

## Balls

### *Purpose/Objective*

Balls are playful by nature. Since childhood, we have been taught to have fun with balls—playing catch, dodge ball, 4-square, SPUD, kickball, soccer, and more. They are also terrific teaching and learning tools. The best balls for training should be “S.A.F.E.”:

- 1) **S**oft: They shouldn’t hurt (people or things) when thrown hard.
- 2) **A**esthetically pleasing: They should look fun!
- 3) **F**eel: They should feel delicious to the touch.
- 4) **E**asy: They should be easy to catch.

### *Benefits*

The benefits of using balls in the classroom are almost as numerous as the ways we can use them.

- Create a relaxed playful mindset
- Engage the whole brain – discussions are left-brained. Toys tap into the creative right side.
- Versatility – they can be used for stress relief, games, team selection, and reinforcement.
- Encourage participation – people can’t keep their hands off them!

### *Activities*

#### **Stress relief**

Leave a few balls on learners’ tables so they can pick them up and occupy their hands.

#### **Icebreaker**

At the start of a session, introduce yourself, what you do, something you like about your job, something you don’t like, and a favorite pastime, for example. Then toss the ball to another person and ask them to introduce him or herself in a similar manner. Keep the ball moving around the room until everyone has been introduced.

#### **Lesson Reinforcement and Discussion Summary**

At the close of a discussion or session, tell the group you’re going to throw the ball out to someone and ask them to share a learning point or other relevant comment with the rest of the group. They then pass the ball to someone else, and so on.

#### **Team selection**

Have an assortment of different kinds (or colors) of balls. Have every participant pull a ball out of a bag or box. When all have been distributed, instruct players to find all the people who have similar balls. At the end of the game or exercise, let players take their balls as parting gifts!

## Role Play

Role-playing can be a little anxiety producing for the players. Use balls to make the exercise a bit more fun and less scary. Give the person in the “hot seat” 3 balls. When they get stuck and need a suggestion for what to say (or do) next, invite them to throw a ball to someone for a little help.

## Brainstorming

- Toss a ball from person to person (quickly). Whenever someone catches the ball, they need to throw out a brainstorming idea. Remember, don't mix creation of ideas with evaluation of ideas—the goal is to get as many ideas on paper as possible, and at this pace you might get some fun and funny entries! There will be plenty of time to weed through them later!
- Play “What If.” The goal is to have your group dream up a **success story**. The holder of the ball makes up an opening sentence of the story, then passes the ball to another. The recipient must add sentence to the story, building on what's been said, then pass the ball to another. Play continues until the story comes to a close. Follow up the exercise with a discussion of the story that was woven together by the group.

## Teach Juggling

Introducing a physical challenge is often a useful way to balance the mental challenge that learners experience in class. Frequently, it also results in role reversal—the “pro” is not necessarily the boss or supervisor. This can be incredibly refreshing for individuals who are “lower down on the totem pole.”

## Assigning Roles

Divide your group into teams of three or four. Give each team a ball. Ask them to play “Hot Potato” or “One Potato” to pick a leader, an observer, or a person to “go first.”

*One Potato:* the group passes the ball from player to player while chanting “one potato, two potato, three potato, four, “five potato, six potato, seven potato, more.”  
Whoever has the ball at the end of the chant is “It.”

*Hot Potato:* the facilitator will play music for 7-10 seconds, while the ball is tossed from player to player. When the music stops, the person with the ball is “It.”

## Exercise

Play catch. That's right! When you take a break, ask your group to go outside and play.



## PLEASE SHARE YOUR GREAT IDEAS!

If you use balls in a creative way,  
Please tell us so we can add your idea to this list  
(and give you the credit!!)