

Learning Guide



Communication Nation

Episode 4: Together We Can

We hope you enjoyed learning all about how teambuilding happens with good communication skills. Extend your learning with this print-ready Learning Guide!



What's in this Learning Guide?

Get Set to Listen

Answer TRUE or FALSE statements before and after listening to the episode.

Vocabulary

Discussion Questions

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.3-8.1, SL.3-8.3

Writing Prompts

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.3-8.1, W.3-8.2, W.3-8.3, W.3-8.4, W.3-8.7, W.3-8.8

Trust Me, I'm the Expert: Improv Activities

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.1, SL.3, SL.4, SL.6; National Core Arts Standards (Theater): TH:Cr1.1, TH:Cr2.1, TH:Pr4.1, TH:Pr6.1, TH:Re7.1; CASEL: Self-Awareness, Social Awareness, Relationship Skills, Responsible Decision-Making

Word Connections Game

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.1, SL.3, SL.4, SL.6; National Core Arts Standards (Theater): TH:Cr1.1, TH:Cr2.1, TH:Pr4.1, TH:Pr6.1, TH:Re7.1; CASEL: Self-Awareness, Social Awareness, Relationship Skills, Responsible Decision-Making

Let's Play Games!

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.3.2, W.3.2, SL.3.4, W.3.7; NGSS 3-LS4-4

Additional Resources & Book List



The Children's Hour
kids public radio

© 2026 The Children's Hour radio show podcast
<https://www.childrenshour.org/together-we-can/>



Get Set to Listen

1. Before listening!

Read each statement and write TRUE or FALSE based on what you already know.



2. After listening!

Based on what the experts said in the episode, write TRUE or FALSE.



Before Listening	TRUE or FALSE?	After Listening
	1. Improv is a scripted form of acting that requires memorization.	
	2. One main rule of improv is to disagree with your partner.	
	3. Thinking too much can sometimes make improv harder.	
	4. There are wrong answers in improv games.	
	5. Saying “no” to bad ideas helps team members find the best ideas.	
	6. Games like Capture the Flag teach teamwork and cooperation.	
	7. Hand games only involve physical movement and no communication skills.	

What did you learn?



Get Set to Listen

Answer key

1. FALSE. Improv is created on the spot without a script.
2. FALSE. The key rule is “yes, and,” which means agreeing and building on ideas.
3. TRUE. Doug Montoya says overthinking can stop ideas from flowing naturally.
4. FALSE. In improv, there are no wrong answers—everything helps move the scene forward.
5. FALSE. Saying “yes, and” keeps conversations and teamwork going smoothly.
6. TRUE
7. FALSE. They also build rhythm, listening, and nonverbal communication skills.



Vocabulary

Listening for Words

1. Make a four-column chart and label the columns “I don’t know,” “I’ve seen or heard, but don’t know the meaning,” “I think I know the meaning,” and “I know the meaning.”
2. Write the vocabulary word in the column that describes how well you know the meaning of the word.
3. Listen to [the episode](#). Note how the speaker uses the words.

Matching Words with Definitions

1. Print and cut apart the word and definition cards.
2. Spread out the word cards so you can see them all. One by one, attach a definition card to each word card.

Writing with New Words

After working with the words and definitions, write a one-page essay or story that uses at least three of the words.

improvisation

The act of doing or making something up as you go along without planning ahead of time.

expert

Someone who knows a lot about a specific topic or is very skilled at something.



Vocabulary

prop

An object used by actors during a play or performance to help tell the story.

scene

A part of a play, movie, or book where the action happens in one place without stopping.

prompt

Something that helps or reminds you to do or say something.

cooperation

Sharing ideas, responsibilities, positivity, and efforts to get something done.



Vocabulary

coordination

The ability to move different parts together smoothly and efficiently.

purpose

The reason why something is done or created.

tradition

Customs and practices that originate in the past and have often been done in the same way for a long time. Traditions also adapt due to environmental factors and to survive.

resilience

The ability to keep going and stay strong even when facing difficult situations or challenges.



Discussion Questions

1. How does communication help build a strong community?
2. Why are people stronger when they work together instead of alone?
3. What are some games you play that require teamwork?
How do they help people connect?
4. What does the rule “yes, and” mean, and why is it important?
5. How does staying positive help a conversation or activity?
6. Why might overthinking make communication or improv harder?
7. How can playing games teach real-life skills?

Group Discussion Strategies

Think Pair Share:

1. Individually, student writes down their answer to a question.
2. Students pair up and tell each other their answers.
3. Teacher calls for volunteers to share with the whole class their answer (and/or their partner’s answer). Teacher notes key words/phrases on board.

Round Robin:

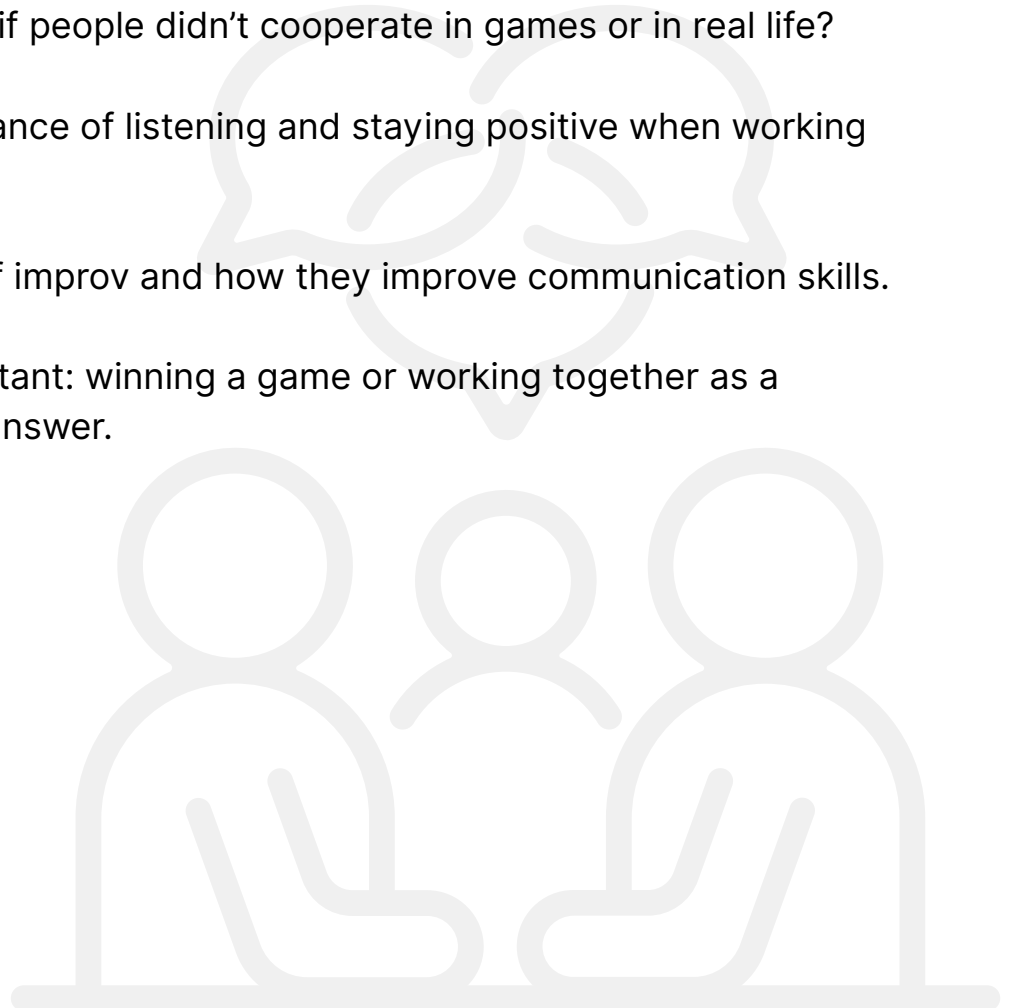
1. Teacher poses one question (written on top of a large page) to students, who are assembled into small groups of 3 or 4.
2. Students take turns brainstorming the answers. The recorder of the group writes down all answers.
3. The leader reads the group’s ideas to the entire class. Teacher moderates.



Writing prompts

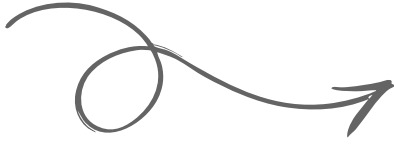
Reflective Journaling Prompts

1. When have you worked as part of a team? What went well or was challenging?
2. How do you feel when people listen to your ideas and build on them?
3. What can you do to be a better teammate or communicator?
4. Why is kindness important when working with others?
5. How can communication help people find common ground, even when they disagree?
6. What would happen if people didn't cooperate in games or in real life?
7. Describe the importance of listening and staying positive when working with others.
8. Describe the rules of improv and how they improve communication skills.
9. Which is more important: winning a game or working together as a team? Defend your answer.





Trust Me, I'm the Expert



Being positive moves things forward.

Improvisation is the act of doing or making something up as you go along without planning ahead of time. Improv can be utilized for self-advocacy skills by assisting in confidence and public speaking, as well as communication, on-the-spot thinking and decision-making.

Listen

to [Part 1: The Art of Improv](#)

Warm-up

Play a [word association warm-up game](#) like the one described in the episode.

Rules for Good Improv

Use these rules to help you create a positive and creative skit:

1. Use "Yes, and...", keeping in mind that it's important not to be negative. Instead, we always say yes to what is happening in the scene and add more information when it is our turn.
2. Act as though you are an expert about what you're talking about, even though you're just pretending.
3. Use what is available and be creative.

Find & Use Props

Find the items on the list to use as props to help you act out the scene:

- | | | |
|--|--|---|
| ☐ something green | ☐ something small | ☐ something common |
| ☐ something soft | ☐ something weird | ☐ something useful |

Set the Stage

Make sure you and your partner/team have room to move comfortably. Put the props or items you collected during your scavenger hunt nearby so you can use them in any scene.

Ready, Set, Go!

Review the rules of improvisation above. Use props and the prompts on the following page to inspire your scenes. Have fun!



Trust Me, I'm the Expert

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Improv Prompts

Use the rules and suggestions on the previous page and the following prompts to inspire your improv scenes. And don't forget to have fun!

For more ideas and suggestions on getting inspired with improv, check out [this website](#).

Superhero Training Camp You are a superhero, learning to use your superpower along with others.	Time Traveler You are using a machine to travel through time to different historical periods. Tell people you are from the future.	Toy Box You are toys who come to life when your child goes to sleep. Who amongst you will be your leader?
Teaching Troubles You are a teacher trying to give a lesson to misbehaving students.	Content Creator You are trying to sell a bad product to your followers.	Job Interview You are at an interview, and you believe you are highly over qualified.
Celebrity Interview You are interviewing a celebrity about their next project and you want them to reveal a secret about it.	Strange Mystery Detective You're detectives solving strange mysteries. You're about to uncover what happened and who caused it.	Friend Drama You are having an argument with a friend and you are both convinced that you are right.



Word Connections Game

Being positive moves things forward.

Listen

to [Part 2: Staying Connected](#)

Consider this common game that helps people have fun and connect with others. To get the most out of playing, it's important to cooperate, be flexible, and try out different things. With teamwork and collaboration, you can create a fun experience.

Word Connections Game

Players take turns saying a word that is related in some way to the previous word.

Example: Music > Guitar > Rock > Concert.

The round can end when players can't think of any more words, or you've reached a decided time limit. Play this original version with at least two other people, then each of the versions below. Record your findings and apply that information to create your own version.

Version 1: Category Connections Say words related to a category. <i>Ex. Category: Feline Animals</i> <i>Mountain Lion > Bobcat > Tiger</i>	What was fun: What I would change:
Version 2: Memory Connections Repeat a chain of words before adding a word. <i>Ex. Player 1: "Tree." Player 2: "Tree, Leaf." Player 3: "Tree, Leaf, Green."</i>	What was fun: What I would change:
Version 3: Silent Connections Use gestures or drawings to play without speaking.	What was fun: What I would change:
My Version: _____ _____ _____ _____ _____	What was fun: What I would change:



Let's Play Games!

Listen

to [Part 3: Community Building](#)

Research

Learn more about traditional ball games and hand games in the “Additional Resources” section.

Play

Practice teamwork and encourage teammates while playing the following games:

Cooperative Challenge Course

Set up simple tasks (passing a ball, building something, solving a puzzle) that can only be completed by working together.

Hand-Clapping Game Practice

Teach or create a clapping rhythm game with a partner to build timing, focus, and nonverbal communication.

Silent Team Challenge

Groups complete a task (like building a tower) without speaking to practice nonverbal communication.

Ancient Game Reenactment

Recreate a simplified version of an ancient ball game (using safe materials) and focus on teamwork and strategy.

Relay Message Game (Chasqui Style)

Players pass a message down a line or across teams to show how communication works over distance.

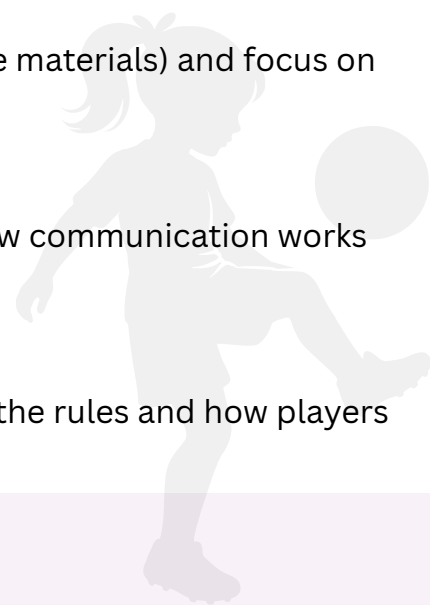
Create Your Own Game

In small groups, invent a game that requires teamwork. Explain the rules and how players cooperate.

Reflect & Discuss

After playing, discuss:

What worked? What was challenging? How did teamwork help?





Additional Resources

[Improv Therapy Group](#)

Find articles about improv and children, as well as exercises and warm-up activities.

[Improv Prompts, Examples, and Exercises](#)

“A bunch of different types of improv prompts, from basic, to-be-expected prompts to way-out-there, never-used-before prompts.”

[Ancient Ball Games](#)

Learn about the original ball games, from *Cuju*, the ancient Chinese ancestor of football, to the modern ceremonial version of Mayan fireball.

[7 Historical Ball Games that Shaped the Ancient World](#)

This article goes into detail about everything from how play actually looked and felt to material science, ceremony and cultural significance.

[Mayan Ball Game](#)

This short article from the Chichen Itza ruins website explains what was known and unknown about one of the earliest forms of organized sport.

[The Chaski: Official Messengers of the Inka Empire](#)

This PDF guide for teachers of grades 4-12 from the National Museum of the American Indian includes maps, articles, discussion questions, and additional resources for learning about the great Inka roads and the messengers that traveled them and held the empire together.

[15 Easy Hand Clapping Games to Teach Your Kids](#)

Basic instructions with video examples.

Videos

[The Ancient Maya Ball Game Explained in 5 Minutes](#)

[Ancient Ball Game: Indigenous game Ulama is Being Practiced Again](#)

This ancient ball game is being revitalized in modern Mexico.

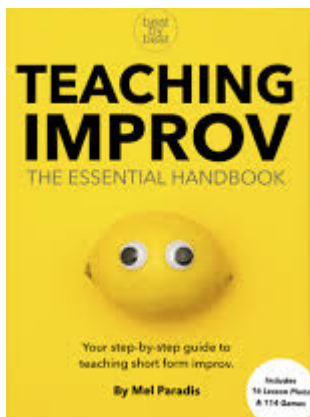
[Tuscaroa Fireball](#)

Watch players of this modern version of an ancient ball game.

[Purépecha ball making \(Uárhukua Ch'anakua\)](#)

This tutorial teaches you how to make a simple ball for practicing a modern version of the ancient Mayan fireball game called *Purépecha*.

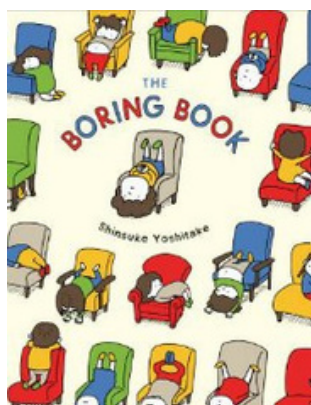
Book List



Teaching Improv: The Essential Handbook

by Mel Paradis

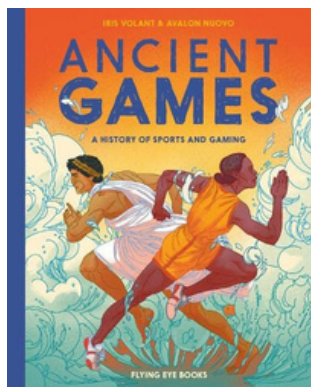
A step-by-step guide to teaching improv to kids and teens. This e-book includes 16 lesson plans.



The Boring Book

by Shinsuke Yoshitake

What makes something boring? How does one react to boredom? Is there a way to keep from being bored? Young readers will explore these questions in this thoughtful picture book.
ages 5-8



Ancient Games: A History of Sports and Gaming

by Iris Volant

Explore the history of games—from the origins of the Olympics to ancient Mesoamerican ballgames—in this engaging book. Discover how Vikings played and the strategies of medieval Japanese sumo wrestlers.
ages 8-12



Hand Clap!

by Sara Bernstein

This book teaches kids the words and movements for a variety of rhymes to be sung by two or more people while rhythmically clapping hands in a pattern.
ages 4-12