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*Many a moon ago, you could be guaranteed an evening of entertainment if you toddled down to your local pub. Whether this was because people hadn't quite developed the art of conversation or simply because older generations had a more natural aptitude for organised fun, I'm not sure. Either way, you could be assured that from Darts to Skittles and from Shove Ha'penny to Quoits, your local boozer would offer a plethora of bar-gaming delights. These days, as giant screens and arcade games jostle for bar-side breathing space, much is being written about the near-death of traditional pub games.*

*Whether you're keen to keep such traditions alive or merely looking for some bar-side fun, the following chapter features some modern-day takes on traditional games, alongside some novel ideas for employing bar-based paraphernalia to keep you and your beer buddies smiling well into the evening.*



## Beer Mat Quoits

### What's the game?

Quoits is a traditional English pub game, which basically involves players lobbing a ring over a set of wooden stakes. The following adaptation can be easily rolled out at your local pub.

### What do I need to play it?

An orange or grapefruit, a cocktail stick and enough beer mats so that each player has two each.

### How many friends?

Between two and ten bar buddies is ideal.

### How do I play it?

- First of all, you need to prepare your equipment. Cut your orange or grapefruit in half, position one half flat side down on the table, and stick a cocktail stick in the middle of it.
- Next, create large, equal-sized holes in each of your beer mats. The smaller you make them, the harder the game.
- Distribute your beer mats so that each player has two, and mark a throwing line on the ground at an agreed distance away from the table, depending on how hard you want to make the game.
- In each round, players attempt to throw their two beer mats over the cocktail stick. If they get a 'hook' (i.e. get the mat hooked over the cocktail stick), the player scores three points; if it's a 'leaner' (if it leans against the cocktail stick), they get two points; if no one gets a hook or a leaner, then the person with the closest lob at the end of each round scores a point.
- The game plays on in the same way until someone reaches 21 points and they're declared the winner.

## Shove Ha'penny

### What's the game?

Shove Ha'penny is a vintage English classic invented by trainee lawyers in 1521. It is a smaller and more versatile adaptation of Shovel Board, which by all accounts was one of Henry VIII's favourite pastimes.

Shove Ha'penny has been a hugely popular pub game at local taverns for many a hundred year and it should do a marvellous job of keeping you entertained of an evening at your local brew house.

### What do I need to play it?

Some chalk, a bar or table to play on, permission from the barman to chalk on their table (it does wipe off, after all) and five of the same type of coins.

### How many friends?

Designed for two players, though you can create a tournament-style event if there are a few more of you.

### How do I play it?

- The traditional game is played using a Shove Ha'penny board, but as these are hard to come by at your local pub, you can draw your own board on the table or bar. To do this, simply chalk out ten lines, making sure that the distance between your lines is about one-and-a-half times the width of a coin. Next, mark out your shoving line about thirty centimetres in front of the first line.
- Each player takes it in turn to shove their five coins, aiming to get as many of them as possible to sit squarely in a bed – the gap between each of the horizontal lines. The coins must be positioned on the shoving line, and for each one that successfully lands in a bed, a chalk mark must be made by the side of the bed, with one player's marks made on one

side and the other player's on the opposite side. A coin may be shoved only once, unless it doesn't reach the first line, in which case it can then be shoved again.

- Once a player has shoved all five of their coins, it's then the second player's turn to do the same.
- The aim is to get three chalk marks alongside each of the beds. However, once three scores have been made in a bed, any further scores in that bed will be given to the opponent instead, unless the opponent also has three scores in the bed.
- If your coin does land in a bed that's already scored three points, then you can try to knock it into the next one with one of your remaining coins.
- The first person to secure three points in each of their beds wins.



## Aunt Sally

### What's the game?

Aunt Sally is another traditional English pub game. Players must try to knock a doll off its perch. Traditionally, a wide iron stake was bashed into the ground and a wooden object was balanced on top which players would then attempt to knock off. Its roots lie in the English Civil War, when bored troops used to while away the hours between battles by knocking objects off posts.

In case you don't have an iron stake to hand, I've featured a pub-friendly version below.

### What do I need to play it?

A bar stool, three pieces of round fruit and some sort of non-smashing object that can be balanced and knocked off the stool (a light piece of wood is ideal).

### How many friends?

As many as are gathered around the bar.

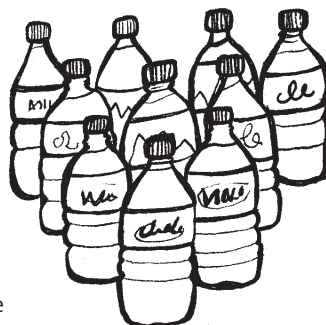
### How do I play it?

- Each player has six tries at knocking the wooden item off the bar stool using the piece of fruit. Only underarm throws are allowed. There is no traditional rule on how far away from the stool you should stand, so just make your own rules based on the space available to you.
- The scores are totted up, and the person with the highest number of successful knock-offs wins that round and scores a point.
- The game plays through five rounds and the person with the highest number of points overall wins. If it's a draw, play moves into sudden death, with each player taking it in turns to attempt to knock the wooden block off the stool.

## Water Bottle Skittles

### What's the game?

Skittles has been found to date back to the seventeenth century and its journey through time is recorded in some famous works of literature. It was mentioned by Charles Dickens in *The Pickwick Papers* and even earlier by Thomas Hughes in *Tom Brown's Schooldays*. Because of the amount of bar space a traditional skittle alley takes up, the game is on the decline. Get behind the campaign to keep this classic game alive by bringing this easy-to-implement reinvention to a pub near you.



### What do I need to play it?

Ten recycled water bottles filled with water (you can decide which size you use, depending on the arm strength of your gathered players) and three grapefruits or cricket balls per player to be used as the bowling ball.

### How many friends?

Ideal for a small group of around six.

### How do I play it?

- Position your ten water bottles in a triangle and mark out a bowling distance about ten metres away. Get everyone into pairs.
- Each player takes it in turns to have three bowls to knock down as many water bottles as they can.
- At the end of each round, two points are awarded to the pair who knock down the most skittles. The game plays on until six rounds are completed.
- The team with the highest score wins.



## Cocktail-Stirrer Catapult Darts

### What's the game?

Cocktail-stirrers, as long as they're flexible enough, make great catapults. This game requires friendly bar staff who don't mind you flinging fruit slices onto the floor.

### What do I need to play it?

A cocktail-stirrer and three slices of lemon per player, and some chalk to mark out the dartboard.

### How many friends?

Ideal for two to four.

### How do I play it?

- Chalk out your dartboard on the floor. You can go to town and draw up the whole all-singing-and-dancing dartboard if you like; alternatively just draw three concentric circles with a bull's-eye in the middle. You'll also need to draw a flicking line for players to stand behind.
- Finally, agree your points system. You can either follow the rules of darts or make up your own, e.g. five points for a bull's-eye and then lower points for each of the wider circles.
- Players stand behind the flicking line with their slice of lemon positioned on the round flat top part of their cocktail-stirrer and then flick it towards the chalked dartboard on the floor.
- Points are totted up at the end of each round, with the winner being the highest-scoring player when play comes to an end.

## Coin Curling

### What's the game?

While away a rainy afternoon at the pub by flicking a bunch of coins towards a chalked-out target. The loser of each game has to buy the next round.

### What do I need to play it?

You need two coins of the same size and type per player and some chalk to mark out your target.

### How many friends?

However many are around to play, though any more than eight of you and it might mean too much waiting around.

### How do I play it?

- First of all, find yourself a lovely long table – the longer the better.
- Next, use the chalk to draw three circles of slowly decreasing size at one end of the table, each one inside the other, to form a target. Issue all players with two coins each, ensuring they are the same type to prevent calls of foul play.
- The aim of the game is to get your coins as near to the centre of the target as possible. You do this by standing at one end of the table and propelling your coin down to the other end with a flicking motion.
- Get yourselves into two teams. Players from each team take it in turns to flick both their coins towards the target.
- Once all players have played their turn, the winner is the team who got their coin closest to the smallest circle in the middle. One point is awarded for the coin closest to the centre and an additional point is awarded for all the winning team's coins that end up nearer the target than the loser's closest coin.
- The coins are collected, the game starts again and the first team to score twenty points wins.

## The Nail Game

### What's the game?

This is an Alpine classic, well known to anyone who's been on an Austrian skiing holiday and visited the local tavern. It's a test of judgement and strength in which players compete to be the one to hammer a nail all the way into a log. It provides a great opportunity for male bonding, as it combines strength, hammer dexterity and a healthy dose of competition in one neat 'hanging out at the bar' package.



### What do I need to play it?

A log, a hammer and some four-to-six-inch nails.

### How many friends?

I wouldn't recommend playing it with more than eight of you, as it could mean too much waiting around.

### How do I play it?

- The object of the game is to be the person who takes the final strike that gets the nail into the log.
- First, tap a good-sized nail a little way into a solid log or wooden block.
- Each player takes the hammer and strikes the nail in turn. If they are particularly bold, they might go for getting the nail all the way in. I've never seen anyone pull this off, though I am sure that if you're a challenger for the Austrian Championship it's a possibility.
- If, as is usually the case, the player only gets the nail a short way in, the hammer is handed around the group, with the striker to get the nail all the way in being declared the winner.

## Table Rugby

### What's the game?

This will appeal to rugby enthusiasts. It's kept us entertained for hours on many a rainy afternoon.

### What do I need to play it?

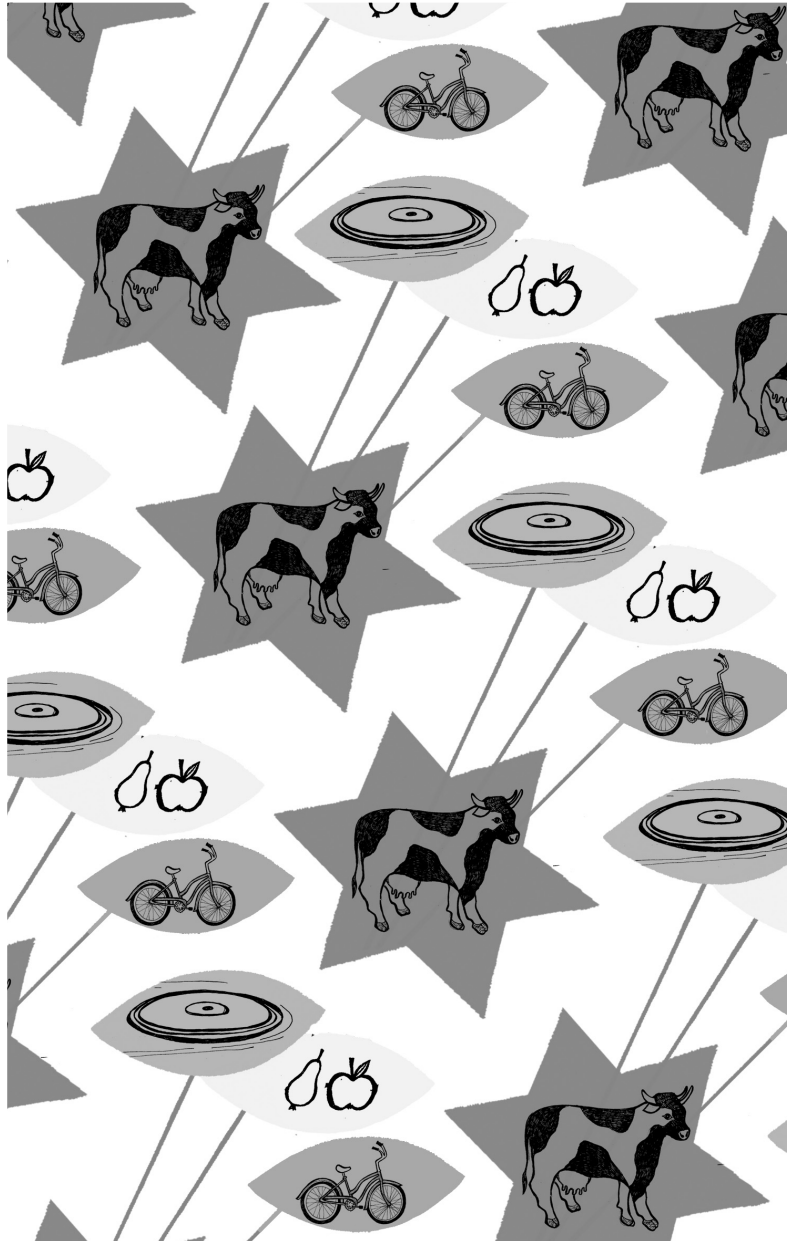
A table, a coin and two chairs.

### How many friends?

At least two of you.

### How do I play it?

- First up, players need to take it in turns to score a 'try'. A try is scored when a player successfully flicks a coin (using your index finger and thumb) to the other side of the table so that it lays flat and a part of it hangs over the edge.
- Players get three flick attempts; if they fail, it's the next player's turn. If successful, they then need to flick the coin off the edge of the table using index finger and thumb, and catch it as it falls. If they manage, they score five points.
- As in the real game of rugby, to score extra points the try needs to be 'converted'. To convert a try, the player places the coin between their index finger and thumb and then spins it, before attempting to catch it mid-spin. Next, someone from the opposition creates 'goalposts' by forming an H with their fingers and thumbs, and the player attempts to throw the coin over the 'crossbar' using their two thumbs. If successful, the player scores another two points.
- First person to score fifty points wins.

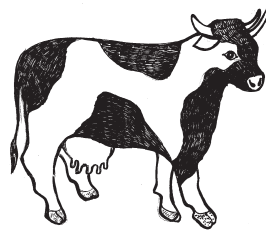




**TWO**  
**Organised  
Fun for  
Nature's  
Playground**

Whether you're a Ray Mears type or the sort of person who can't leave their house without their heels, the great outdoors offers a profusion of entertainment delights. From an afternoon on the lawn to a cross-country hike, there's nothing like a few lungfuls of fresh air to boost your spirits and get you raring for a bout of organised fun.

The following chapter bubbles with ideas for games you can play in the garden, field or fen, and will have you abandoning your sofa in no time for the pleasures that can be found in nature's playground.



## Frozen T-Shirt Competition

### What's the game?

Definitely one for the summer. This game involves racing to be the first to put on a frozen T-shirt.

### What do I need to play it?

A T-shirt for every player and a freezer to prepare them in.

### How many friends?

As many as you like.

### How do I play it?

- The T-shirts are thoroughly soaked the day before and either screwed up and tied up into a tight ball or folded up as if to be put away. They are then placed in the freezer overnight. The more water left in the T-shirt, the harder it is to put on, so it's up to you whether you want to wring it out or not.
- Players line up with the frozen T-shirts on the floor in front of them. On the signal, players race to put their T-shirts on.
- The first to get their T-shirt all the way on wins.





## Splat the Rat

### What's the game?

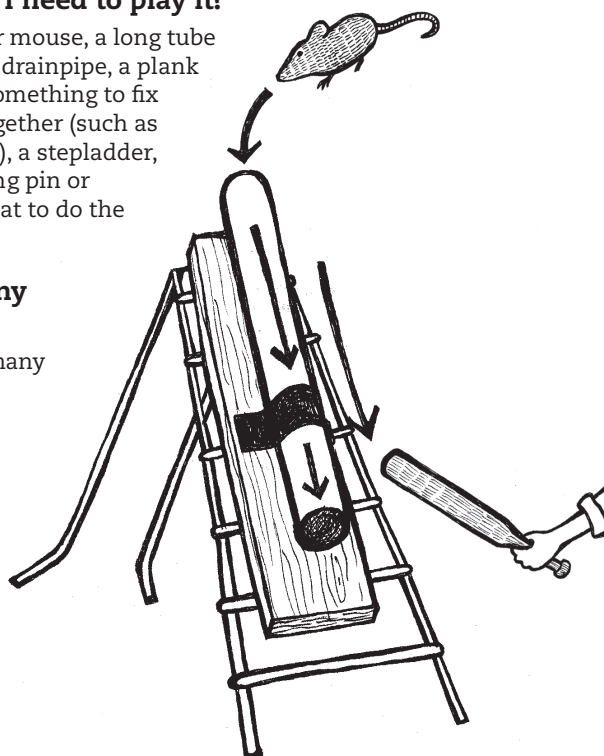
This used to be a staple of any country fair or village fête. Perhaps because my attendance at such quintessentially English occasions has dwindled, I haven't seen it in action for years. It requires a bit of preparation, but the reusability of the equipment makes it worth the time invested.

### What do I need to play it?

A toy rat or mouse, a long tube or piece of drainpipe, a plank of wood, something to fix the two together (such as gaffer tape), a stepladder, and a rolling pin or rounders bat to do the splatting.

### How many friends?

However many you like.



### How do I play it?

- First of all, you need to manufacture your apparatus. Take a long tube about two metres in length – a piece of drainpipe is ideal – and a slightly longer plank of wood, and strap the two together using gaffer tape or similar.
- You need to ensure that the edge of the plank of wood and the drainpipe are aligned and that the plank extends beyond the end of the drainpipe – around fifty centimetres is ideal. This is to provide a ‘splatting’ area for when the rat shoots out of the tube.
- You then need to set your game up by resting the plank, with the pipe uppermost, on top of your stepladder.
- Once set up and ready to go, the first player positions themselves kneeling down at the bottom of the pipe with the rolling pin gripped in hand.
- The toy rat is then sent scuttling down the pipe, and the player scores a point if they manage to hit the rat with the rolling pin when it comes out at the other end.



## Human Crufts

### What's the game?

Human Crufts is one of the many brilliant games invented by the wonderful Bestival Festival team at Camp Bestival. The event involves pairs of friends (one of whom pretends to be the pooch and the other the owner) competing in an agility class, a freestyle performance and a beauty contest.

### What do I need to play it?

Some obstacles for the agility course and a range of fancy dress items for the beauty contest. You also need to make some large score cards so that each judge has a sheet of paper with a single number on it from 1 to 10. A dog lead per competing pair is also a useful accessory.

### How many friends?

This one works best in big groups.

### How do I play it?

- Decide on your judging panel (ideally three people) and get everyone else to pair up and decide who's the pooch and who's the owner.
- Pairs then go away and practise their show routine (a freestyle performance of their choosing) and the agility class, and agree on the outfit for their beauty contest.
- Meanwhile the judges set up the obstacle course – think along the lines of planks to balance on, obstacles to jump over and, if you can get your hands on one, a tube to tunnel through.
- Contestants then compete in the three classes and are scored out of ten by the judges, who hold up a score card at the end of each performance.
- The competing pair with the highest score at the end of the competition wins.

## Cow Sniffing

### What's the game?

Much to my mother's fear and loathing, my three siblings and I used to start playing this the minute we arrived at our aunt's house in Devon. Please play with caution and it's totally at your own risk. You have been warned.

### What do I need to play it?

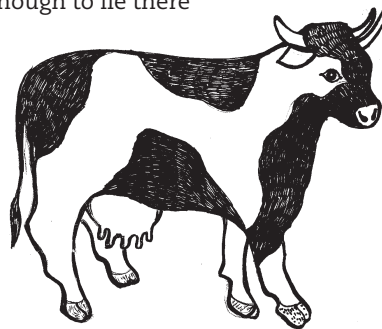
A field full of cows.

### How many friends?

As many or as few as you like.

### How do I play it?

- Find a field of cows. Make sure there are no bulls or bullocks (baby bulls) in there. Young heifers (female cows) are the best as they're intensely curious but without the bullishness of the male variety.
- Lie down next to each other, or on your own if you're playing solo, in a cowpat-free area and close your eyes.
- The natural curiosity of a cow means that within a few minutes (or hours, if it's a hot, lazy day) you will attract the attention of the majority of the herd.
- You must now lay as still and quiet as possible. The player who is brave enough to lie there the longest while twenty dewy, slimy muzzles are pushed in their face wins.
- The perceived saving grace of the game is that the minute someone moves, the herd scatters – hopefully away from you.



## Baby Racing

### What's the game?

The innate competitiveness of most new parents makes this game a winner. If they're not already boasting about six-month-old Junior's maths genius or how little Maisie is already displaying Mozart-like talent on her rattle, then they soon will be. This game puts an end to such speculative boasting and puts the babies and their parents to the test. The baby-owning entry criteria for this game does make it a little exclusive, but you could always borrow one if you were set on playing.

### What do I need to play it?

A few babies, their parents (or carers) and an area in which to race.

### How many friends?

This is a race and entry needs to be in teams of two adults with a baby. To ensure it's a fair match, babies need to be in the same age bracket.

### How do I play it?

- Mark out your racetrack. I'd suggest not being too ambitious with distance at this stage, so set out something around three metres in length.
- Get one adult lined up with the child at the starting point and the other adult positioned at the end of the track.
- On the word 'Go!', babies are released and race (well, that's the idea, anyway) to their adult partner who is waiting at the other end of the track, cooing like a maniac.
- The adult at the end of the track is allowed to make as many encouraging noises as they like to urge the baby on but they are not allowed to use their hands at all.
- The first baby to touch their racing partner's knees at the other end of the track wins.

## Field Raider

### What's the game?

If you are one of those people who needs some gentle cajoling to step away from the computer console to head out on a country walk, then this game is an ideal first foray into homespun fun. It's a bit like Gate Vaulting (see following game), but in this version players are allocated certain obstacles and awarded points each time they're cleared them.

### What do I need to play it?

Some friends (or indeed one friend) who are about to head off on a long country stomp across unknown territory.

### How many friends?

Best played in small groups of two or three.

### How do I play it?

- Before you set off on your walk, agree which obstacle(s) each walker is going to be allocated. You need to be heading off somewhere where no one has been before to prevent an unfair advantage. You should also choose obstacles which will be commonly featured on the type of walk you're doing. For example, if you're going on a cross-country tramp then one player might be allocated a wooden gate, another a metal gate and another a cow's feeding trough. If, however, you're heading off on coastal paths then the obstacles allocated might be a bench, a dustbin or a National Trust sign.
- Players are then awarded points each time they pass and clear their obstacle. You'll also need to agree how each obstacle is going to be cleared. You could leapfrog a bin, balance across a bench and flip over a gate, for example.
- The player who accumulates the most points by the end of the walk is the winner.

## Tug of Love

### What's the game?

My boyfriend and I are constantly competing for our dog's love and affection. Any new set of dog owners would be telling a lie if they claimed they didn't secretly vie to be number one in their little pooch's eyes. This game puts this adoration to the test. I've heard US divorce courts use this method to decide who keeps the dog, but that might be only a rumour. Barney always wins this game, but I know it's total cupboard love and it's me that Otter (that's our dog) really loves the most.

### What do I need to play it?

An umpire, a dog and its two owners.

### How many friends?

See above.

### How do I play it?

- Get the umpire to stand in the middle holding the dog, with the two owners positioned equidistantly on either side. The distance between the two owners should be around ten metres.
- On the word 'Go!', the dog is released and the two owners must make encouraging noises to get the dog to come to them. No treats, toys or food of any kind can be used.
- Whoever the dog goes to first is the winner and clearly the dog's preferred owner.



## Gate Vaulting

### What's the game?

A long country walk can be made far more interesting when turned into an equestrian-style event. Contestants are awarded points for creativity in clearing gates, fences and stiles. Young, lithe urbanites have been jumping on the bandwagon of this game and can be found hurling themselves over buildings (well, small walls at least) and running up lampposts on city streets all over the world. Parkour is a sport that's exploded in popularity among energetic youths and it's even been immortalised in the James Bond film *Casino Royale*.

### What do I need to play it?

An athletic disposition and sporty footwear are both an advantage.

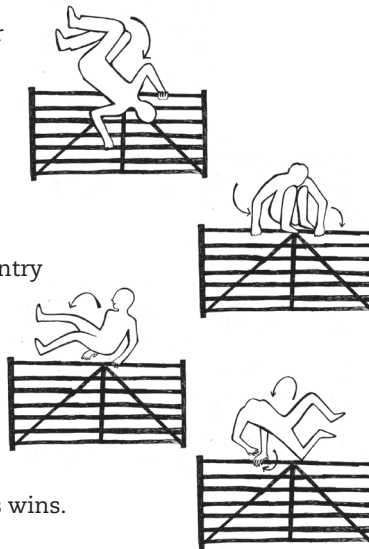
### How many friends?

Can easily be played on your own, though an element of competition with a friend makes it far more entertaining.

### How do I play it?

This one needs very little explanation. While on a country walk, players are awarded points for their creativity in clearing whatever obstacles they come across.

Some advanced jumping styles are shown here. The person with the most points wins.





## Water Bombing

### What's the game?

This is another great game for a blistering day in the afternoon sun. In this version players stand in a circle and when their number is called they must race in and catch the water balloon.

### What do I need to play it?

A whole packet of water balloons filled and tied.

### How many friends?

Great for large groups of five and above.

### How do I play it?

- To get started, someone stands in the middle with everyone else stood in a circle around them. They then number all players including themselves.
- When set up, the person in the middle throws a water balloon up into the air and shouts one of the numbers. That person has to run in and catch the water balloon. If they fail, they're out and have to step out of the circle.
- Before they leave the circle they pick up one of the water balloons and chuck it in the air and shout another player's number.
- The last player left in is the winner.



## Soggy Backs

### What's the game?

If it's a hot sunny day and you fancy a game to cool you down, have a crack at this one. It essentially involves pairs racing to see who can roll a water balloon between their backs down to the floor without bursting it.

### What do I need to play it?

One water balloon per competing couple. If you can't get your hands on water balloons, you could use eggs instead, though they obviously lack the cooling properties of the former and could leave you in a bit of a slimy mess.

### How many friends?

A minimum of four or however many want to play. You just need to ensure everyone is paired up.

### How do I play it?

- Players pair up stand back-to-back with the water balloon positioned between their two shoulder blades. This will obviously vary depending on how big each of the players are, but you just need to make sure the balloons are positioned at the same distance from the ground for everyone.
- On the word 'Go!', players race to manoeuvre the balloon down their backs and safely onto the ground.
- The first pair to complete the task wins.

## Egg Throwing Contest

### What's the game?

Egg throwing is a sport that's enjoyed around the world. The event involves one person throwing an egg for their partner to catch without breaking it over ever-extending distances. The record is currently held by Johnny Dell Foley and his cousin Keith Thomas, both from Texas, who in 1978 threw an egg an impressive 98.51 metres. Each year the annual World Egg Throwing Championship is held in the village of Swaton in Lincolnshire. You too can recreate the dignity and splendour of this event in your own back garden.

### What do I need to play it?

One raw egg per competing pair.

### How many friends?

As many pairs as fancy competing and someone to be umpire.

### How do I play it?

- Pairs of players position themselves an equal distance from each other. I would suggest starting this event off at an easily achievable distance of roughly two metres.
- On the word from the umpire, players take it in turns to throw their egg to their partner. If the egg is dropped, the pair step out of the game.
- Once the remaining pairs have completed the task, all players on one side take a backward step, ensuring they are still positioned at an equal distance from their partners.
- The event plays on until there is one last remaining pair who are then declared the winners.



## Cheese-Rolling

### What's the game?

No one really knows the true origins of the annual Cotswold cheese-rolling event. Some claim it has pagan roots, with others dating it back to Roman times. Held each year in the Gloucester village of Brockworth, the event has grown in size and popularity over the years and contestants travel from all over the world to compete in this slippery and downright painful task, which involves chasing a round Double Gloucester cheese all the way down the hill.

If you're picnicking near a hill or walking along a tussocked slope, you can recreate the majesty of the event yourselves.

### What do I need to play it?

Ideally a large round cheese. As you're unlikely to have one of these stashed under your armpit while stomping through the countryside, you can use whatever you have to hand. We've always used a frisbee, though anything that's round will do. You also need a steep hill to play on.

### How many friends?

As many as are brave enough to compete.

### How do I play it?

- You're a grown-up – well, I'm assuming you are, as this book is written for grown-ups. Anyway, my point is I'm not going to patronise you with words of caution, but obviously don't throw yourself off a cliff or slope. Exercise a degree of common sense.
- Warnings over and done with. Get your contestants lined up at the top of the hill and get your cheese or round object rolling down the hill.
- As soon as it has been set off on its merry way, contestants race down the hill to try to grab it.
- First person to the bottom is the winner.

## Ankle Wars

### What's the game?

This competitive and mildly violent game is ideal to burn off any excess testosterone and put an end to futile debates about who really is the greatest of them all. This is an ankle grabbing and tripping contest in which competitors fight to floor their battle partners.

### What do I need to play it?

Strong ankles and legs.

### How many friends?

As many as want to compete. If there are more than two of you, you can run it as a tournament-style event. I'd recommend one person being the umpire.

### How do I play it?

- First contestants need to remove their shoes and socks and position themselves on some soft ground.
- To prepare for battle, contestants bend down and grasp their ankles with their hands. This position must be maintained throughout the duel. Any contestant who lets go of their ankles is awarded a foul; three fouls and a contestant is eliminated from the competition.
- On the word from the umpire, players must floor their opponent by hooking their legs behind their opponents and tripping them up. Any other manoeuvre is a foul.
- The contestant who floors their opponent is the winner.

## Shoe Tag

### What's the game?

This game used to be one of our favourites while travelling through the delights and wonders of South-east Asia. Its simplicity means that it's easy for anyone to pick up, and it overcomes language barriers as it requires little explanation. It's a great variation on the classic game of Tag and involves you having your shoes – ideally a light summer sandal or flip-flop – stuffed down the back of your trousers, shorts or skirt for the other opponents to grab.

### What do I need to play it?

Players wearing an appropriate item of clothing that their light summer shoes can be stuffed down the back of. If the girls are wearing dresses, you'll need something that can be used to make belts. If you're wearing a bikini, I'd suggest putting a sarong or trousers on as you could end up flashing more than you intended.

### How many friends?

A big rambling gang of you.

### How do I play it?

- Get everyone to put their shoes either down the backs of their trousers or skirts or tucked securely under a belt. You need to ensure that each player has a reasonable amount of shoe sticking out of the top so that the other players can grab it.
- Decide who's 'it'. That person has to chase everyone else and try to pull a shoe out of the backs of their trousers, skirt or belt.
- Once a shoe is grabbed, these are then put at the side and the player who has just lost their shoe becomes 'it'.
- Players are out when both their shoes are taken. The last remaining player is the winner.

## Frolf, or Gisbee

### What's the game?

Some friends devised this game while on a long walk through the Monmouthshire countryside. They thought they'd stumbled on a way to bring golf into the twenty-first century, but soon found it to be a recognised sport in the United States. It's a great way to provide added entertainment to a long walk and requires nothing more than a frisbee and some friends.

If you don't have a frisbee to hand, you can always use a round plastic lid or even a sun-dried cowpat.



### What do I need to play it?

One frisbee per player, some friends and a large area to play in. If you're getting serious about it, then you could craft some large, chain-like hoops to mark the holes around the course, as they do in the States.

### How many friends?

As many or as few as you like.

### How do I play it?

- Each player takes it in turns to pick a marker to be the next Frolf target on the course. Before taking a shot at each target, players must agree on the par (a realistic number of throws that it will take to reach that tree, bush or bin). For example, if you agree a par of three and reach the target in two throws, you are one under par.
- The objective of the game is to travel around the course to each target in the smallest number of throws. The winner is the player with the fewest total throws.

## Water Pistols at Dawn

### What's the game?

This game sees teams compete to successfully direct their blindfolded players to make a direct hit with a water pistol.

### What do I need to play it?

Two water pistols and two blindfolds. It's also handy to have some towels available and some warm clothes if it has the potential to get nippy later.

### How many friends?

Enough to form two teams, though you can play it with as few as four of you. It's also good to have a non-player to act as the umpire.

### How do I play it?

- Get everyone into two teams and position them in two semicircles facing each other with the guns on the ground in the middle. Number each of the contestants in both teams, i.e. both teams should have a number 1, 2, 3 and so forth.
- Once everyone is in position, the umpire announces the start by picking a number and then puts the blindfolds securely on the two contestants assigned this number. On the word 'Go!', they each have to find their way to the pistols directed by their teammates and race to be the first to shoot their opponent.
- The first contestant to make a successful direct hit scores a point for their team. The two contestants go back to their positions in the semicircle and two more players are called forward and the game plays on.
- The first team to reach ten points is the winner.





## Human Croquet

### What's the game?

Another novel alternative to the traditional game of Croquet, without the fuss and bother of acquiring the proper kit. This time the game is played blindfolded, with players adopting the role of the mallet, ball and hoop.

### What do I need to play it?

The only equipment you need for this game is people. To make it work properly you actually need quite a few friends – erm, twenty-two, in fact.

### How many friends?

Ideally you need twenty-two players: ten pairs to be the hoops, one for the ball and another to be the mallet. It is workable with far fewer players, it just means a lot of running around: those who are the hoops have to manoeuvre themselves into a different position once their hoop has been cleared.

### How do I play it?

- Ten pairs of people position themselves around the course facing each other, with their arms raised in the air, clasping each other's hands to create a 'hoop'. If you're playing the game with fewer people, just ask hoop players to move themselves into another position once their hoop has been cleared.
- The 'ball' is then blindfolded and their partner, the 'player', must direct the blindfolded ball through the ten hoops in sequence.
- The player moves the ball by standing behind them, turning them in the intended direction, then saying 'Go!'; no further commands can then be given (or contact made) except for a 'Stop!' command.



- Teams take it in turns to play and the usual Croquet rules apply. In summary, the object of the game is to get the ball through the appropriate sequence of hoops. Players take it in turns to hit the ball around the course. If you get your ball through a hoop in one go (i.e. from 'Go!' to 'Stop!'), you get another turn. If your ball hits an opponent's, they stay where they are while you get another go. If your ball hits the hoop, your go ends and it's the turn of the next player.
- The goal of the game is to get around as many hoops as possible in the right sequential order. The first team to make it around the course wins.



## Fruit Croquet

### What's the game?

A blissful, bizarre way to spend an afternoon. There's a certain art to directing a croquet ball using only a stuffed stocking swinging majestically between your legs. You'll be pleased to hear that it looks every bit as rude and ridiculous as it sounds.

### What do I need to play it?

A stocking and an apple or orange for each player. You also need something lighter to be the ball. A tennis ball or a light football is ideal. Finally, you need something to create hoops or mini-goalposts with. We've always used pebbles to mark them, but if you've got some time you can create large hoops by bending garden wire into shape and sticking them in the ground.

### How many friends?

A minimum of two and a maximum of eight per game, to prevent it going on too long.

### How do I play it?

- Each player creates their own croquet 'mallet' by putting a piece of fruit in a stocking and then dangling it between their legs by attaching it to their belt. Using your hands is not allowed; players must swing their hips to create a pendulum-like motion with the mallet and thus propel the ball towards the hoops.
- Mark out the route by creating hoops or mini-goalposts around your designated pitch – ideally five or six hoops. You can use pebbles to mark out the hoops, or you can create garden-wire hoops as described above.
- Players then play Croquet following the traditional rules (see Human Croquet on previous page). You only get one go at hitting the ball, unless you go through a hoop and then you get an extra go. If you 'roquet' another player (if you hit their ball with yours), you also get another go. You can only roquet your fellow players' balls once in between each hoop.

## Broom Polo

### What's the game?

As a horse-loving, city-living kid, I spent much of my childhood cycling around car parks on my trusty rusty bike, imagining it was a noble chestnut steed galloping through the countryside.

After coming across the game of Polo in one of my well-worn pony books, my bike-horse game was soon adapted to include our kitchen broom and I persuaded my younger sisters to join me in a game of Broom Polo. We revisited it as adults one gin-soaked summer afternoon and it proved to have held its magic.

### What do I need to play it?

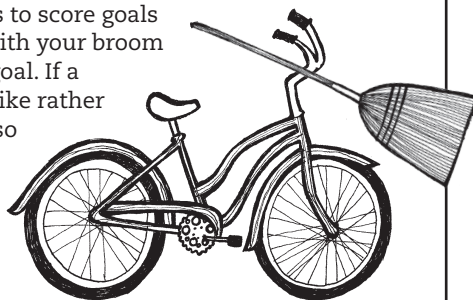
A ball, a bike and a broom per player, with tin cans for goalposts.

### How many friends?

You can play it with two of you, but two teams of four (as in a real game of Polo) is the ideal scenario.

### How do I play it?

- If there are more than two of you, get yourselves into teams. Players mount their bikes and grasp the broom as if it were a polo mallet, with the sweeping end used to hit the ball.
- Each 'chukka' (period of play) lasts seven minutes and you can choose to play between four and seven chukkas, depending on how much time you've got.
- The object of the game is to score goals to win. Hitting the ball with your broom across the line scores a goal. If a ball is knocked by your bike rather than your broom, this also counts as a goal.
- The team with the most goals at end of the chukkas wins.



## Bale Toss

### What's the game?

The Bale Toss is a much-loved village-fête cornerstone that allows a country lad to impress his sweetheart through a showcase of masculinity and strength. It's essentially a competition to see who can throw a bale of straw the highest by lobbing it over a pole that's slowly raised higher and higher.

It was the highlight of my sister Rachel's wedding (obviously apart from the actual marriage and speeches bit) with the entire party gathered to cheer the participants on. Luke, the groom, put in a particularly spectacular performance when his tossed bale failed to make it over the bar and instead landed on his head.

### What do I need to play it?

A long pole (it can be a long stick, piece of fencing, sailboat mast etc), ten metres of strong rope and twenty metres of strong cord, one extending ladder pulled into two separate pieces and a couple of bales of straw. If you want to make your bales lighter, it's good to have some extra string so you can halve the size of the bale and tie it back up.

### How many friends?

You need some strong friends to help you get everything set up and as many competitors as fancy having a go.

### How do I play it?

- First of all you need to get your bale-tossing bar set up. This is essentially a bar that can be easily raised once everyone has cleared it. There are a number of ways you can do it, but my brother-in-law Luke developed the following system:



- Find yourself a good strong fence (a post-and-rail type is ideal) and firmly rope your two ladders onto the fence about three to four metres apart (or the same length as your metal bar) so they point upwards. You need to make sure the rope is knotted tightly as the bale hits the pole with quite a force and you don't want the ladders to fall on people and cause a nasty accident.
- Next, you need to figure out a pulley system. Cut the cord into two equal ten-metre lengths. Attach them to each end of the raising pole. Attach something heavy to the other end of the strong cord and throw this over the top rung of one of the ladders. When you pull on the cord, the raising pole should easily slide up the ladder. You will have to adjust one side at a time, or alternatively have two people at the ready to raise the pole.
- You might find that a whole bale of straw is too heavy to throw for the ladies (and perhaps even the men). If you can track down a horse's hay net, this makes an ideal means to hold a split bale. Alternatively, securely tie up half a bale with rope.
- Once you're all set up, the event plays in rounds. Contestants take it in turns to throw the bale over the pole. If you manage it, you're through to the next round. If not, you're out. The person who can throw the bale the highest is the winner.



## Amy's Competitive Yoga Posing

### What's the game?

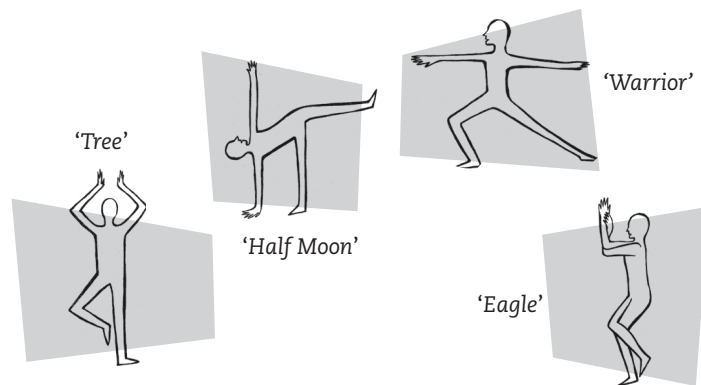
Competitive Yoga Posing will have a certain appeal to yoga enthusiasts, but it's equally entertaining to watch yoga virgins attempting to throw and hold a strong move; or indeed for the group to come up with entirely new poses of their own creation. The object of the game is to throw the most impressive but stable yoga position and challenge the other contestants to be the first to pull out. Points can be awarded for dexterity and flexibility as well as endurance, but it's easier to play 'first man down is out'. My friend Amy came up with this one for our first-ever Organised Fun Olympics. It was also a key feature at our most recent Olympics, with my friend Dudgey winning despite being a stonking eight months pregnant. Pretty damn impressive.

### What do I need to play it?

A judge and some competitors.

### How do I play it?

- Players form a circle and take it in turns to throw their chosen yoga move. Everyone must then copy that move. You might



choose the Tree, the Warrior, or, if you're feeling brave, a Headstand.

- You need to make sure your moves are as challenging as possible, otherwise there will just be a lot of standing around in funny positions.
- The first person to fall out of the position is out, and it's then on to the next person, until the last person standing wins.

## Arcadia's Leap

### What's the game?

We invented this at a friend's birthday on Hampstead Heath. It's great for picnics and other outdoor social occasions.

### What do I need to play it?

A spacehopper is a great addition, but by no means essential.

### How do I play it?

- This is a game of trust as well as jumping ability, as contestants compete to see who can jump over the most friends. Very few rules apply and any jumping style can be adopted.
- Get your first friend to lie on the ground and the contestant leaps over them. After each successful jump, another player lies next to their friend, making the distance to be jumped farther and farther.
- The contestant who jumps the farthest wins.
- When we played it up on the heath, the birthday girl had been given a spacehopper and we used it to give us extra bounce. If you can rustle one up from somewhere, it's a significant addition to the game.



## Schnitzeljagd

### What's the game?

This is a popular German variation of the Scavenger Hunt. Great to instigate when you're setting off on a country stomp but you are at that rather frustrating stage when half the group is still faffing around making sure their hairclips match their wellies. Those who are ready can set off on their merry way leaving a trail for the others to follow.

### What do I need to play it?

Stones, sticks and other bits of nature that can be used to mark a trail.

### How many friends?

At least two of you – the 'hunter' and the 'hunted' – though bigger teams make it more fun.

### How do I play it?

- Before you start, agree on where the game will finish, and ensure the hunted have a collection of sticks, pebbles and chalk to leave their trail.
- Split into two groups, with the hunters being slightly larger in number. The object of the game is for the hunted to reach the designated place before they're caught.
- The hunted are obliged to leave clues along their way to lead and mislead the hunters. The clues must always lead the right way, but you can set false routes as long as they end in a clearly marked X. A selection of other signals are:

- Directional arrow (perhaps made out of twigs).
- A star of arrows to show different possible directions (false and true).
- A chalked X on a tree.
- A ribbon tied to a tree to show you're on the right route.
- If the hunted reach the designated point before being found, they're the winners. If the hunters find them first, they become the winning team.



## Last Bike Standing

### What's the game?

My neighbour Gareth, who lives in the houseboat opposite, told me about this one. He and some friends came up with it on a camping trip. The aim of the game is to try to force your opponents to put their feet on the ground.

### What do I need to play it?

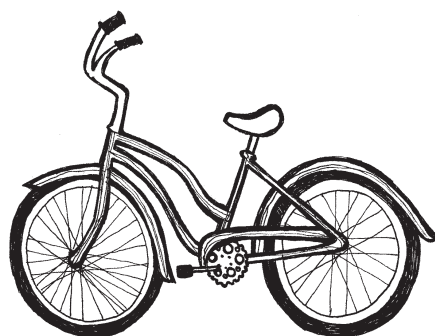
A bike per player.

### How many friends?

You can play it with two, but it's more fun with three or four.

### How do I play it?

- First of all, agree the boundaries of the cycling area.
- The objective of the game is to be the last bike standing. Players are out as soon as they put their feet on the ground.
- To play, players cycle around trying to block each other's paths, forcing their opponents to put their feet on the ground.
- No pushing, hitting or gouging allowed, but other non-violent, non-sportsmanlike tactics are encouraged.



## Tin Can Horseshoes

### What's the game?

This is a traditional English village game honed by the young farmers of Britain. As horseshoes aren't found in abundance in the city, you can also play using empty tin cans or anything that has a ring-like shape.

### What do I need to play it?

For the traditional game, you'll need horseshoes and a metal or wooden stake (or even a sturdy stick) that can be firmly hammered into the ground. If not easily accessible, then clean out some old tin cans and open at both ends. The standard 400g tin cans are in fact pretty tricky to loop over so you might want to use the wider ones or even manufacture yourself a ring using rope or string.

### How many friends?

As many or as few of you as you like.

### How do I play it?

- Get yourself set up by hammering a stake into the ground.
- The object of the game is to get your horseshoe or tin can over the stake.
- Players have three shots to try to hoop it over the stake in the ground to win a prize.

