

INTERNATIONAL DAY OF PLAY



2026

Game Booklet



BOSTON
Public Schools



*City of Boston
Early Childhood*

The City of Boston and Boston Public Schools will be celebrating International Day of Play on **June 11, 2026.**

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International Day of Play is all about community, movement, and elevating the importance of play for children of all ages. Boston Public Schools recognizes the diversity of its students and staff as one of the district's biggest strengths.

The theme for this year's celebration is **UNITED We Play.** In honor of this theme, this booklet highlights one outdoor game from every country that is featured. While each country offers many different games and traditions, this booklet spotlights one example from each of the highlighted countries.

Some of the highlighted games may be similar to activities that both students and staff may know. When applicable, comparisons to similar games played in the United States are included with the sole purpose of providing a better understanding and easier facilitation.

Do you have a different version of how to play a highlight game?
Have a game that you would like to add to the booklet?

[Click Here for the Game Addition Form.](#)

Several games and instructions may include the language of the country from which the game originated. Despite ample research, some translations, spellings, and game instructions may vary by source.



Staff members are encouraged to adapt and modify all games to best meet the needs of their students and spaces.

The theme for
International Day of Play 2026 is...

UNITED WE PLAY



International Day of Play, celebrated on June 11th, is a global celebration that highlights the importance of play. Play is crucial to both a child's development and their physical and mental well-being.

This year, in partnership with the City of Boston's Office of Early Childhood, BPS is proud to celebrate International Day of Play under the theme **UNITED WE PLAY**.



On this day, communities around the world, globally, nationally, and locally, will come together to recognize the power of play.

HAITI



Lago Lago / Lago Kache

Number of Players: 3+

Materials needed: none

HOW TO PLAY

- 1 One child remains in the middle and is chosen to be the “mother” or the finder for that round.
- 2 While this player is in the middle, they repeat the following phrase:
Lago, Lago. Ti Sanglé. Ça ou mangé?
The highlighted translation is “what did you eat?”, unsure what the second part of the phrase is
- 3 While the player in the middle is repeating this phrase, the other players will hide in the designated space.
- 4 The player in the middle will then try to find where all the players are hiding.

EL SALVADOR



Mar y Tierra

Number of Players: 2+

Materials needed: line drawn with chalk

HOW TO PLAY

- 1 Players will begin the game by lining up alongside the drawn line.
- 2 The facilitator will designate one side of the line to be "mar" (sea) and the other side of the line to be "tierra" (land).
- 3 One player is chosen, their role is to call out either mar or tierra. The players will jump either side to side or front to back to be on the correct side of the line.
Some players will also jump and remain on the same side of the line.
- 4 If a player jumps on the wrong side of the line, they are either out or have to do some form of physical activity

CAPE VERDE



Ouril

Number of Players: 2+ or 2 equal-sized teams

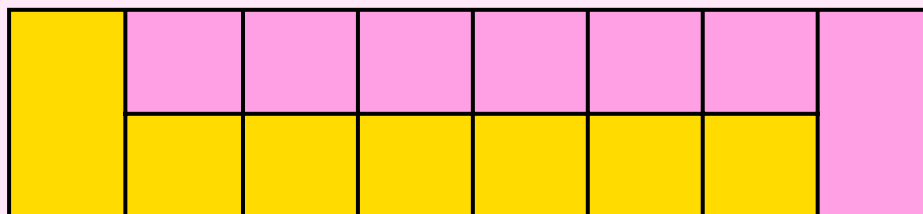
Materials needed: buckets/bowls, 48 small objects (bean bags, marbles, etc.)

HOW TO PLAY

1

Using buckets/bowls, lay out the life-size playing board so that there are 14 "pits."

- The layout should look like this:
 - Player 1/Team 1: will have the blue squares
 - Player 2/Team 2: will have the yellow squares
- (Not including the squares on the ends). Place 4 of the small objects into each of the middle squares



2

Player 1/Team 1 will begin the game by choosing one of the squares containing small objects. Then, in a clockwise direction, they will walk around the entire board and place one small object in each square. Players will avoid placing a small object in the opposing team's end bucket. They will continue this until they run out of the object.

3

Player 2/Team 2 will then repeat the same pattern.

4

The player/team that acquires more than 24 pieces wins the game, as they have the majority of the pieces!

INDIA



Cheetah, Cheetal

Number of Players: 7+

Materials needed: cones/chalk to mark boundaries

HOW TO PLAY

- 1** To make the playing field, draw or mark off two lines about 5 feet (1.5 meters) apart. On either side of these lines, pace off about 20 to 30 feet (6 to 9 meters) and mark off the areas. These are the baselines.
- 2** Pick one person to be the Indian PRINCESS or PRINCE. Divide the rest of the players into two teams: CHEETAHS and CHEETALS.
- 3** Have the CHEETAHS and CHEETALS line up, back to back. The PRINCE or PRINCESS stands at the top middle of both lines and calls out, "Chee-eee-ee. . ." "tah" or "tal" trying to surprise the groups.
- 4** The team that's called must turn quickly and chase the other players to their baseline. Tagged players are out of the game.
- 5** The game is finished when all players on one side are tagged.

ITALY



Strega Comanda Colore

Number of Players: 4+

Materials needed: colorful objects scattered around

HOW TO PLAY

1

Begin by placing colourful objects around the play area, or choose a colourful place to play. One player is chosen to be the “witch,” or Strega Comanda Colore.

2

The witch will call out a color. The other players must run and find an object of that color and touch it before the witch catches them.

- If no one is caught, the witch will call out another color.
- If someone is caught, they become the new witch.

PORTUGAL



Jogo de Lençinho

Number of Players: 4+

Materials needed: a handkerchief or scarf

HOW TO PLAY

- 1 Similar to Duck, Duck, Goose, in Jogo do lençinho, everyone sits in a circle. One person walks around the outside of the circle while the others face inward, singing a song.
- 2 The person walking drops a handkerchief behind one of the seated players.
- 3 If the person notices, they must get up and chase the other person before they reach the space and sit down.

INDONESIA



Semut, Orang, Gajah

Number of Players: Groups of two

Materials needed: none

HOW TO PLAY

- 1** Players pump their fists up and down to the count of three. On four, they straighten their arm and give one of three signs
 1. Pinky = ant (semut)
 2. Pointer finger = man (orang)
 3. Thumb = elephant (gajah)
- 2** Victories are determined by:
 - The elephant beats the man
 - Man beats the ant
 - Ant beats the elephant
- 3** Players will continue playing until one wins two out of the three rounds, making them the winner

CHINA



Catch the Dragon's Tail

Number of Players: 8+ players

Materials needed: handkerchief

HOW TO PLAY

- 1** The children all form a line with their hands on the shoulders of the child in front.
 - The first in line is the dragon's head
 - The last in line is the dragon's tail
- 2** The dragon's head then tries to catch the tail by maneuvering the line around so that they can tag the last player. All the players in the middle do their best to stop the dragon's head by keeping their arms stiff. The line is not allowed to break.
- 3** If the head catches the tail, the tail player takes the front position and becomes the new dragon's head.
- 4** All the other players move back one position. Then the last person in line becomes the new dragon's tail.

EGYPT



The Handkerchief Game

Number of Players: Two teams equal in size, at least five players on each, one leader overall.

Materials needed: a handkerchief, chalk

HOW TO PLAY

- 1 To create the playing space, draw two parallel lines (about a half-court length apart). Draw the leaders' circle in the middle of the two lines.
- 2 The designated leader stands holding up a handkerchief in the circle drawn in the center of the playing area.
- 3 Players in each team are numbered one to five.
 - If there are more than 5 players for each team, assign numbers beyond 5 for each player.
- 4 The game begins when the leader holds up the handkerchief, calling a number from one to five (if there are more players, then it will be a number from one to the max).
- 5 The two players from each team with the number called will run into the circle to try to grab the handkerchief from the leader.
- 6 The player who succeeds in grabbing the handkerchief tries to run back to their line without being tagged by their opposite number.
- 7 If the player holding the handkerchief makes it back to their team's line without being tagged, then their team gets a point. If the player is tagged then the point goes to the opposite team.

JAPAN



Hana, Hana, Hana, Kuchi

Number of Players: 8+ players

Materials needed: none

HOW TO PLAY

- 1** Players sit in a circle and imitate the leader, who taps his or her nose three times and mouth once, while saying "hana, hana, hana, kuchi". (Nose, nose, nose, mouth).
- 2** The leader continues to repeat the phrase but can touch any features in any order, regardless of the words being said.
- 3** The players must do what the leader says and not what the leader does. A player failing to do this must become the leader or allow his or her cheek to be daubed with flour and water (or put their hands on their cheeks for a less messy game).

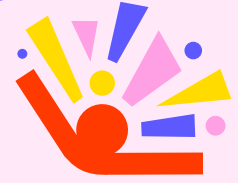
The names of the features are:

Mimi = eye

Hana = nose

Kuchi = mouth

KENYA



Nyama, Nyama, Nyama

Number of Players: 4+ players

Materials needed: list of animals, fish, or plants

HOW TO PLAY

- 1 One player is determined as the leader.
- 2 The leader will stand in the middle while all other players sit around the leader.
- 3 The leader will read from the list and or make up a list of their own.
 - Every time the leader says an animal that can be eaten, any player in the group can jump up and shout "Nyama".
- 4 The first person who jumps up and shouts "Nyama" is the winner and becomes the next leader.

KOREA



Dan Chhae Jul Normgi

Number of Players: 5+ players

Materials needed: a long skipping rope

HOW TO PLAY

- 1 Two players take either end of the skipping rope and turn it continuously.
- 2 All other players stand in line and, one at a time, attempt to jump over the rope.
- 3 The goal of the players in line is to stop the rope with their legs.
 - If they are able to stop the jump rope, then this player becomes the winner. They will then trade places with one of the players holding the rope.
 - If the skipper's legs get caught by the rope, the skipper is out.
- 4 The game will continue until there is only one skipper; this player is the winner.

SYRIA

Hajila



Number of Players: 2+ players

Materials needed: chalk, a spot marker

HOW TO PLAY

- 1** Players will begin by drawing a column of squares on the ground in front of them.
 - Label each square to have a specific point value; players can decide.
- 2** Players will toss or kick the point marker up the column; whichever square the marker lands on is the number of points that the player scores for that round.
 - If the marker does not land in a square, the player does not score any points that round.
- 3** Each player will continue to go until one reaches the determined “winning” number of points.

AUSTRALIA

Skippyroo Kangaroo



Number of Players: 4+ players

Materials needed: none

HOW TO PLAY

- 1** All players will sit in a circle, and one player is chosen to sit in the middle.
 - The player in the middle is “Skippyroo Kangaroo”.
- 2** The player in the middle will close their eyes while the other players in the circle will sing:
 - “Skippyroo Kangaroo, dozing in the midday sun, here comes a hunter, run, run, run.”
- 3** The facilitator will then choose one of the players on the outside circle to tap Skippyroo Kangaroo on the back and say:
 - “Guess who’s caught you just for fun?”
- 4** Without opening their eyes, Skippyroo will try to guess whose voice it is.
 - If Skippyroo is right, the players switch spots. If Skippyroo is incorrect, they remain in the middle.

IRELAND

Shadows



Number of Players: 4+ players

Materials needed: none

HOW TO PLAY

- 1** This game is another version of tag where one player is chosen as the tagger.
- 2** The tagger has to try to stand in the shadows of the other players they are chasing.
 - Players are allowed to run to a shaded area for 10 seconds so their shadow can not be seen.
 - Players can crouch down to make their shadows smaller and harder to stand on.
- 3** When a player's shadow is stood upon, they become the new tagger.

GHANA

Pilolo



Number of Players: 3+ players

Materials needed: small objects to hide

HOW TO PLAY

- 1 While all other players' backs are turned, one player is chosen to hide the small objects around the designated area.
- 2 When the hider yells, "Pilolo", all players will turn around and try to find the hidden objects.
- 3 The first player to find one of the hidden objects will bring it back to the hider and will win a point.
- 4 They become the new hider, and the game continues.

UNITED KINGDOM

Pass the Parcel

Number of Players: 3+ players

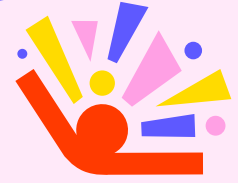
Materials needed: small objects to hide

HOW TO PLAY

- 1** The facilitator will choose one small object to wrap.
- 2** While the music plays, all players will stand in a circle, passing the object around.
- 3** When the music stops, whoever is holding the object will unwrap one small piece of the paper.
- 4** The music will continue, and the object will be passed around again.
- 5** Repeat this until the object has been unwrapped.
- 6** Modifications: add a physical activity to the object-passing!

BRAZIL

Luto de Galo



Number of Players: 4+ players

Materials needed: a handkerchief for each player

HOW TO PLAY

- 1 To begin the game, players will start by tucking the handkerchief into their pockets.
- 2 Players will begin hopping on one leg and will place their right hand behind their back. Players will then try to pull the handkerchief out of other players' pockets by using their left hand.
 - If a player stands on both feet or uses their right hand, they are disqualified from the game.
- 3 The last player who has their handkerchief wins the game.

THAILAND

Chair Ball



Number of Players: 6+ players

Materials needed: two baskets, small balls, chairs

HOW TO PLAY

- 1 The facilitator will split the group of students into two even-sized teams.
- 2 One player from each team will be chosen to hold the basket and stand on the chair.
- 3 Players on each team will then pass the ball to each other without dribbling.
- 4 When a player passes the ball, they must pass the ball without moving from the spot they're standing in.
- 5 The player standing on the chair is allowed to catch the ball with the basket. They are allowed to lean forward, crouch down, etc., in order to catch the ball without moving from the chair.
- 6 The team that scores the most points within a set period of time wins.

ZAMBIA

Frog Friendship



Number of Players: 4+ players

Materials needed: none

HOW TO PLAY

- 1 The facilitator will split the students evenly into two groups, and the players will stand in parallel and face each other. The facilitator will mark a finish line.
- 2 Players will pair up with the partner that is across from them.
- 3 Each pair will put their hands together and crouch down. Without letting go of their hands touching, they will hop to the other side together.
- 4 The first group to successfully make it to the finish line without letting their hands slip wins!

FRANCE

Escargot



Number of Players: 2+ players

Materials needed: chalk

HOW TO PLAY

- 1** The facilitator will use the chalk to draw a circle large enough to stand in on the ground. Within the circle, draw a spiral and divide the space into even squares. There should be at least 10 squares within the circle. (The larger the squares, the harder the game will be). Once all squares have been drawn, label each one beginning with "1" and the center square is "home".
- 2** One player will start at the first square and begin to hop on one foot throughout the circle, the objective is to make it to the "home" square.
 - While in the circle, the player is not allowed to switch feet. If they step on a line or outside of a box, they will exit the circle and join the line.
 - If a player makes it to "home," then they are allowed to pick any box and write their initials somewhere within the box.
- 3** The next player will hop on one foot throughout the circle, avoiding landing in any box with written initials in it.
- 4** The game is over when all players can no longer make it through the escargot.

PUERTO RICO

El Gato y el Ratón

Number of Players: 4+ players

Materials needed: none

HOW TO PLAY

- 1 Students form a circle holding hands.
- 2 One student is the ratón (mouse) inside the circle.
- 3 One student is the gato (cat) outside the circle.
- 4 The cat tries to tag the mouse.
- 5 The circle can lift arms to let the mouse in/out – but can block the cat.

Switch roles often!



Citations:



- <https://www.bitsandpieces.com/blogs/blog-post/international-kids-games?srsId=AfmBOopxUgEVaEXTUnEf5-s8rf4FnJVzm8Pdpw2rlG89RUgBcr48b019>
- <https://activeforlife.com/8-outdoor-games-from-around-the-world/>
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