



FUN STUFF



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1 Introduction

[The New England Patriots have a tradition](#): every year, towards the end of training camp, the whole team watches as a rookie lineman attempts to catch a punt. The stakes for this catch attempt are high: if successful, the team earns two curfew-free nights. Over time, this tradition has turned into a spectacle and a complete joy for the team.

This tradition is a great example of why it's important for teams to do fun things together from time-to-time: it build camaraderie and togetherness. As a team member, it's important to get to know your teammates as human beings, not just as athletes. With that in mind, I have created this document to catalogue "fun stuff" that basketball teams can do together to generate comradery, togetherness, and mutual understanding.

2 Basketball Games

2.1 Games with lowered hoops

Turn your players into kids again and get them dunking.

2.2 Half-court shot competition

Miss & you're out. If everyone misses in the same round then you're back in. Go until you have one winner.

2.3 "Granny shot" free throw shooting competition

Rick Berry was great at this. Your players will have fun trying.

2.4 Bring in an opera singer and a guitar

Have your team dribble to the rhythm of the music. Creates a great environment in the gym.

3 Non-basketball games

3.1 "White Sheet" Group Cohesion Game

Group cohesion game: Each team chooses a player. The teams do not know which player they have chosen from the opposing team, as there is the blanket. They can be placed as desired. When they lower the blanket, the first one to say the name of the other adds a point.

3.2 Zip, Zap, Zop

A classic

3.3 “Category” Walking Tag

Everyone is a different name w/in a particular category. Get tagged w/out saying someone else’s category name & you’re out.

3.4 Egg drop challenge

Teams are given some cardboard & tape, need to build an apparatus that holds an egg and drops to the ground w/out the egg breaking.

3.5 Kahoot Quizzes

Have players draw up a play or answer a scouting report quiz – if they do it right, coaches do push-ups. If they do it wrong, players do push-ups. You can also use Kahoot.com to facilitate fun quizzes like this.

3.6 Rock Paper scissors tournaments

Cheer on your teammates

3.7 Home Run Derby

Fun to play with wiffle balls in a gym

3.8 Pumpkin Carving Contest

Good idea to do around Thanksgiving

3.9 Gingerbread House Building Contest

Good idea to do around Christmas

3.10 Puzzle Contest

See which team can complete the puzzle first

3.11 Team Jeopardy

Solicit “answers” about your team members from your team members. Turns out to be a great way to learn about your teammates.

3.12 Telephone

Simple but effective way to teach communication skills. The Navy SEALS do this.

3.13 Duck duck goose

So fun. Can do 1v1 standing, with many games going at once.

3.14 Scavenger hunt

Make taking a picture with the head coach an item on the list.

3.15 Silent line-up games

E.g., you have one minute to line up in order according to how many letters in your name are in ~this~ word. No talking.

3.16 Easter egg hunt in pairs, one person is blindfolded

Great thing to do around easter!

<https://twitter.com/MJTripleThreat/status/1119576677531758592>

3.17 Team dodgeball or team handball

So fun!

3.18 Team waiter tag

Can do with or without dribbling

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=emTLYwcY4tM>

3.19 First correct response wins games

Most recently I have started messaging my players clips of NBA film, and having a “first correct response wins” game with small rewards such as “gold stars”.

3.20 Top chef cooking wars

Teams compete to make the best meal possible. Coaches judge winners.

3.21 Tunnels and Tummies

https://twitter.com/Mr_Longden/status/995403899774398464

3.22 Team board game night

Everyone likes a good board game. Maybe a good January-term event

3.23 Blindfolded pool noodle wars

Several teams. One person on each team is blindfolded, goes into the arena where pool noodles are scattered. Rest of team needs to communicate positioning to their blindfolded teammate. Once the blindfolded teammate obtains a noodle, they need to knock-out the other blindfolded players in the arena by skewering them with the pool noodle. Team of the last blindfolded person standing wins. Very fun game.

3.24 Wild Unknown Animal Spirits

Pull a card from “The Wild Unknown Animal Spirit” deck, a set of illustrated animal archetypes, and ask how the animal resonates. E.g. a pulled swan card might remind you that you need time alone to recharge.

This exercise is meant to be whimsical, fun, and silly.

3.25 Capture the Basketball

Just like capture the flag, but with a basketball instead

3.26 Lego competition

Teams of 3 or 4 build legos with each other. After a set amount of time, coaches judge which lego creation is best.

4 Team Events

4.1 Improv Games

Exercise #1: Gather five to 10 people in a circle and create a new story one word at a time. Go around a dozen times, then stop to check in. Participants quickly learn that they have to balance their own ideas and expectations with those of the ensemble. No one can control the outcome. And words like “the” or “and” are just as important as “tortoise” or “hare.” Seemingly small contributions matter greatly to the whole.

Exercise #2: Two people engage in a conversation about anything, but have to begin every sentence with the words, “thank you.” This underscores a key idea in improv: everything your colleagues offer is a gift about which you should feel grateful. When comedians, or leaders, create an environment that welcomes and values contributions, people are willing to give bolder, more honest comments and take more risks.

Exercise #3: A group makes a circle; one person stands in the middle, eyes closed. Everyone else silently chooses one member of the circle to be the leader, then begins to mimic any body movements he or she makes. The person in the middle opens his or her eyes and tries to determine who the leader is. We use this exercise to reinforce the idea that high-functioning improv ensembles find their leaders by looking for the right person at the right time, not formal titles.

<https://hbr.org/2015/03/3-improv-exercises-that-can-change-the-way-your-team-works>

4.2 Reciprocity Ring

- everyone sits in a circle
- one-by-one, each person makes a specific ask
- if anyone can help, they offer
- and it's the ASKER's job to follow-up

4.3 Idea Circle

Idea ball pass around in a circle and share an idea like in elementary school.

4.4 Team “Coffee Chat” Dates

Especially early in the season, make a schedule so that teammates go on “coffee chat” dates with each other. Good way for players to get to know each other.

4.5 “Your Story”

Good event to introduce new members of the team. Each member of our team shared a photo on a screen and delivered a 60sec story of why that particular photo represented themselves. Some amazing stories. Really get to know your team! Brought everyone together.

4.6 Partner Draw

At a Design Thinking talk for icebreaking, myself and the person next to me drew each other with constant eye-contact. All in one go (without lifting the pen), no looking at the paper. Plenty of laughs right after sharing our pictures. We talked about our interests to sketch out too. It felt very human, really warmed things up

4.7 “Safe Seat” (from Dabo Swinney @ Clemson)

In a team room, create your own version of a psychiatrist’s couch. Put a chair in front of the room and bring folks up, and have them sit in the “safe seat”, the head coach gets it going (e.g. tell me about your dad, or tell me about your family, or tell me what does your future look like to you), and then the players get involved and it becomes a very safe thing and the next thing you know you’ve learned something about your teammate, way more than just about who they are as a player.

4.8 “Biggest Fear” Sharing

Facilitator had everyone write their biggest fear on paper, then crumple it up and throw into the room at the same time. Then, you picked up what was at your feet and threw again. Then a few people read the fears they picked up out loud. Shocking how many people had same fears.

4.9 Team letter writing

Have each team member hand-write a letter to someone who has made a difference in their life. Good exercise to do after New Year’s.

4.10 “Thankful” Card Writing

What you’re thankful for cards about each player by a teammate for Thanksgiving

4.11 Confidence posters

Team building drill we do with our Academy teams:

- Write 3 things you are good at it on the court on your own paper
 - Write something you like about a player on and off the court at every teammates paper
- A lot of kids lack confidence, and this helps a lot with team chemistry

4.12 Unified Sports

Connect with the local branch of this special Olympics program and host an event that is memorable for all.

4.13 Servicing seniors

Lots of ways to service seniors, especially during the holidays.

4.14 Halloween haunted house

Scare the wits out of your team at a local haunted house.

4.15 Team row

Get the crew coach to help you organize a team row. Great way to get everyone “rowing the boat in the same direction” in a novel environment.

4.16 Go to an art museum.

4.17 Dance Class

Bring in a dance teacher to do an introductory class

4.18 Voice Class

Bring in a voice teacher to do a session on using your voice

4.19 Personal Finance Course

Coach JJ teaches an excellent, can't-miss course on managing your personal finances

4.20 Cops and Robbers

This can be a fun game to play at a hotel.

4.21 Pillow Fight

This can be another fun one at a hotel. Just don't break any pillows!

4.22 Dance Circles

Good for gameday @ the hotel or pre-game

4.23 Mini sketches

Give them a topic and/or some props, and have teams create little comedy sketches and perform them.