

Raccoon Circles

A Handbook for Facilitators
Book II



Teamwork & Teamplay

The Adventure-Based Training Company

Jim Cain, Ph.D.
468 Salmon Creek Road
Brockport, New York 14420

Phone (585) 637-0328
Fax (585) 637-5277
Cellular (607) 227-2246

Email: jimcain@teamworkandteamplay.com
Website: www.teamworkandteamplay.com

Dedication

The first collection of Raccoon Circle activities, published in the fall of 2001 was appropriately dedicated to Dr. Tom Smith, educator, innovator, colleague and friend. This collection of activities was downloaded more than 5000 times during the first four months, from the Teamwork and Teamplay website. With this second collection comes the opportunity to thank some of the many, many friends, colleagues and fellow teambuilding experts that have also taken a 15 foot long section of climbing webbing, and changed just a bit of their world with it.

I'd like to personally thank Chris Cavert, Tom Heck, Rick French, Barry Jolliff, Mike Spiller, Kirk Weisler, Alf Grigg, Michelle Cummings, Clare Marie Hannon and Mike Anderson for adding both value and volume to the steadily growing list of Raccoon Circle activities. And, for those adventure-based educators that I have not had the opportunity to play with yet, I look forward to meeting you and sharing more of the Raccoon Circle world. And, if all goes well, perhaps the above folks will join in helping create the definitive Raccoon Circle activity guide. If you would like to contribute, you can send your ideas to jimcain@teamworkandteamplay.com

Dr. Jim Cain

The Plan Continues

In the spring of 2002, this second volume of Raccoon Circles activities was posted to the Teamwork and Teamplay website, joining the now classic first volume. As with the first volume, you are welcome to download this entire list of activities. All that we ask, is that if you are going to copy this information, use it in a staff manual, pass it out at conferences or workshops, give it as a birthday present to your favorite adventure educator or include it with your graduate dissertation, that you please copy the entire content - which is currently 22 pages. Many folks have worked hard to innovate and compile these activities. We hope you enjoy this collection of nearly 40 activities, and that you will pass along the complete information from the website (safety, background, credits, activities and resources).

This document, Raccoon Circles - A Handbook for Facilitators - Book II, is available for a fee from Adventure Hardware (www.adventurehardware.com Phone 1-800-706-0064), and free of charge, in PDF form, from the following websites:

www.teamworkandteamplay.com - or - www.frontiernet.net/~teamplay



Raccoon Circle Activities - Book II

www.teamworkandteamplay.com

This second volume of Raccoon Circle activities have been created and shared by the facilitators, authors, teachers and adventure-based educators listed at the end of this publication. You are welcome, and in fact, encouraged to copy, freely distribute and share this information in any form (paper copies, electronic media, website links, faxes, etc.) All that we ask is that you copy or reproduce this ENTIRE document of nearly 40 activities, which is presently 22 pages long.

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Raccoon Circle Activities - Book II

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1. The Basics

The Raccoon Circle consists of a single piece of tubular nylon climbing webbing, which can typically be purchased in a variety of colors from outdoor sporting goods stores, and specifically those outdoor stores that carry climbing gear and supplies. While a variety of other belt materials (such as those found at horse tack shops, pet stores and sewing supply stores) and even rope can be substituted, tubular climbing webbing is recommended. Tubular webbing is extremely strong (breaking strength is typically near 6000 pounds tensile loading), comfortable to hold, colorful, and can be easily washed when necessary. Tubular climbing webbing also does not stretch, which makes it a good choice for many of these activities.

The activities listed here are performed with a Raccoon Circle that is approximately 15 feet (4.6 meters) in length. If you wish to accommodate larger groups, you can either join a few Raccoon Circles together with a water knot, or use a single, long Raccoon Circle. For most circular activities, you'll need about 13 inches (about 1/3 meter) of length for each person. Many of the activities in this publication use a Raccoon Circle with no knot (untied), simply as a straight line. For those other activities that need a true circle, the following section illustrates how to tie an important knot, the water knot.

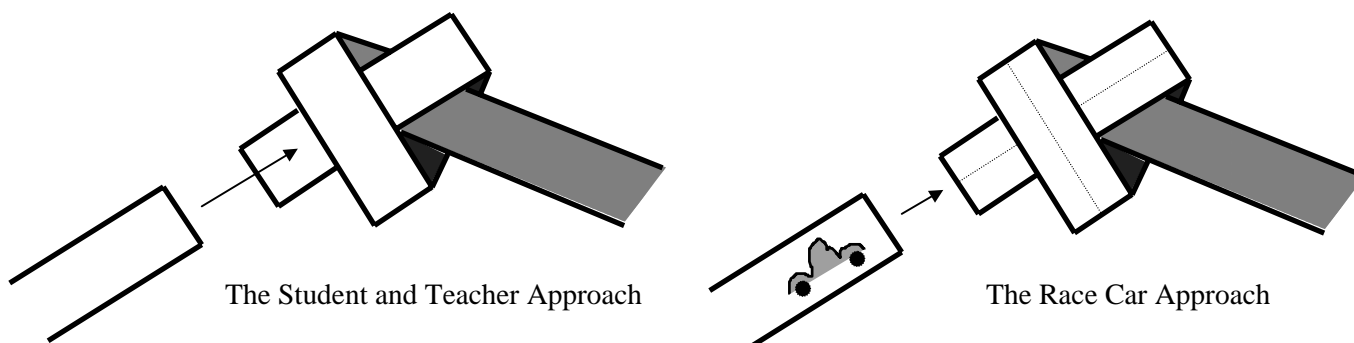
2. Water Knot Tying

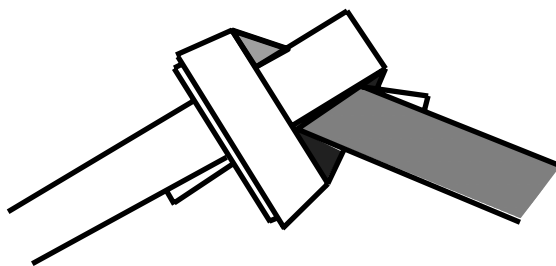
While a variety of knots can be used to tie flat webbing together, the water knot is one of the strongest and best. The "water knot" is so named because river rafting guides use such a knot with flat webbing, so that even when wet, the knot can easily be removed.

My favorite explanation of how to tie a water knot comes from fellow facilitator and friend Kirk Weisler of Utah. See the illustration below for details. Start by tying a simple (but loose) overhand knot in one end of the Raccoon Circle webbing, with a short tail (less than 2 inches is fine). Because of the flat webbing, this overhand knot will remain very flat. This first knot is the "teacher" or "mentor" knot.

Next travel the length of the webbing, unwinding and untwisting the webbing as you go, and hold the opposite end of the webbing. This end is the "student" end of the webbing. The student does everything the teacher does, they just happen to do it backwards. This means that (first), the student looks directly at the teacher (each tail end of the webbing nearly touches). Next, the student "doubles" the teacher by following the same path as the teacher backwards. This involves following the webbing, and finally tucking the student end of the webbing into the teacher knot, leaving about a 1 or 2 inch long tail. Now simply pull the opposite sides of the knot to secure it.

Since some participants may respond to a slightly different learning style, here is another brief method of teaching the water knot. Begin by tying the teacher knot so that the black stitching typically found running down the middle of most colorful webbing can be easily seen. This dashed line looks a bit like the line found running down the middle of many roads. The student end of the webbing is now seen as an automobile (or race car for faster knot makers) which simply needs to drive down the middle of the road to complete this knot.





The Finished Water Knot

3. Target Specifications

Here is an interesting activity in communication and team coordination. The challenge is for a single blindfolded participant (the “pitcher”) to communicate with the remaining members of the team, and successfully throw an object through the Raccoon Circle they are holding (the “strike zone”).

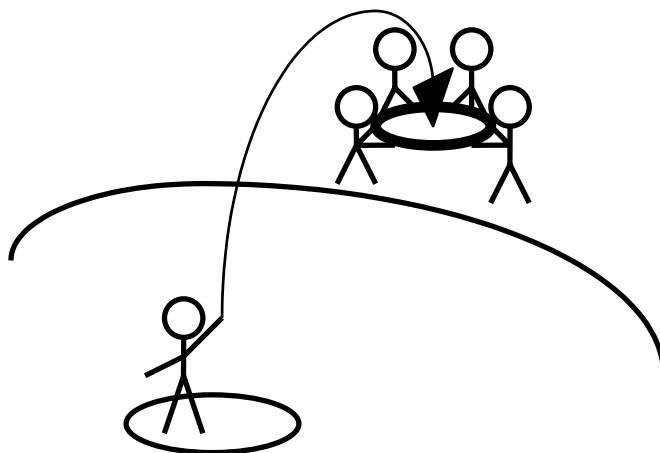
Begin by tying three Raccoon Circles that form different sized circles (i.e. you can either use different length webbing strips, or tie the Raccoon Circles with different length “tails”). You’ll end up with a small (about 3 ft (1 meter) in diameter circle), a medium (4 feet (1.3 meters)) and a large circle (about 5 feet (1.6 meters)).

Next, you’ll need another tied Raccoon Circle to use as the “pitcher’s mound.” Place the pitcher inside the pitcher’s mound, blindfolded, holding a series of soft throwable objects (foam balls, beach balls, a foam noodle, a flexible flying disc, stuffed animals, etc.).

Finally, use several untied Raccoon Circles to form an outer circle, approximately 15-20 feet (5-7 meters) away from the pitcher’s mound (see the graphic below). The “strike zone” team now holds the largest Raccoon Circle, and chooses a position to stand outside the outer circle. They must now communicate to the pitcher their location, and instruct them how far to throw the object.

For a successful pitch (in the “strike zone”), the object needs to pass through the Raccoon Circle, without touching either the team or the Raccoon Circle, and without the team moving their feet.

For some variation, the strike zone team can move to different positions, even farther outside the outer circle, team members and the pitcher can trade places, different size Raccoon Circles can be used, different objects can be tossed, and (my personal favorite), using a rubber chicken, the pitcher can toss the “chicken ball” for which the strike zone team can only make chicken sounds to communicate their location. You can find this activity with even more variations, in the book *Teamwork & Teamplay*, Chapter 4, page 179.



From the Teamwork & Teamplay Website at: www.teamworkandteamplay.com

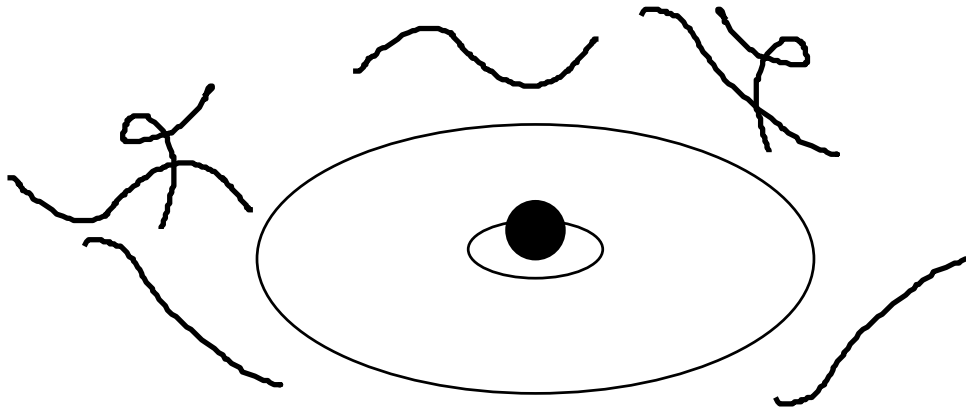
4. The Giant Texas Lizard Egg

Thanks to Sam Sikes for this interesting activity, from his book “Feeding the Zircon Gorilla - and other team building activities” ISBN 0-964541-0-5. For this unique problem solving activity, you’ll need several (about a dozen) untied Raccoon Circles, one regular size (tied) Raccoon Circle, four pieces of webbing tied into one large Raccoon Circle, and a Bowling Ball. An illustration of this setup is shown on the next page.

4. The Giant Texas Lizard Egg - Continued

Place the Giant Texas Lizard Egg (the bowling ball) in the center Raccoon Circle. The challenge is now for the participants to find a technique for removing the Giant Texas Lizard Egg from the central Raccoon Circle (the “nest”), completely outside the larger circle, without allowing the bowling ball to touch the ground in the space between the inner Raccoon Circle and the larger outer circle. The participants have a dozen untied Raccoon Circles as resources to accomplish this task.

Encourage the participants to be careful when transporting the Giant Texas Lizard Egg. As a consequence to dropping the Giant Texas Lizard Egg or allowing the bowling ball to touch the ground in the space between the central and outside circles, the participants can be asked to give up one untied Raccoon Circle resource for any “errors.” For inclusion, the facilitator can also require that all participants must be touching (or connected or somehow attached) to the Raccoon Circles when lifting the Giant Texas Lizard Egg from the inner circle.



Typical solutions for this initiative include creating some sort of basket, ring or hoop with one Raccoon Circle, and attaching the remaining webbing as “handles” and/or forming a type of channel or bridge to transport the ball, and using another Raccoon Circle or two to roll the ball along this path.

5. Human Knot - The Easy Way

One technique for increasing the number of participants that are able to join hands for the human knot initiative, is to extend their reach via several Raccoon Circles. This is also a great technique if you happen to have some ‘less than 15 foot lengths of Raccoon Circle webbing,’ although even full length, untied Raccoon Circles will work. It is also a great method of extending the comfort level of participants by creating a bit more space between participants, and allowing a bit more freedom of movement with assuming difficult positions. And finally, having multiple Raccoon Circles with different colors assists the problem solving method by making it a bit more obvious which piece of webbing needs to be moved to help the group be successful.

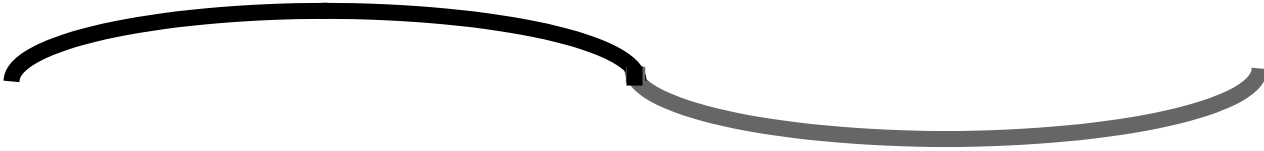
It is possible to gather about 8-12 participants conveniently together to perform the Human Knot initiative when holding hands. Typically this will bring most groups snugly together, and shoulder to shoulder. By using untied Raccoon Circles between participants, the available space between participants is greatly increased.

It is also possible to set up this initiative in advance, before the participants arrive. This can be accomplished by placing one untied Raccoon Circle per participant on the ground, and then having participants approach this collection of Raccoon Circles and take hold of two separate pieces of webbing. Now the challenge of unwinding this mess and forming a circle can begin.

For more complex, but similar initiatives, read Section 6 (below), The Octopus, and Section 32, It’s KNOT Our Problem.

6. The Octopus

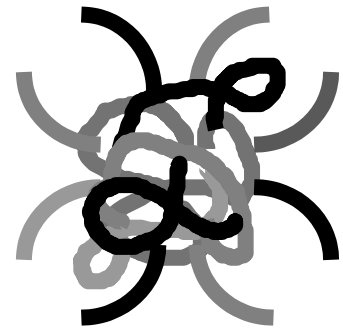
I first encountered this activity from some friends in Europe. It is an interesting problem solving activity, and an even more interesting method for finding a partner. The Octopus is a great big tangled mess of Raccoon Circles, and here is how you create this activity.



First, take two untied Raccoon Circle pieces of webbing, and (using one water knot) tie these two pieces together to form one long piece of webbing. These two pieces of webbing can be different colors, or the same color, but a collection of each style is best (i.e. some long pieces of webbing with different colors of webbing, some with the same color). You'll need one piece of webbing for each person in the group (or one long "joined" piece of webbing for every two participants).

Next, take several of these long (joined) pieces of webbing, and tangle, twist, spiral, loop and basically make spaghetti of them (be sure not to tie difficult to remove knots in this webbing mess), leaving about 1 foot of each piece of webbing visible outside the pile, so that participants have a place to grasp the webbing at the start of the activity.

The challenge is now for participants to work together to unravel this mess, without letting go of the piece of webbing that they are holding, and ultimately discover which person in the group is holding the other end of their piece of webbing. Untangling the rope is allowed, however, untying the knots joining the two pieces of webbing together is not allowed.



From the Teamwork & Teamplay Website at www.teamworkandteamplay.com

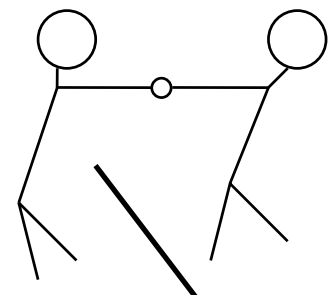
7. Cross the Line

This activity requires a single untied Raccoon Circle, stretched into a straight line. With half of the group on one side of the line and standing about 6 feet (2 meters) behind the line, and the other half of the team on the other side, the scene is set for a moment of conflict (of "us" vs. "them"). Make no mistake, this Raccoon Circle activity is a bit higher level than most, but it is excellent for setting the stage to talk about conflict, negotiation and win/win, win/lose, and lose/lose scenarios.

Tom Heck calls this activity, "Their Ain't No Flies On Me!", and begins this activity by having one side say, "There ain't no flies on me, there ain't no flies on me, there might be flies on you (point to folks on the other side), but there ain't no flies on me!", and then boldly take a step towards the line (with just the right amount of attitude). The other side now replies, "there ain't no flies on me, there ain't no flies on me, there might be flies on you, but there ain't no flies on me!", and takes a step towards the line. The first side now repeats, and moves to the line, followed by the second side repeating their lines, and stepping face to face with the other side.

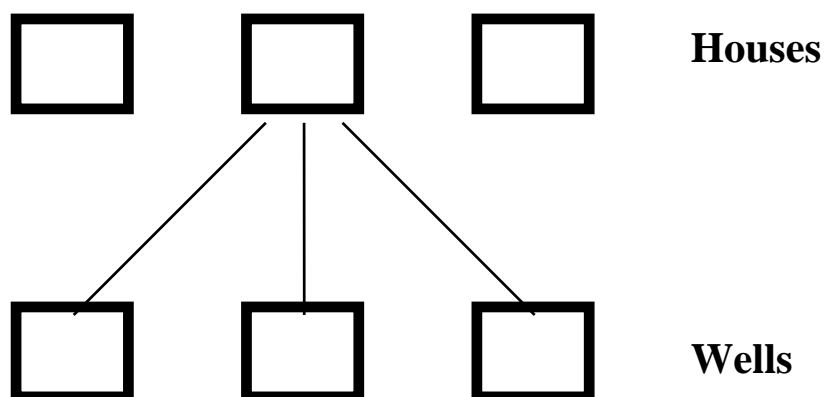
Now the facilitator says, "you have 10 seconds to get the person across the line from you onto your side of the line!"

Typically, this phrasing results in a rather quick tug of war between partners, and usually a physical solution (for one person at least) to the challenge. Leaving open a major opportunity to discuss conflict, challenge, attitude, negotiation, and how to resolve differences between people.

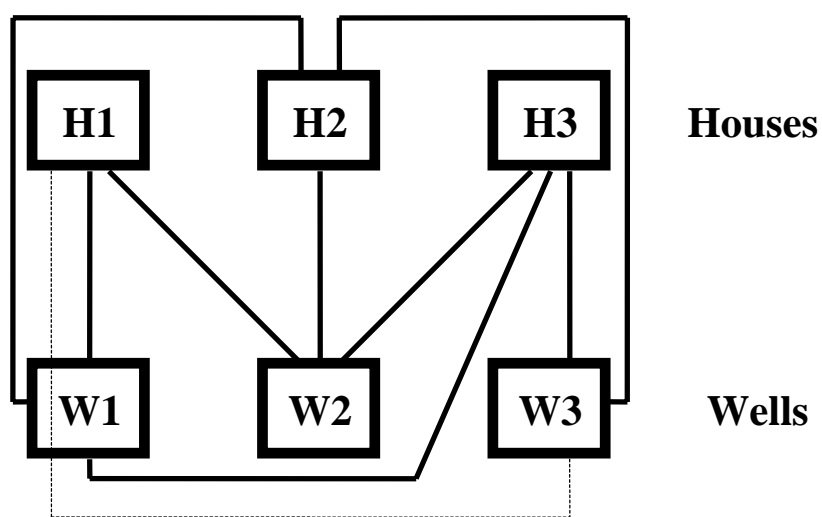


8. Villages and Wells

Here is a classic puzzle from the 19th century, that is also found in the book *Teamwork & Teamplay*, Chapter 4, page 198. The challenge in this problem solving activity, using 9 untied Raccoon Circles, is to create connections between each of the three houses, and the three water wells in the nearby space. For those that like “stories” for such activities, imagine that the residents of each house are friendly neighbors, but are worried about the possibility of a water shortage in the coming dry season. As neighbors, they are all willing to work together to find a solution, by making sure that each of their houses is connected to each of the three wells, but that none of the lines are crossed. One house below has been connected to the three wells. The task or challenge is for the group to find a method for connecting the other two houses to the wells. You might want to use bricks, wooden blocks, books, or any other small square objects to mark the three houses and three wells, as shown here:

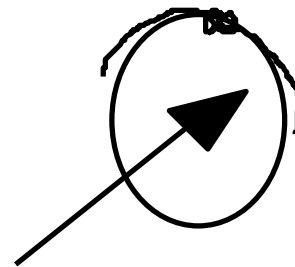


One possible solution (although not the only one, especially for a creative group that is willing to “bend the rules” a bit) is shown below. This “solution” requires some creativity to keep the water lines from crossing. In this case, one of the lines must either pass through one of the wells, or one of the houses, thus connecting all the other wells and houses, without crossing any water lines!



9. Worm Hole

Here is a simple activity in goal setting, challenge, cooperation, and group problem solving. Begin by having the group first decide on the size of circle they will form out of their Raccoon Circle. Big circles are easiest, smaller circles are more challenging. The objective or challenge here is for everyone in the group, working with a partner, to successfully pass through the Raccoon Circle “Worm Hole” without touching the webbing as they pass through.



Partners are required to be in contact with each other as they pass through the worm hole. Fellow team members can assist the pair going through the worm hole by holding the Raccoon Circle for them, BUT, once a person has held the Raccoon Circle and then let go completely, they cannot hold the Raccoon Circle again (this encourages different participants to take a leadership role during the activity). Should participants make contact with the Raccoon Circle during their passage through the worm hole, one of the helpers holding the Raccoon Circle must let go once the pair has made it through. For this activity, you can either tie different size circles from the same long piece of webbing, or you may choose to have several lengths of webbing for different size circles.

The chart shown here gives a relative conversion between the original length of webbing and the diameter of Raccoon Circle that can be created - allowing about 1 foot of the length for the knot and the “tails.”

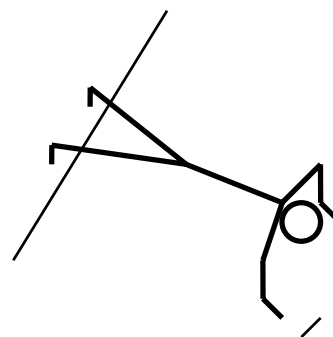
You can find this activity, along with a more detailed set of instructions and possible variations in the book, *Teamwork & Teamplay*, Chapter 4, page 206.

Length of Webbing		Raccoon Circle Diameter	
Feet	(meters)	Feet	(meters)
15	4.6	4.5	1.4
12	3.7	3.5	1.1
10	3.0	2.9	0.9
8	2.4	2.2	0.7
6	1.8	1.6	0.5

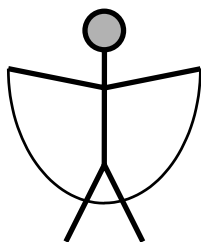
From the Teamwork & Teamplay Website at www.teamworkandteamplay.com

10. Pencil Pushers

Don't be fooled, this simple activity is extremely physically challenging. Stretch an untied Raccoon Circle into a line. This is the starting point. The challenge now is for teams of two to four participants to push a new, unsharpened pencil over the line, and across the floor, making contact with only their hands on the floor. This challenge typically results in the group forming some type of human bridge, with the first person's feet just behind the line, and other team members climbing over them as they extend the bridge. The winners are those that push the pencil the furthest distance, and still are able to return behind the line, without touching the floor in front of the line with anything but their hands.



11. Knot By Myself

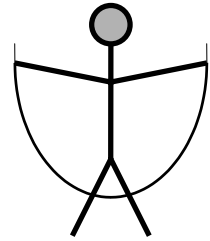


This old parlor trick has two rather unique solutions, one true, and one involving slight of hand. The challenge or trick here is to pick up an untied Raccoon Circle, and then tie an overhand knot in the webbing, without letting go of the webbing. While it is possible to perform this trick with a full length Raccoon Circle, it is a bit easier with a 6 foot long piece of webbing (Raccoon Circle Junior).

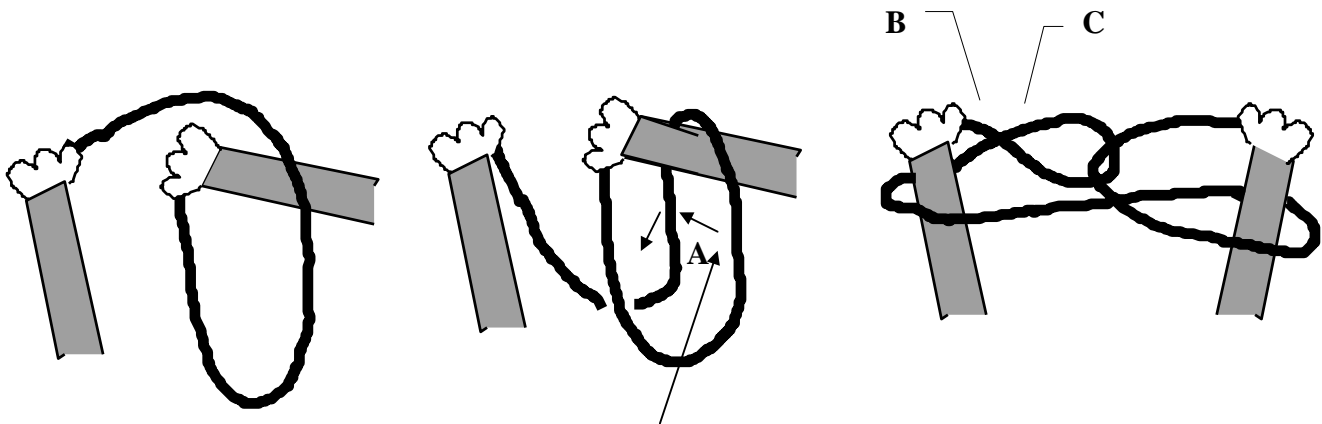
First of all, if you happen to pick up the webbing as shown in the illustration to the left, it is pretty unlikely that you'll be able to tie an overhand knot without letting go of the webbing. The secret for technique number one, is to first cross your arms, and then pick up the webbing. Then, by simply uncrossing your arms, you'll tie an overhand knot.

11. Knot By Myself - Continued

Technique number two requires a bit more work, and some practice to make this slight of hand version look authentic. I first learned this version from Sam Sikes of Learning Unlimited. Begin by holding the webbing as shown, with about 4 inches of webbing over the top of each hand. The illustrations shown below are pictures of what your hands should look like as you execute this trick. This, however, is not an easy trick to explain here. If you would like a visual explanation, look up Sam Sikes or Jim Cain at their next conference appearance.



After grasping the Raccoon Circle, loop the left hand over the right hand to form a “window” with the webbing. Next pass the left hand through this window, behind the part of the webbing marked “A” and then back out of the window. Now move the left and right hands away from each other.



If you pull the left and right hands apart now, no knot. The secret move is to take the left hand, and switch the position where it is holding the webbing, from the segment of the webbing marked B to the segment marked C. This is accomplished by dropping the center of the webbing down, and moving the contact point with the left hand from the end of the webbing, to about 1 foot inward (i.e. from point B to point C). The result is an overhand knot.

From the Teamwork & Teamplay Website at www.teamworkandteamplay.com

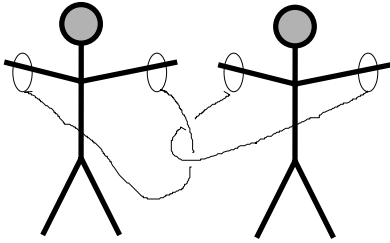
12. Line Up

This activity is a modification of one that Chris Cavert shared. Begin by creating a straight line with an untied Raccoon Circle. Next, shuffle a deck of ordinary playing cards, and give one to each participant, face down. When told to begin, time the group with a stopwatch, as they attempt to line up in order, based on their playing card. This self directed work team will need to define what “in order” means, and how to complete the task. When completed, check for accuracy, and report the time to the group. Collect the cards, shuffle only these cards, and pass them out again to the group, and ask them to establish a new time goal to again complete the task (with the same cards, but potentially with a new person holding a different card).

The team does need to establish such order as where the Ace of Hearts goes. Does it go first, because a 1 is low, or first because Ace begins with an “A”, or last because an Ace is the highest card in the deck?

Other cards that can be created from blank index cards include: animals (placed in order by name, size, weight), nouns (alphabetical order, size of the object they represent), vehicles (number of wheels, number of passengers they can carry, relative cost), or any other objects or items that have some natural order, rank or sequence (like hours of the day: 6:15am, 0700, 12 noon, 13:20, 5 pm and 2300 hours).

13. Handcuffs and Shackles

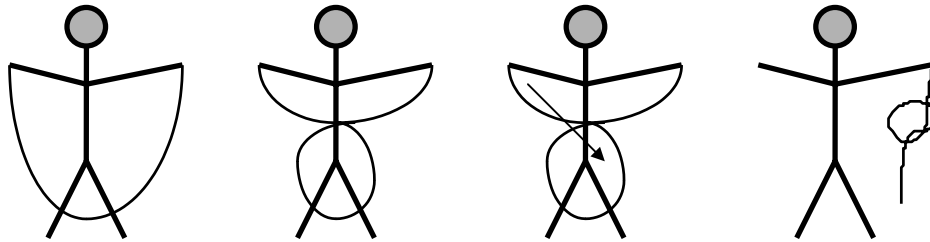


This activity can be found in the book, *Teamwork & Teamplay*, on page 105. Using a full length Raccoon Circle, or even a half length segment of webbing, create a pair of webbing “handcuffs” by tying loops in the end of each piece of webbing. Now place your hands into these handcuffs, and with a partner, connect your handcuffs to theirs, as shown here. The challenge is become disconnected from your partner, without removing your hands from the handcuffs or untying the knots. The classic solution to this challenge involves passing your handcuffs through the wrist loop of your partner.

14. Throwing Knots

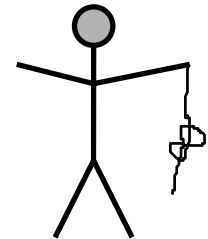
Here is a solo activity that can fill the time you spend waiting for the bus, or waiting for the rest of the hikers to catch up with the leaders, or waiting for the teambuilding program to start...

The challenge here is to learn how to “throw” various knots into a straight piece of webbing. An entire Raccoon Circle is fine, but this activity also works well with only about 3 feet (1 meter) of webbing or rope.



A simple knot to begin with is a standard overhand knot. Begin by holding the webbing in both hands, as shown above. Move both hands together to create a twist in the webbing, and finally throw one end of the webbing through this twisted loop, to form an overhand knot.

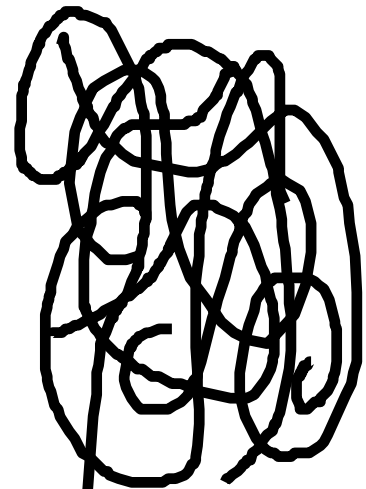
For a second knot, although not the simplest, try the Figure 8. Holding the webbing or rope in both hands, so that it droops in the middle, and forms the letter “U.” Next, create a twist in the webbing, by twirling. Finally, throw one end of the webbing through the opening in the lower portion of the twirled Raccoon Circle. The result should be a Thrown Figure 8. This knot requires one more twisted loop than the overhand knot. With a bit of practice, you should be able to “throw” a successful knot every time.



From the *Teamwork & Teamplay* Website at www.teamworkandteamplay.com

15. Spaghetti

Here is a consensus building activity that comes in three different levels. The challenge here is for the group to decide how many different Raccoon Circles are present. Level One - Begin using several different colors of webbing. Since this level of “challenge” is actually quite simple, this first level should be used to discuss how the group will know when they’ve reached consensus, how to solve a problem as a group, and how to listen to each member of the group. Level Two involves making a giant plate of spaghetti with several (typically about 5 or 6) different lengths of the same color Raccoon Circle. At this level, the various pieces of Raccoon Circle should still have each of their untied ends easily visible. Level Three Spaghetti has a slightly different number of same color Raccoon Circles, but this time, the ends are hidden, knotted together, and otherwise more challenging to discover. The goal in each case is for the group to reach a correct consensus as to the true number of individual Raccoon Circles present in the spaghetti pile.



16. Interference

Here is a communication challenge from Tom Heck that is loud and playful, but still carries a significant message about how we communicate. Using two untied Raccoon Circles as boundary lines, create the activity space shown below. In this space, the “senders” occupy the left “endzone,” the “interferers” occupy the middle space, and the “receiver” occupy the right “endzone.” The challenge is now for the senders to verbally or visually communicate a message to the receivers, while the interferers in the center region attempt to disrupt the message, distract the senders or receivers, and basically add a great deal of chaos, noise and confusion to the activity.



After 30 seconds, the receivers are asked for the message. Then the three distinct groups switch to new roles (interferers become receivers, receivers become senders, senders become interferers) and a new message is delivered. Typical messages might include:

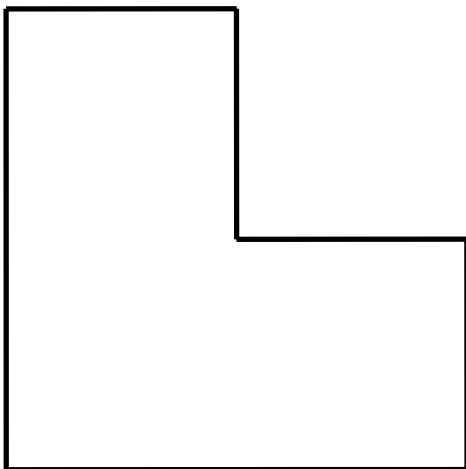
In order to listen, you must first become quiet.

Somewhere on the ocean, there is a tree, that remembers it was a ship.

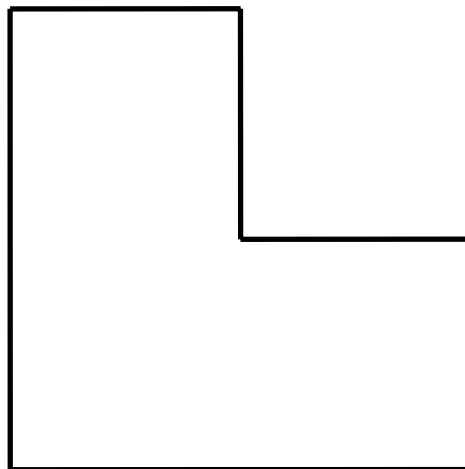
The best things in life, are not things.

17. Real Estate Puzzles

There are dozens of geometric puzzles, some which date back to the 1800's, that ask participants to sub-divide an unusually shaped piece of property into a set number of pieces or plots. Below are shown a few such shapes, with their challenges, and possible solutions. Use several Raccoon Circles (or perhaps sidewalk chalk or masking tape) to define the property boundaries, and newspaper, newsprint, cardboard or even other Raccoon Circles as the method for creating the sub-divided spaces.

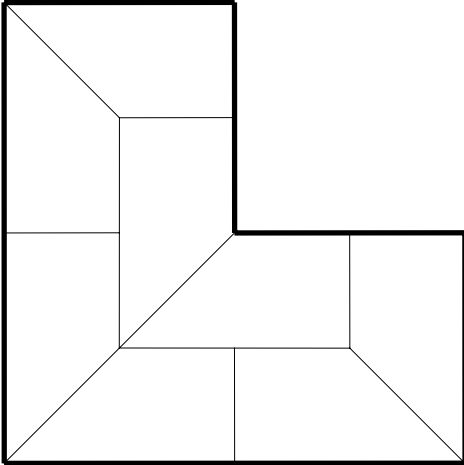


Divide the above shape into eight equal size and identical shapes.

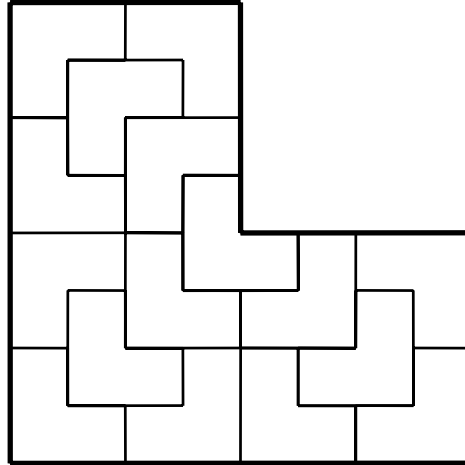


Divide the above shape into thirteen (13) equal size and identical shapes, that are also identical to the shape of the entire area.

17. Real Estate Puzzles - Continued



Divide the above shape into eight equal size and identical shapes.



Divide the above shape into thirteen (13) equal size and identical shapes, that are also identical to the shape of the entire area.

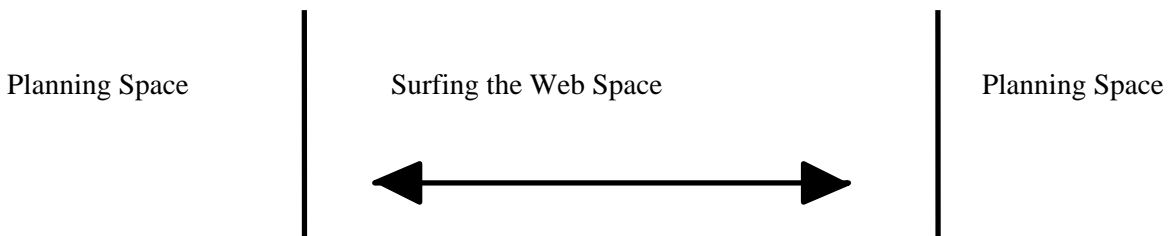
18. All Aboard

Place a single Raccoon Circle on the floor, and like the wooden platforms typically used for this activity, ask all participants in a group to stand inside the circle, long enough to sing one verse of “Row, row, row your boat.” Begin with a full length Raccoon Circle (15 feet - 4.6 meters), tied with a water knot as the first size circle. Then have several other lengths of Raccoon Circles ready to additionally challenge the group (or you can simply tie other full length Raccoon Circles with water knots that have progressively longer tails - which will create smaller and smaller circles). You can find a longer description of this activity in the book, *Teamwork & Teamplay*, on page 70.

19. Surfing the Web

Chris Cavert created this simple problem solving activity that challenges a group to find multiple techniques for solving the same problem. The challenge is as follows: using only an initially tied Raccoon Circle, teams of 4 participants are asked to cross over an area, marked by lines, boundaries, or untied Raccoon Circles, crossing as many times as possible in 5 minutes, using as many different styles to cross the area as they can. Any portion of a team member (hand, foot, etc.) may touch the ground within the area, provided that it is also touching a portion of the Raccoon Circle at the same time. For example, if the first group of four decides to use the Raccoon Circle loop like the tread of a bulldozer, they can step on the floor, provided that they always have the Raccoon Circle below at least a portion of their foot.

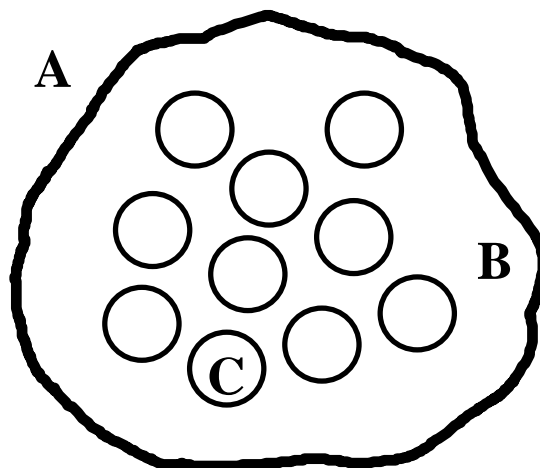
While many teams of 4 work independently on this task, some will see the opportunity to collaborate with neighboring teams, and work together. The typical spacing between the borders of the area is approximately 15-20 feet (5-6 meters). This is an interesting activity to see just how many possible solutions the entire group can find to the challenge.



20. Fill In

For this activity from Chris Cavert, you'll need one very large Raccoon Circle (which can be tied with multiple water knots from 6 standard length Raccoon Circles), and one smaller circle for each participant. A 7 foot long (2.1 meter) length of webbing will produce a 23 inch (0.6 meter) diameter circle, which is the right size for an adult.

Participants begin outside the largest circle (Area A), where they are allowed to have their eyes open. Next, they walk inside the large circle and place their "personal" circles near one another in the middle, then exit the large circle. The object is for everyone to find their inner "personal" circle, and occupy it, without touching anyone else in the process. Once a participant has walked inside the large circle, they must close their eyes. Once they are inside their personal circle, they cannot talk (although other forms of auditory sounds can be used). Time the group to see how long it takes for the entire group to successfully reach their circle without contacting others. Add 5 seconds penalty for each contact.



Region A **Eyes Open,
Talking Allowed**

Region B **Eyes Closed,
Talking Allowed**

Region C **Eyes Open,**

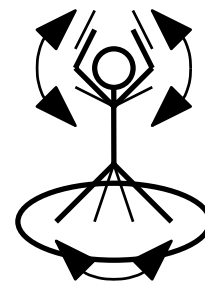
From the Teamwork & Teamplay Website at: www.teamworkandteamplay.com

21. Zoom !

Here are three variations of the group activity "warp speed" where participants attempt to "move" something around the circle, as quickly as possible. Begin with a full-sized Raccoon Circle, with all participants holding onto the webbing. In this first version, the knot in the webbing becomes the object that is passed around the circle, and timed with a stopwatch. The challenge or goal is to see if the group can creatively problem solve a technique for reducing the amount of time required for the knot to traverse one revolution of the circle. Version 2 involves one person in the group clapping, and passing this clap around the circle, with each participant clapping once. Version 3 eliminates the tactile passing of the knot or clap, and replaces them with each person saying Zoom, for a verbal version of this activity.

22. Taking Charge

This event is both a warm-up activity, and an opportunity for leadership within the group. Place a Raccoon Circle at the center of a group. As facilitator, begin the activity by standing in the center, and informing the group that the person standing in this position has the power to lead the group. The music "I've got the power" can be used, or some other motivational, athletic, or inspirational music. Begin with some stretching motions, such as arm circles, neck rolls, or leg stretches. Then progressively begin using more complicated motions, such as jumping jacks, where typically someone else will find the motivation to say "I've Got the Power," or "I'm Taking Charge!" and lead the group into another stretching movement. Continue for the length of the song.

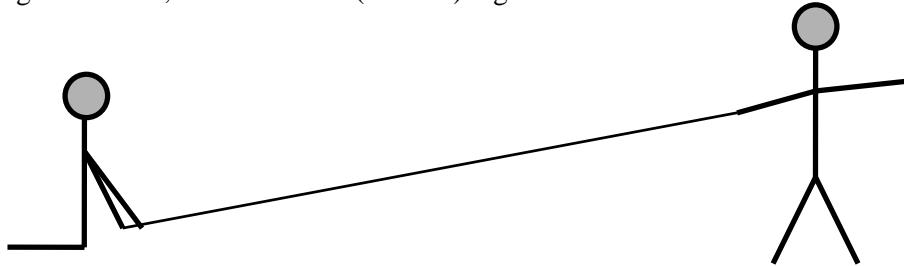


23. A Circular Story

Here is an activity similar to "one word stories" in which a Raccoon Circle is used to determine who will continue the story. With all group members holding onto a Raccoon Circle, the story begins with the person presently nearest the knot. As they begin talking, the knot begins to be passed around the circle. When the person talking stops moving the Raccoon Circle, the person nearest the knot continues the story from that point, and resumes moving the Raccoon Circle the opposite direction.

24. United We Stand

Here is a creative problem solving challenge that requires some skill, balance, and having group members choose their own level of commitment and challenge to the group. The goal is for the entire group to stand side-by-side, and cross the line in unison, taking a single step together (not a jump!), without anyone touching the line in the process. Two participants (or facilitators) are chosen to hold the ends of the untied Raccoon Circle at a challenging slope, ranging from ground level, to about 3 feet (1 meter) high.



From the Teamwork & Teamplay Website at www.teamworkandteamplay.com

25. The Alphabet and More

Using a Raccoon Circle, with all member of the group holding on, form the following letters, numbers and shapes as quickly as possible.

A, B, C ... X, Y, Z
1, 2, 3 ... ?, @, &

26. Tie Us All Together

Thanks to Alf Grigg of Willowdale, Ontario, Canada for showing us how old ties (those men's ties that have gone seriously out of fashion) can be used to create community, and build teams. In fact, Alf has a brief book on the subject. You'll find his contact information in the resources section of this publication.

In this case ties, or 3 foot (1 meter) long segments of Raccoon Circle webbing can be used to create groups, and perform several group tasks (such as "The Alphabet and More" shown above). Begin with a collection of ties or the short Raccoon Circle segments mentioned above. First group together with other participants holding the same color of webbing. Other suitable configurations include one participant of each color webbing. Next, the group can use a water knot to tie their webbing segments together (a simple overhand knot works for the ties). This simple activity also works at the completion of a program, or closing activity, where all participants tie themselves together with the rest of the audience.

27. This is Not a Raccoon Circle, it is a ...

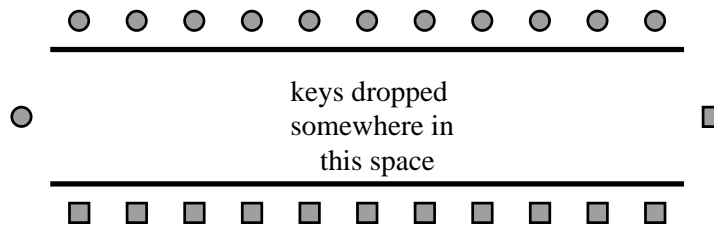
I originally witnessed Mike Spiller leading this activity, using foam "noodles" at the Texas TERA conference in 2001. In this variation, participants stand in a large circle passing around both tied and untied Raccoon Circles. The goal is for participants to invent a new idea for the Raccoon Circle and tell their neighbor about this. For example (while showing my neighbor an untied Raccoon Circle), "this is not a Raccoon Circle, it is my belt, and I just lost 200 pounds!" Or perhaps, "this is not a Raccoon Circle, it is a climbing rope for my ascent of the shortest peak in Kansas!" The neighbor can then either pass on this same idea, or make up a new one.

28. Props

This activity requires about three items to be placed in the center of a group of participants. Typical items include: an untied Raccoon Circle, an oven mitt or large glove, a tennis ball, a yardstick or broom handle. This activity is often used in Theatre Sports or improvisation classes as a technique for improvising with common objects, as they become extraordinary props. For example, the oven mitt, stick and ball could become an imaginary baseball game, with a catcher's mitt, baseball and bat (which would need three people to create). The Raccoon Circle could become the throwing circle for a track and field discus thrower as they unwind a record breaking throw. Use your imagination and have fun.

29. The Keys to Communication

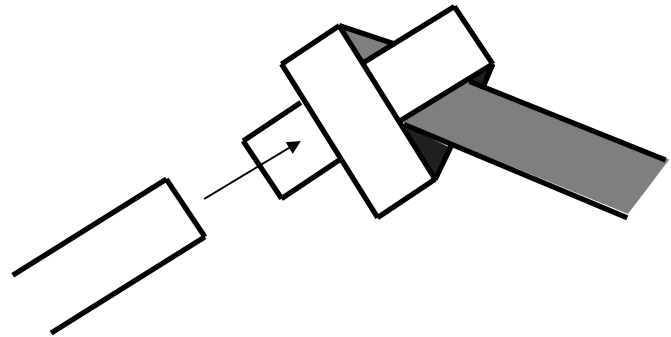
Thanks to Alf Grigg for sharing this activity at the COEO conference in Ontario, Canada. Participants form two parallel lines, which can be marked with two untied Raccoon Circles. You'll also need two blindfolds, and a set of keys, or some other small object to place in the central search area. One participant from each team stands at the ends of the search area, blindfolded. Using only vocal commands (i.e. no physical contact), the two teams attempt to help their blindfolded participant find the keys or other object in the central space. A higher level variation of this activity would be to have the blindfolded participant find several objects, and then assemble them together, again while blindfolded.



From the Teamwork & Teamplay Website at: www.teamworkandteamplay.com

30. We are KNOT Doing That !

Thanks to Dave Woods for sharing this version of a “pass” using a webbing knot. With about 20 inches (51 cm) of webbing, you can tie a bracelet (wrist band, or even an ankle bracelet) with a Raccoon Circle. The water knot for the bracelet is identical to that shown earlier in Section 2, but requires a bit more struggle, since the bracelet is quite a bit smaller, and you’ll need to have your wrist in the loop during the process.



Once the wrist or ankle bracelet is in place, participants can use this item as a “pass” during an adventure program. This simply means, that as an individual or group decision, the individual or group has the ability to choose their level of challenge, or to alter the challenge by presenting their bracelet to the facilitator. In addition to the “pass” device, the webbing does make a pretty cool bracelet.

31. Danger Zone

Here is an activity that brings the group into close proximity. Think of this activity as a version of All Aboard, but this time with all participants laying down on the job!. Begin with a super-sized Raccoon Circle (say one with three pieces of 15 foot long webbing tied together). The goal now is for the entire group to find a comfortable resting place, laying down inside the Super Raccoon Circle. Stories of everyone in the same tent, or perched on a narrow ledge high on a mountain, or perhaps sleeping overnight in the nest of a prehistoric pterodactyl can be used. After finding this comfort zone, ask everyone to turn over (which typically happens during a night’s sleep at least 4 times). Next you can ask some folks to change places, without disturbing the other sleepers.

Finally, you might consider a game of “Ha!” while the group is this close. You can find a more lengthy description of this activity in the book, Teamwork & Teamplay, on page 93.

32. Hoseplay

While Alf Grigg was busy in Canada using old ties for activities, Glenn Bannerman of North Carolina was able to use another local resource for his recreational activities. Glenn happened to discover and invent many games, craft activities and recreation ideas using waste hose from the L'eggs panty hose division of Sara Lee Hosiery. Many of these activities can also be performed with webbing materials and Raccoon Circles. You can find books, videos and other ideas on Glenn's creative nylon hoseplay at the address shown below. You can also purchase a box of waste hose for \$10 from the folks at Sara Lee (which basically just covers the shipping charges), and use ordinary fabric dye to add some color.

Creative Nylon Hoseplay (Book and Video)
Bannerman Family Celebration Services, Inc.
P.O.Box 399
161 Virginia Road
Montreat, NC 28757
Phone (704) 669-7323

Sara Lee Hosiery
Waste Hose
P.O.Box 719
Marion, SC 29571

33. It's KNOT Our Problem

Here is an interesting activity that allows the group to be creative, and solve somebody else's problem as well. Thanks to Mike Spiller for sharing this one.

Begin by giving each participant an untied Raccoon Circle. Next, have the entire group form smaller groups of 8-10 people. Each smaller group now has the task of twisting, winding, knotting and basically scrambling their Raccoon Circles together. Begin this task by having each person hold one end of their untied Raccoon Circle, and passing the other end to another person in their group. Now twist, tangle, stretch, twirl and basically make a huge knotted mess of these Raccoon Circles. Then place this "mess" on the floor, with the ends of each Raccoon Circle clearly visible. Each group now moves to a new location, and attempts to unwind this mess by first grasping the ends of all Raccoon Circles, and then attempting to untangle them.

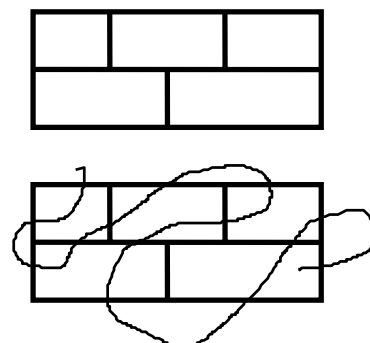
If you choose to time the groups as they attempt to complete this task, here is a hint.... some knotted masses come apart more quickly if rather than grasping the ends of the webbing, participants start with only one end, and tug and untangle as they go. Some webbing strips might even slide completely out of the mess with a single tug!

For similar challenges, see Section 5, Human Knot - The Easy Way, and Section 6, The Octopus, for other KNOT problem solving possibilities.

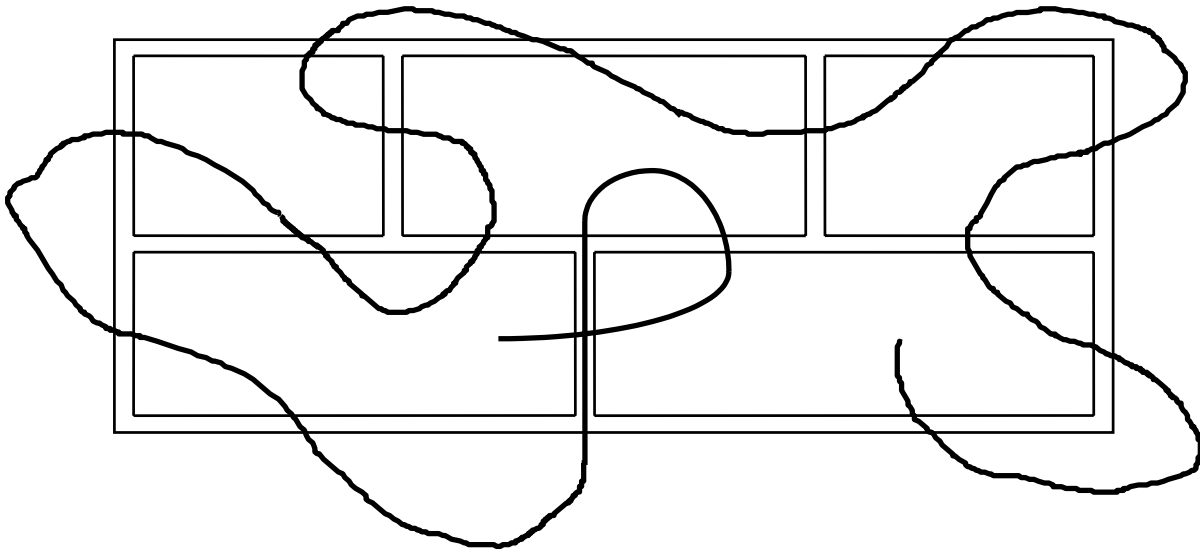
From the Teamwork & Teamplay Website at: www.teamworkandteamplay.com

34. Cross Every Line

Using duct tape, or some other wide tape, paint, sidewalk chalk or even a wooden frame, construct the five block shape shown here. The overall dimensions of this shape should be approximately 2 feet (0.6 meters) tall by 3 feet (1.0 meters) wide, with 2 inch (5 cm) wide lines. The puzzle or challenge here is by using one full length Raccoon Circle, to cross every line segment in the shape one time. One (unsuccessful) attempt is shown at the right. Notice that this attempt misses the vertical line in the lower center, and the horizontal line just above and to the right. An interesting solution is shown on the next page.

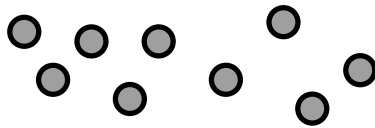


34. Cross Every Line - Continued

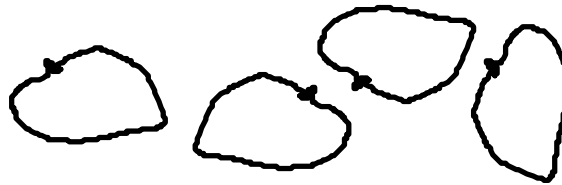


From the Teamwork & Teamplay Website at: www.teamworkandteamplay.com

35. Nine Pigs and Four Pens



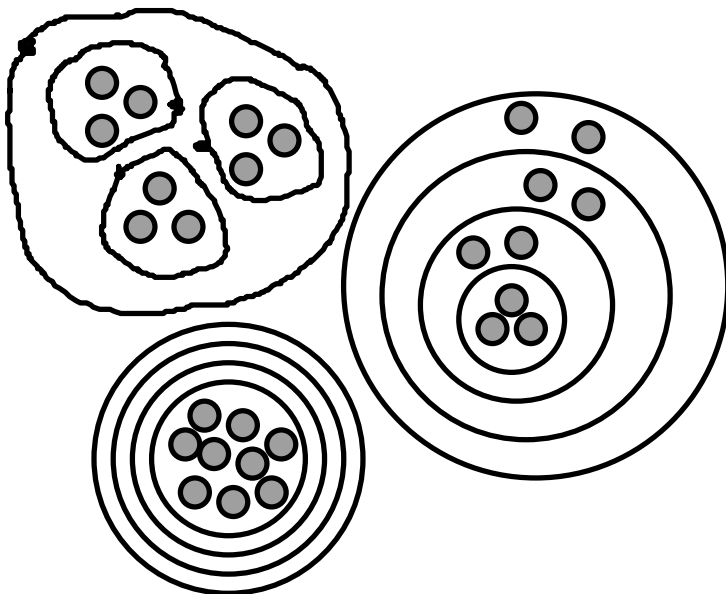
The Pigs



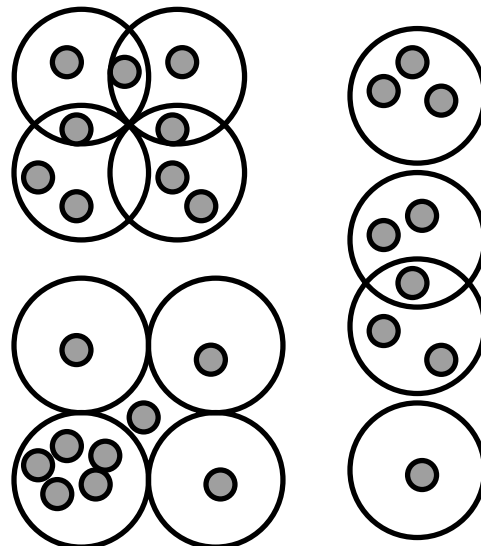
The Pens

This puzzle requires four Raccoon Circles (for the four pens) and nine objects (for the pigs). Plastic bleach bottles can be decorated for the nine pigs, or perhaps nine plastic piggy banks. The challenge is to place an odd number of pigs in each pen. Odd numbers include 1,3,5,7 and 9 for this puzzle. Even numbers include 0,2,4,6 or 8. Two styles of solutions are shown below. Type One include those solutions without the pens crossing each other. Type Two solutions require the pens to cross each other. Many puzzle solvers will try to use the four pens independently. Gook Luck - Oink!

Type One Solutions



Type Two Solutions

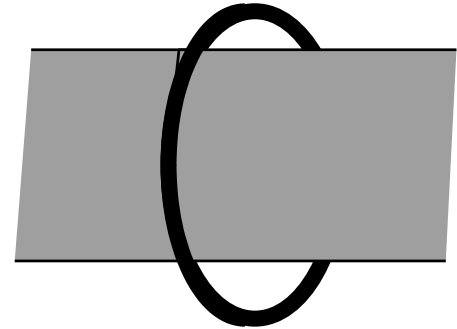


36. Where's the Knot

This simple observation game places one person in the center of the Raccoon Circle, while the remaining members of the group hold the Raccoon Circle. The object is to pass the Raccoon Circle clockwise or counterclockwise around the group, hiding the location of the knot. The outer group is allowed to slide their hands along the Raccoon Circle and of course vocally distract the person in the center. When the person in the center correctly guesses the person presently holding the knot, they change places with that person, and the game begins again. A slight variation of this game is shown below in Ring on a String.

37. Ring on a String

This game requires a standard Raccoon Circle, but the knot must be tied AFTER a 2 inch (50 mm) ring has been passed over the webbing. This size of metal or plastic ring is required to pass over the standard water knot. The challenge is now for a person standing in the center of the ring to close their eyes while the other members of the group "hide" the ring under the hand of one outer group member. When the inside person opens their eyes, they have 3 guesses to find the ring. The outer group may choose to try passing the ring during this guessing time, further challenging the person in the center.



From the Teamwork & Teamplay Website at: www.teamworkandteamplay.com

38. Minefield

This activity requires a variety of Raccoon Circles, both tied and untied, and shorter web segments if available. Begin by placing two untied Raccoon Circles at the outer boundaries of the space (see below). Next, place several Raccoon Circles within the space as forms of obstacles. The challenge of this activity is for a sighted partner to verbally guide a blindfolded (or eyes closed) partner through the space, without touching any of the obstacles littering the path. The activity can begin with the blindfolded partner looking at the minefield in advance, or perhaps never seeing the minefield until after crossing it. The Raccoon Circle in the center of the minefield can be a "vision restored" location, where the blindfolded partner can temporarily remove their blindfold to gain some perspective of their progress, and of the task ahead. Some of the web segments can be "treasure" that needs to be gathered along the way, or that can be used in barter in case a future object is "touched." This space can be used for only one set of partners, or multiple partners at the same time. This second approach will require some problem solving to determine when and how to communicate effectively.



39. Opening and Closing Activities

One of Many Parts - When tubular webbing is manufactured, there may occasionally be splices in the material, which do not allow the rolls of webbing to be uniformly cut into 15 foot long segments. For those undersized pieces, here is an opening activity that will also produce a prop for a closing activity at the end of the program. Either begin with undersized pieces of tubular webbing, preferably in a variety of colors, or cut a new roll of webbing into approximately 20 inch (51 cm) long segments. Have participants write their names on their piece of webbing using a permanent dark colored marker. These shorter webbing segments can be joined together within the group (using multiple water knots) to form the Raccoon Circle of many colors to be used during the program. Participants can also create a wrist or ankle bracelet with their webbing - See Section 30 for details.

A Part of the Whole - During the first workshop that I ever attended with Dr. Tom Smith, he mentioned that he often encouraged members of the group during debriefing sessions to (using a permanent marker or pen) write words of encouragement or significant phrases directly on the Raccoon Circle. He also encouraged them to write their own names. At the completion of their time together, he would cut the group's Raccoon Circle into small pieces, so that everyone in the group could take away some portion of the whole "spirit" of the group. Names and words will be most visible when you choose a dark color marker, and a lighter color Raccoon Circle webbing (yellow, light gray, orange, etc.) If you would like to create bracelets from these Raccoon Circles, be sure to cut into lengths of about 18-20 inches (45 to 51 cm). A typical 15 foot long Raccoon Circle will make 9 to 10 bracelets.

Inside/Outta Here - In a similar fashion to the group problem solving activity shown in Section 10 of the first Raccoon Circle publication (also available on the website shown below), Inside/Outta Here places the members of the group inside the Raccoon Circle. The final goal is once they have finished their final processing and debriefing, they can choose to all leave the circle together, saying "we're outta here!" in unison.

Lots of Knots - Begin by tying as many knots in an untied raccoon circle as possible. Then, pass this knotted Raccoon Circle around the group. As each member of the group expresses some commentary about the day's events, they may untie a single knot for each comment. When all knots are removed, the processing is complete.

Notes:

Teamwork & Teamplay, by Jim Cain, was awarded the Karl Rohnke Creativity Award by the Association for Experiential Education. You can obtain a copy of this award winning adventure-based book directly from the publisher, Kendall/Hunt, at 1-800-228-0810, or at www.kendallhunt.com

You can purchase this publication from Adventure Hardware at www.adventurehardware.com or by calling 1-800-706-0064. Raccoon Circles and this publication are included in the Teamwork & Teamplay Team Kit, also available from Adventure Hardware.

Teamwork & Teamplay

The Adventure-Based Training Company

Some Information about Dr. Jim Cain

Dr. Jim Cain is the author of the award winning adventure-based text *Teamwork & Teamplay*, which received the Karl Rohnke Creativity Award presented by the Association for Experiential Education. He was the First Executive Director of the Association for Challenge Course Technology, and is presently manager of the Cornell University Corporate Teambuilding Program. In the past 3 years, he has presented and facilitated more than 500 teambuilding programs in 36 states and 9 countries. Jim makes his home in Brockport, New York. From 1983 to 1998, he worked as a senior research engineer for Eastman Kodak. He holds a Bachelor degree from YSU, Master degrees from RIT and U of R, and a Ph.D. in Mechanical Engineering from the University of Rochester. Dr. Cain frequently serves as a visiting professor on subjects ranging from experiential education to challenge and adventure-based activities, and from recreational dancing and games leadership, to structural engineering, chaos and powder mechanics. He is presently working on three new adventure-based and teambuilding projects, including *Teambuilding Hardware* with Sam Sikes and Chris Cavert, *A Facilitation Guide* and a second volume of *Teamwork & Teamplay* activities. Visit the *Teamwork & Teamplay* website for more info.

Workshops and Training Events

Here is a collection of some of my favorite workshops, conference presentations and training events. You can request any of these prepared programs for your event, or a custom designed program.

Teamwork & Teamplay - An active workshops based on the title of the award winning book.

The Nuts and Bolts of Building Portable Challenge and Adventure Equipment - Build you own adventure equipment and learn how to facilitate these activities.

Wings, Strings and Flying Things - This workshop utilizes a variety of flying, floating and soaring devices to encourage an interest in science, physics and just for fun.

Traveling Light - This workshop utilizes the lightweight props found in *Teamwork & Teamplay* (like Raccoon Circles), and is ideal for those that lead adventure activities and wish to travel light.

Play with a Purpose - This hands-on workshop uses a variety of simply games and activities that can be used with a variety of groups. From get acquainted activities to thought provoking activities.

Dancing in Lines, Squares and Circles - Jim is a third generation square dance caller, musician and dancer, and this workshop shares some of that heritage in a fun and community building session.

The Elements of a Truly Outstanding Challenge Program - This workshop is intended to acquaint the participant with the basic elements of establishing an outstanding challenge program.

Working and Playing in Groups. Using the 5 stages of group performance (Forming, Storming, Norming, Performing and Transforming), this single or multiple day workshop leads a team through the various stages of performance, and encourages honesty, respect, feedback, open communication and teamwork, as the group pulls together, overcomes difficulties, and really learns how to work together.

The Challenge Course in the 21st Century - As the first Executive Director of the Association for Challenge Course Technology (ACCT), Dr. Cain presents a variety of topics related to ropes courses and adventure-based education in North America and around the world.

Staff Training and Train the Trainer Programs - Train your staff with *Teamwork & Teamplay* activities, equipment and resource materials. Half day to 3 day programs available.

Jim Cain, Ph.D. *Teamwork & Teamplay* 468 Salmon Creek Road Brockport, New York 14420

Phone (585) 637-0328 Fax (585) 637-5277 Cellular (607) 227-2246

Email: jimcain@teamworkandteamplay.com or teamplay@frontiernet.net

Website: www.teamworkandteamplay.com or www.frontiernet.net/~teamplay

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Raccoon Circle Activities - Book II

www.teamworkandteamplay.com

40. Resources

For more information on experiential & adventure-based programs, & Raccoon Circle activities contact:

Dr. Tom Smith, Raccoon Institute Box 695 Cazenovia, WI 53924 Phone (608) 983-2327

Dr. Jim Cain, Teamwork & Teamplay 468 Salmon Creek Road Brockport, New York 14420 USA
 Phone (585) 637-0328 Fax (585) 637-5277 Cellular (607) 227-2246
 Email: jimcain@teamworkandteamplay.com Website: www.teamworkandteamplay.com
 Email: teamplay@frontiernet.net Website: www.frontiernet.net/~teamplay

Tom Heck, Life Coach Inc. P.O.Box 1831 Asheville, NC 28802
 Phone (828) 665-0303 Fax (828) 670-7631 Email: tom@tomheck.com Website: www.tomheck.com

Chris Cavert, FUNdoing Inc. Phone 1-888-638-6565 chris@fundoing.com www.fundoing.com

Alf Grigg 394 Woodsworth Road #48 Willowdale, Ontario, Canada M2I 2T9 Phone (416) 444-7550 Email: 3griggs@sympatico.ca

41. Books and other resources that contain Raccoon Circle activities:

Raccoon Circles, 1996, by Tom Smith 32 pages of activities, history, references and ideas.

Teamwork & Teamplay, 1998, by Jim Cain and Barry Jolliff, Kendall Hunt Publishers, Dubuque, Iowa Phone (1-800-228-0810) ISBN 0-7872-4532-1 419 pages of portable adventure-based activities, equipment, resources and references, with many activities that can be performed using Raccoon Circles.

The Group Loop Activity Guide - 22 Fun Group Activities that enhance community, teamwork, leadership and creative problem-solving, by Tom Heck. Phone (828) 665-0303 www.tomheck.com

Raccoon Circles - A Handbook for Facilitators (With 35 Activities), by Jim Cain, September 2001
 Teamwork & Teamplay Website www.teamworkandteamplay.com/raccooncircles.html
 18 pages of activities and illustrations for making the Raccoon Circle a popular part of your programs.

Lines and Loops - Community Building Activities with Webbing, by Chris Cavert. 22 pages of activities, illustrations and references. Phone (888) 638-6565 chris@fundoing.com www.fundoing.com

Creative Idea for Team Work - Using Old Ties, by Alf Grigg. Seven tasks using ties, and debriefing ideas. Alf Grigg 394 Woodsworth Road #48 Willowdale, Ontario, Canada M2I 2T9
 Phone (416) 444-7550 Email: 3griggs@sympatico.ca

Creative Nylon Hoseplay (Book and Video) by Glenn Bannerman, Bannerman Family Celebration Services, Inc. P.O.Box 399 161 Virginia Road Montreat, NC 28757 Phone (704) 669-7323

The Adventure Group P.O.Box 69 Jonas Ridge, NC 28641 Phone (800) 706-0064
 Carries Raccoon Circles and several other small, portable adventure-based learning props in the Teamwork & Teamplay Team Kit, including this publication and other Teamwork & Teamplay equipment, plus all levels of adventure-based training. Website: www.adventurehardware.com