Rijeka, Croatia 2026

INSTITUTE OF
YOUTH POWER

GAME LAB+

BOOKLET

Empowering Minds
Through Play

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This booklet is a guide to learning through play, where education meets game design.

Through challenges, rewards, and hands-on exploration, this booklet invites students and educators alike to rethink how learning happens.

It encourages young adults to stay curious, take ownership of their progress, and discover that structured learning can be just as engaging as play.



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NAME OF THE GAME

Uni-mik

GOAL OF THE GAME

To practice communication and description skills by figuring out a hidden identity through questions and creative expression.

HOW TO PLAY?

- On your turn, you draw a card that determines what happens:
- A number card (1, 2, or 3) lets you ask that many questions.
- The forbidden card means you skip your turn.
- The change-way card reverses the order of play.
- To figure out your identity (an animal, a profession, etc.), ask your questions. The other players answer using all of their communicative resources — gestures, sounds, descriptions — without saying the word directly.
- Play continues until each player has guessed who they are.

WHAT IT TEACHES?

Active listening, creative and non-verbal communication, patience, and logical deduction.

MATERIALS NEEDED TO PLAY

Number cards (1, 2, 3), a forbidden card, a change-way card, and identity cards worn so each player can't see their own.

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NAME OF THE GAME

Sheet-ball

GOAL OF THE GAME

To build teamwork, coordination, and quick communication between players through a physical, cooperative challenge.

HOW TO PLAY?

Played in teams of 3v3 up to 5v5. Each team holds a sheet at their own end of the field, held by two people. A goal is scored by throwing the ball into the opposing team's sheet. The sheet can't be folded while held during play, and sheet holders can move but can't rotate their arms — so success depends on the whole team moving and communicating together. Inside the marked 1v1 area, basketball rules apply. The round starts with a jump ball. Once a point is scored, both teams switch the player inside the 1v1 area, so everyone gets a turn in different roles.

WHAT IT TEACHES?

Teamwork, spatial awareness, non-verbal coordination between sheet holders and players, and adapting your role within a group.

MATERIALS NEEDED TO PLAY

Two bedsheets, a ball, and a marked playing area (about 8m long, 3m wide for the central zone).

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NAME OF THE GAME

The Black Sheep

GOAL OF THE GAME

To practice quick thinking, observation, and reading group dynamics in a fun, active setting.

HOW TO PLAY?

- The Black Sheep stands in the middle of a circle of chairs, one chair per seated player, so everyone knows exactly how many spots there are.
- The Black Sheep calls out something people might share, for example: "Everyone wearing black has to exchange places."
- Everyone who matches the trait — including the Black Sheep — must exchange seats with another matching player. Anyone who doesn't match stays in their seat.
- Whoever doesn't find a new seat in time becomes the new Black Sheep, and the game continues.

WHAT IT TEACHES?

Teamwork, spatial awareness, non-verbal coordination between sheet holders and players, and adapting your role within a group.

MATERIALS NEEDED TO PLAY

One chair per person, minus one (for the Black Sheep in the middle).

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NAME OF THE GAME

Human Chess

GOAL OF THE GAME

To practice trust, spatial awareness, and precise communication by navigating blindfolded, guided only by leader's voice.

HOW TO PLAY?

- Two teams of 5 or more play at the same time. Each player is blindfolded and stands on the board.
- Each team has one leader who can see the whole board and stands behind their team, guiding them with spoken directions only — for example, "Nola, take a big step forward."
- Only the leader may speak. Players may move 360° around themselves, but cannot jump — just careful, deliberate steps.
- Each round lasts 10 seconds, so leaders have to think and communicate fast, and players have to listen closely.
- If a player touches an opponent, that opponent is out for the rest of the game.
- The round continues until every opponent has been touched.

WHAT IT TEACHES?

Trust in your teammate, precise verbal communication, active listening under time pressure, and spatial awareness without sight.

MATERIALS NEEDED TO PLAY

Blindfolds, a marked playing area ("the chessboard").

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NAME OF THE GAME

Echo Chain

GOAL OF THE GAME

To practice memory and active listening by building a growing chain of sounds or words as a group.

HOW TO PLAY?

- The first player makes a short sound, gesture, or word (e.g. a clap, a word like "sunshine," or a funny noise).
- The next player repeats it exactly, then adds their own sound, gesture, or word.
- Each player in turn repeats the whole chain from the start before adding something new.
- If someone breaks the chain (forgets or gets the order wrong), the group decides together whether to restart the chain from that point or from the beginning.
- The round ends when the chain becomes too long for anyone to complete, or after an agreed number of rounds.

WHAT IT TEACHES?

Memory, focus, active listening, and group patience.

MATERIALS NEEDED TO PLAY

None — just the group, standing or sitting in a circle.

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NAME OF THE GAME

Blind Sculptor

GOAL OF THE GAME

To build trust and precise verbal communication by recreating a pose using only spoken instructions.

HOW TO PLAY?

- Work in pairs. One player (the "sculptor") looks at a pose or shape made by a third person or shown on a card. The other player (the "clay") is blindfolded.
- The sculptor must guide the clay into the same pose using only words — no touching, no pointing.
- Once the sculptor believes the pose is complete, the blindfold comes off and the pair compares their result to the original.
- Switch roles and try a new pose.

WHAT IT TEACHES?

Precise language, patience, trust, and body awareness.

MATERIALS NEEDED TO PLAY

Blindfold (optional — eyes closed also works).

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NAME OF THE GAME

Color Web

GOAL OF THE GAME

To visualize how a group is connected by building a physical web out of string.

HOW TO PLAY?

- Everyone stands in a circle. One player holds the ball of string, says something about themselves (a fact, an interest, a language they speak), and holds onto the end of the string before tossing the ball to someone else.
- That person shares something too, holds their strand, and tosses the ball onward — never to the same person twice, if possible.
- By the end, the group has created a web connecting everyone.
- Optional: to show how removing one person affects the group, one player can gently let go of their strand and the group observes how the web changes.

WHAT IT TEACHES?

Group awareness, openness in sharing, and understanding how individuals connect within a team.

MATERIALS NEEDED TO PLAY

A ball of string or yarn.

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NAME OF THE GAME

Compass Walk

GOAL OF THE GAME

To build trust and communication skills by guiding a blindfolded partner safely through a space.

HOW TO PLAY?

- Scatter soft obstacles around a defined area. Work in pairs — one player is blindfolded, the other is the guide.
- The guide may only use agreed sound signals (like one clap for "left," two claps for "right," a whistle for "stop") — no touching and no walking directly next to the partner.
- The blindfolded player must cross the space from one end to the other, avoiding obstacles, using only the sound signals.
- Switch roles and try again, perhaps with a new obstacle layout.

WHAT IT TEACHES?

Trust, focus, non-verbal signal systems, and calm communication under uncertainty.

MATERIALS NEEDED TO PLAY

Blindfolds, a few soft obstacles (cones, cushions, bags).

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NAME OF THE GAME

Puzzle Pieces

GOAL OF THE GAME

To practice teamwork and communication by combining separate pieces of information to solve a shared problem.

HOW TO PLAY?

- Before the game, split a picture, phrase, or set of clues into as many pieces as there are players — each player receives only one piece and may not show it to anyone else.
- Players must describe what's on their piece out loud, without showing it, so the group can figure out how the pieces fit together.
- Working only from these descriptions, the group must reconstruct the full picture, phrase, or solution together.
- Once the group agrees on their answer, reveal all the pieces to check.

WHAT IT TEACHES?

Communication, careful listening, patience, and collaborative problem-solving.

MATERIALS NEEDED TO PLAY

A picture, message, or simple puzzle cut into pieces (or written clues split up), one piece per player.

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NAME OF THE GAME

Freeze Frame

GOAL OF THE GAME

To practice creativity and quick group coordination by physically representing an idea without words.

HOW TO PLAY?

- Split into small groups. Each group is given a word or concept (e.g. "friendship," "a busy market," "waiting for a bus").
- Without speaking, the group has a short time (e.g. 30 seconds) to arrange themselves into a frozen "photograph" that represents the idea using only their bodies and expressions.
- Other groups guess what each freeze frame represents.
- Rotate through a few rounds with new words.

WHAT IT TEACHES?

Creativity, non-verbal expression, fast group coordination, and interpreting others' ideas.

MATERIALS NEEDED TO PLAY

A list of words or concepts (can be simple objects, feelings, or scenes).

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NAME OF THE GAME

Whisper Map

GOAL OF THE GAME

To combine trust, memory, and information-sharing by guiding a blindfolded player through a course using directions that no single guide fully knows.

HOW TO PLAY?

- Set up a path with soft obstacles and 3–4 "guides" stationed along it, each holding one card with a single instruction, revealed only when the blindfolded player reaches them.
- The player moves guide to guide, one instruction at a time — no one sees the whole route.
- Each guide passes a short "status word" to the next, like a mini echo chain, so the group tracks progress without seeing the full picture.
- The round ends when the player reaches the final guide.

WHAT IT TEACHES?

Trust, sequencing information across a team, patience, and communicating with only partial knowledge — a mix of guided navigation, relay memory, and information-gap thinking.

MATERIALS NEEDED TO PLAY

Blindfold, soft obstacles, small cards with route instructions.

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NAME OF THE GAME

Tableau Web

GOAL OF THE GAME

To build a story together as a group while physically showing how each part of it connects

HOW TO PLAY?

- The group stands in an open space. One player starts a story with a single sentence (like in a normal story relay), but instead of just speaking, the players involved in that first sentence freeze into a pose showing the scene.
- The next player continues the story with a new sentence, and a new group of players (can include some of the same people) freezes into a pose for that new moment — while someone holds a string connecting the new "scene" to a player from the previous one, showing how the story links together.
- Play continues, sentence by sentence, freeze by freeze, with the string growing into a web connecting every scene of the story.
- At the end, look at the full web together and see if the story can be "read" back just from the shapes and connections.

WHAT IT TEACHES?

Creativity, spontaneous storytelling, physical expression, and understanding how ideas connect and build on one another as a group.

MATERIALS NEEDED TO PLAY

A ball of string or yarn.

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This booklet was created by the participants of the GameLab+ youth exchange. The main activity brought together 24 young people aged 18 to 24 from Croatia, Portugal, Hungary, and Spain, who collaborated, learned, and shared ideas focused on non-formal education through games.



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