

Managing groups

This is a general guide to managing groups for TOP Challenge activities. It is expected that teachers will draw on the same experience and judgement they use when grouping children for other subjects and areas of PE, i.e. the ability of the children, their behaviour and the desired outcomes of the activity. However, the children should be encouraged and enabled to work in different groups across tasks so they take on a variety of roles and have a chance to develop a range of skills as a result of experiencing different group dynamics.

Although group numbers have been suggested, all of the activities can be adapted to accommodate smaller or larger groups.

Trust and co-operation

Most of the trust and co-operation activities are undertaken in pairs or small groups. Following an introduction to the whole class, these groups will be able to work simultaneously, with the teacher supervising and facilitating as s/he would during group work activities in the classroom. Reviews may be undertaken by peers in small groups or as whole class reviews.

Team work

Most of the team work activities are best undertaken in small to medium groups. Often groups will be working simultaneously, sometimes in competition or against the clock. For example, for Chicken run and Crossing the swamp, a class can be divided into groups of four - six children spread along the length of a hall, yard or field. Again, reviews may take place within groups, between peer groups or as a whole class.

Medium-size groups (around 8 - 12 children) are probably most effective for Stepping stones, Millipede, Shepherd and sheep, Electric fence and Charlotte's web as the larger group adds complexity and progression to the tasks. Groups may be able to work simultaneously for some tasks (e.g. Stepping stones and Millipede). Where there are space, equipment and/or safety constraints, groups may need to work one at a time or, if working simultaneously in separate spaces, with additional supervision (e.g. from a teaching assistant).

In these cases, there are alternative options for managing a whole class. For example:

- Groups plan simultaneously, take turns to do the activity, are given an observation task whilst the other group(s) take part, then lead reviews of the other group(s) based on their observations.
- Groups are rotated around different activity stations with the teacher stationed at the one that needs closest supervision; rules and scores are kept by the group (with an emphasis on integrity) or by an observer from another group; observers rotate so that they also participate.
- Young leaders from older year groups support the teacher to set-up, observe and review the groups as they work.
- Other adults (e.g. parents, community volunteers) are invited and enabled to support the teacher during activities that need greater supervision.

Danger UXB! can be run as a whole class challenge if there is sufficient space and there are plenty of obstacles.

Navigation

Most of these activities are undertaken in pairs or individually, with the teacher supervising from a central location. Multiple courses can be set up for activities such as What's the score? or Cardinal cones so all of the children can participate at once or in quick succession. Sign up can be run as a competition between small to medium-size groups. Teachers should adhere to the school's policy for allowing children out-of-sight in public areas if, for example, Find that photo or Guiding star are run off-site.

Natural world

Most of these activities are undertaken in pairs or individually within a given area. Teachers should adhere to the school's policy for allowing children out-of-sight in public areas if, for example, Rainbow chips, Skywalk, Scavenger hunt and Surround sound are run off-site. Activities such as Dragon's egg or Bat and moth are best played in medium-size groups – to develop trust and concentration – before trying them in large groups.

As with any PE lesson, it is expected that teachers will undertake a full risk assessment and follow school policies when delivering TOP Challenge activities. However, the children should also be enabled to assess and manage risks through TOP Challenge, preparing them to manage challenges in the wider world.