

# Pioneer Games

Pioneer children had simple toys and games made out of any available materials such as pebbles, rope, pieces of wood and scraps of material. Dolls were made out of scraps of material and wool. Some toys were made of wood. Many of the games they played are still being played today.

## OUTDOOR FUN (active)

- rolling the hoop
- skipping
- sack races or three-legged races
- tag
- hopscotch
- leapfrog
- hide and seek
- ring toss (or horseshoes)
- swings and teeter-totters

## GROUP GAMES

- “Blind Man’s Bluff”
- “Who has the Button?”
- “Ducks Fly”
- “Simon Says”
- “Drop the Handkerchief”
- “Shadow Tag”
- “Poor Doggie”
- “Fox and Geese”

## INDOOR GAMES (or activities that were not as active)

- spinning tops
- “Jack Straws”
- hand shadows
- “I Spy”
- hot and cold
- charades
- ball and jacks
- marbles
- checkers
- cards
- “Tic Tac Toe ( Xs and Os)”
- “Cat's Cradle (string games)”

**Here are instructions for a few popular pioneer children’s games you may want to try with your students.**

**Blind Man's Bluff** - One person is blindfolded and other players form a circle around him/her. The blindfolded person is turned around a few times then let go to catch one of the players. There are different ways to play the game. One way is that the blindfolded player has to guess who he/she has caught.

**Drop the Handkerchief** - Players join hands and form a circle while the person who is “it” holds a handkerchief and runs around outside the circle. “It” drops the handkerchief behind one of the players and keeps running. The player then picks up the handkerchief and runs around the circle in the opposite direction. They race to see who reaches the empty spot first. The loser becomes the next “it.”

**Ducks Fly** - Players face the leader, who says what to do. Then they copy the actions of the leader. The leader will say “Ducks fly” and flap his arms. The players also flap their arms. The leader continues with other actions like “cats meow,” “dogs bark,” etc. But the leader also tries to trick others by saying “sheep oink.” The players must remain quiet until the leader says it correctly.

**Fox and Geese** - This game is played after a snowfall. First the snow is tramped down in paths to make a big wheel with spokes and a hub in the center. One player is the Fox and the rest are the Geese. The Fox tries to catch a Goose (who then becomes the next Fox). Players must stay inside the paths. If a Goose steps off the path, that Goose is caught. The only safe place for a Goose is in the center (hub). But only one Goose is allowed to be in the center.

**Hot and Cold** - One person (it) leaves the room while the others hide a button (or some other object). When "it" returns he/she has to try and find the button. The others give hints by saying "warm, warmer, hot, or cold, colder, etc."

**Jack Straws** - This game is like "pick up sticks." Straws or very thin sticks were used. The straws were placed in a pile shaped like a haystack or tent (coming to a point at the top and spread out at the bottom). Each player took a turn pulling a straw out of the pile trying not to move any other straws. If a player was able to get a straw without jiggling any other straws he/she scored a point. Then it was the next player's turn. The game ended when the stack fell. The winner was the player with the most straws. To make the game more interesting, there were "special" straws which were worth more points.

**Marbles** - The object of the game is to win marbles from other players. The first player tosses a marble on the ground. The second player tries to hit the marble by tossing his/her marble at it. If the second player is successful, he/she wins the marble. If not successful, the first player has a turn to try and hit the second player's marble. There were many other ways to play "marbles."

**Poor Doggie (or Poor Kitty)** - "It" is the doggie who must try to make someone laugh. The players sit in a circle and Doggie goes to each player and barks, whines and imitates a dog. The players have to pet Doggie and say "Poor Doggie, Poor Doggie, Poor Doggie!" The player must not smile while saying this or he/she will become the next Doggie.

**Rolling the Hoop** - Children would run along beside a hoop, rolling it by using a stick. Sometimes races were held to see who could be the fastest. There were also contests to see who could roll the hoop the farthest or who could keep it rolling for the longest time.

**Shadow Tag** - "It" tries to step on another player's shadow. If a player gets tired of running away, he/she must lie down so "it" cannot tag them.

**Simon Says** - Players face the leader and must do what the leader says. If the leader says "Simon says, *Thumbs up*" and puts up his thumbs, then the players must do the same thing. The leader calls out and does other actions like "Simon says *hop on one foot*" or "Simon says *touch your toes*," etc. But if the leader does not say the words "Simon says" and just says "*jump up and down*," the players should do nothing. Anyone who is tricked by the leader has to become the next leader.

**Who has the Button?** - The players form a circle and the person who is "it" leaves (or closes his/her eyes) while the others pass a "button" or another object around the circle. One person hides the object behind his/her back. All the other players put their hands behind their backs, too. Then "it" is allowed three guesses as to who is hiding the object. If "it" guesses correctly they exchange places and a new person is "it."

Source: Saskatoon Schools, Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, Canada  
Source: <http://www.saskschools.ca/~gregory/fun.html>

