

Team-Building Activity

Polar Bears and Ice Floes

► Objective

- The entire group must cross from one icefield to another without stepping off the ice floes.
- This activity builds skills such as effective communication, teamwork, and problem solving.

► Playing Area

- Indoors or outdoors
- Distance of ~ 30 metres

► Equipment and Set-up

- Small squares of carpet or foam pads representing ice floes (for a group of 25, use about 16 or 17 to start)
- 4 pylons to indicate the starting and ending areas (icefields)

► Game Explanation

- Ice floes are frozen masses of free-moving saltwater that float on the surface of the sea.
- Polar bears are dependent on ice floes for their survival. They need ice floes in order to travel to find seals and other prey. The decline of seasonal sea ice is putting the survival of Arctic species such as polar bears at high risk. Scientists and climatologists believe that the projected decreases in the polar sea ice as a result of global warming will reduce the polar bear population by 50 to 100 percent over the next half-century.
- The students become a group of polar bears trying to hunt in the Arctic waters and attempt to cross from one shrinking ice field to another using a series of ice floes.

- The carpet squares are the “safe” areas on which the students can stand; if any student steps off an ice floe into the water, then the entire team must go back to the beginning. Students are given the carpet squares and must work together to figure out how best to place them and move on them.
- Once a carpet square is placed on the ground it cannot be shuffled along the floor or picked up while a student is standing on it.
- If a carpet square is left unattended without a student holding it or standing on it, then it is removed by the facilitator and is not returned during the duration of the game.
- The game is complete when all team members have crossed to the new “icefield.”

► Solution

The students lay out the carpet squares one at a time and move forward to place a new square down at the end of the line, making sure that another student is touching the square before moving to the next one to ensure that it is not removed. Once all of the carpet pieces are used, students will need to continue moving forward until all students are on the squares so that the empty square at the end of the line can be picked up and passed to the beginning of the line. This process continues until all students are across to the safe zone.

This activity is adapted from
one that is used with great
results at Hillside Outdoor
Education school, both during
the school year and at its
summer camps.
