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Introduction

Thinking games are designed for children to have fun while exercising their thinking abilities. The games in this book give practice in such skills as planning, drawing inferences, seeing things from other points of view, formulating questions, and thinking of possibilities.

There are already a number of good thinking games available for children to play — chess, Monopoly, Cluedo, etc., and even hide-and-seek, which involves some planning, originality, and seeing things from another person's point of view. This book supplies fifty-four new games, and its companion volume, *Thinking Games 2,* supplies sixty-four more. There were several reasons for creating these new games. The most obvious reason is that children can profit from having many more games available. Not every child likes or has a talent for chess. Other strategy games are needed to provide a range of choices. Moreover, no single game teaches very much. As you play chess you may improve your planning abilities a little bit, but mostly you just become better at playing chess. And so it is with every game.

The games in this book differ from many others in that they are cheap (they either require no special materials or ones that you can easily obtain yourself) and the rules are easy to learn. We have also tried to design the games to avoid dog-eat-dog competition. There is enough competition to generate excitement, but it is frequently competition between teams rather than individuals.

All the games have been thoroughly tested and revised, with different groups of children, so that you can be reasonably sure they will work with children of the appropriate ages. There are quiet games and active games, games for two and games for a classroom-size group to play at once. There are games for all levels of sophistication, including some that adults may enjoy. Games are grouped according to the number of players, and **within each group the first games are for younger children and the later, more challenging games, are for older children.**

Primarily the games were designed for use in school. They can be introduced at odd moments or made a regular part of the curriculum. In try-out schools children played games for about an hour a week, on the average. Some teachers supervised the games rather closely. Others introduced the games and then let children play them independently while other classroom activities were going on. The games can be used equally well at home or with other children's groups.

We have some research evidence to show that children who play the games regularly over the span of a school year improve in creative thinking skills and in their ability to participate in group problem-solving. Some teachers have reported improvements in reasoning abilities, but we have no evidence that this is a typical result. Our guess is that children will have to play thinking games for several years before any basic improvements in reasoning skills will become apparent. But even that is a speculation. The strongest reason, after all, for encouraging children to play thinking games is not to improve their minds but to let them experience the joy of using their minds in play.

CARL BEREITER

Radar

SKILLS: CODING (NONVERBAL).

A player with a bag over his head uses information that other players give him to draw a line to a small circle on the **blackboard.**

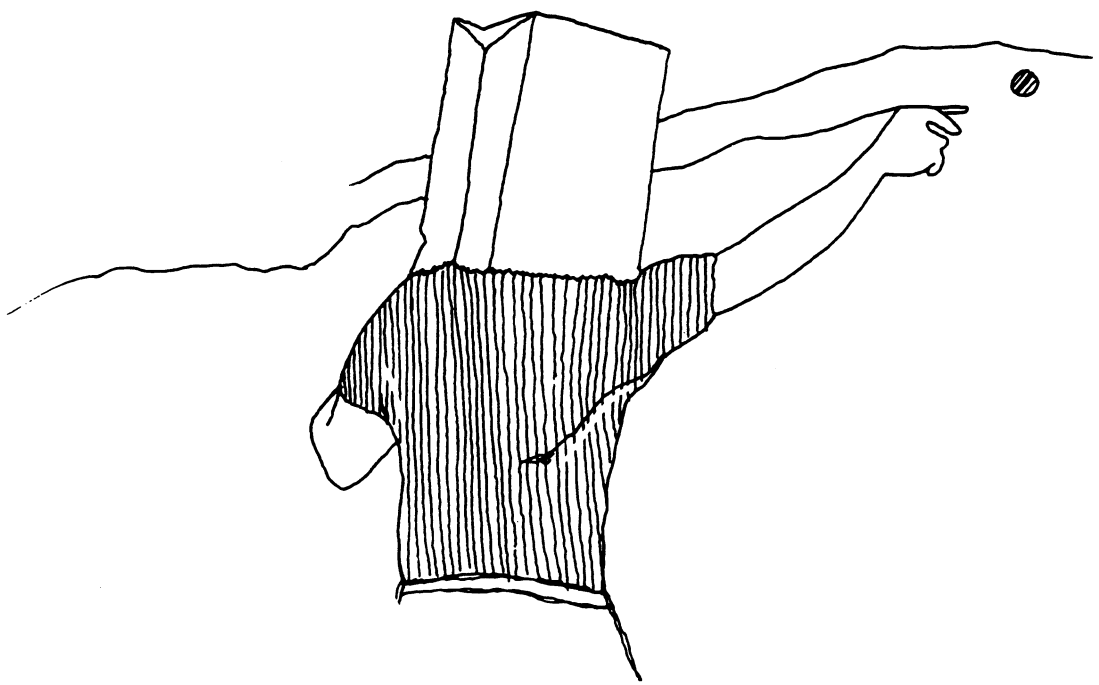
Players: 3 or more.
Materials: **Blackboard**, chalk, and a large paper bag.

Game Procedure

1. A player is chosen who places a paper bag over his head.
2. He is given a piece of chalk and led to the **blackboard.**
3. The other players sit facing the **blackboard.**
4. One player draws a small circle anywhere on the board, keeping its location secret from the player wearing the bag, then sits down.
5. The player wearing the bag draws a line on the **blackboard** and tries to reach the circle that has been drawn.
6. The other players guide him by giving "radar" beeps, beeping slowly when the line is far from the circle and faster as the line comes nearer to the circle.
7. When the circle has been reached, the player wearing the bag chooses another player to wear it, and the game begins again.

Special Considerations

Before playing the game for the first time, players may need practice in beeping slowly and quickly at the right times. Emphasize that beeping should become faster rather than louder.



Touch and Tell

9

SKILLS: IMAGERY, EDUCATED GUESSING.

A blindfolded player must recognize other players by touch.

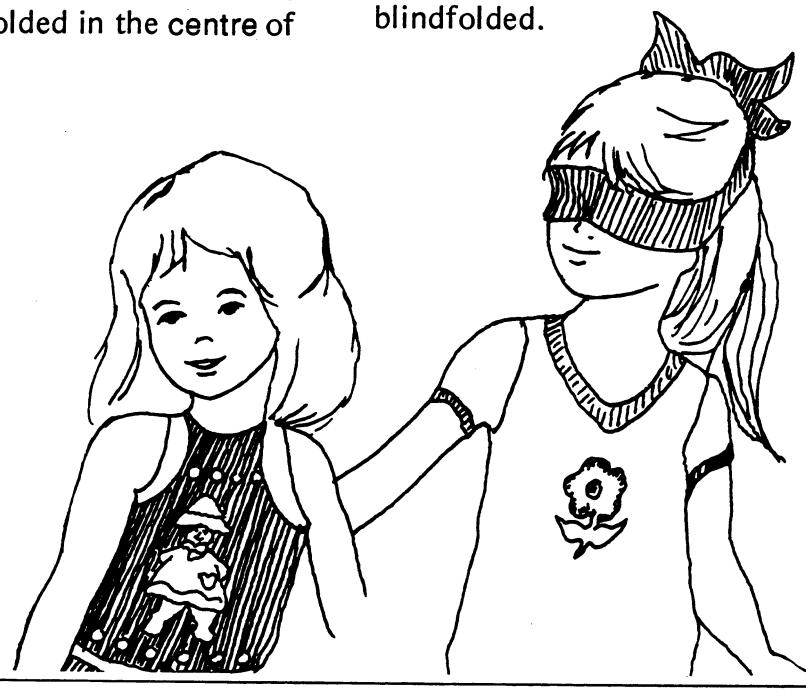
Players: 5 to 12.
Materials: A blindfold.

Game Procedure

1. Players form a large circle.
2. One player is chosen to be blindfolded in the centre of the circle.
3. The rest of the players walk to the right so that the player in the centre will not know their positions in the circle.
4. The blindfolded player walks forward with his arms outstretched until he touches someone.
5. He continues to touch the person until he can guess who it is.
6. He gets two chances to guess.
7. Whether he is correct or incorrect, the person he has touched is next to be blindfolded in the centre of the circle.

Special Considerations

Some players need to be reminded that they can touch the person's face and hair, as well as their body, before they guess who it is. It is also important to stress that players be extremely quiet so that they do not give away their identity by the sound of their voice or laughter. It is often interesting to ask children how they could tell who they were touching.

Variations

The game may also be played in a large open area. One player is blindfolded as above and the others scatter themselves about the room in simple hiding places. When the blindfolded player finds someone, he must guess who it is by touching, and that person is next to be blindfolded.