to make hair and a smile. Serve with the remainder of the banana for an orangutan-approved meal.

*Recipe: Rhonda Lucas Donald*

*Photo: NWF*

Citation: [http://www.nwf.org/Kids/Big-Backyard/Fun/Recipes/~link.aspx?\\_id=6E2F98CA6AD342ED9DFED7FECFA28114&z=z](http://www.nwf.org/Kids/Big-Backyard/Fun/Recipes/~link.aspx?_id=6E2F98CA6AD342ED9DFED7FECFA28114&z=z)