

# Backyard Games

## How To Use It

This section includes practical tips for successfully implementing activities from the *SPARK Back Yard Games* unit. These tips represent best practices derived from years of SPARK research, teaching, and field-testing. Feel free to use and modify as you see fit.

### Unit Overview

- **Scope & Sequence** - Designed to provide you maximum curricular flexibility, you can select any or all games from the unit and teach them in any order. Games can be taught on consecutive days, or periodically (weekly, monthly, etc.), and you may even reserve these games for special occasions (i.e., "Backyard Games Fridays"). Once students have learned multiple games, you can implement the unit culminating event: The *SPARK Backyard Games Invitational*. In addition, as students master each Backyard Game, you are expanding your list of "go-to" activities that can be easily implemented at a moment's notice.
- **Character Matters (CM) System** - Because character is important, each Backyard Game in the unit includes a simple, deliberate four-step character development process.
  1. **Choose & Define.** Before each lesson, refer to the CM Content Cards and select a trait to focus on. Use the card to explain the trait during the lesson introduction.
  2. **Apply.** During activity time (practice and games) monitor for, promote, and give feedback on the selected trait.
  3. **Discuss.** At specific times (half-time, end of tasks/games, teachable moments, etc.), group students and discuss the trait, its application and impact. For example, you may ask when or if the trait was observed and what its impact was on the game, environment, players, etc.
  4. **Reflect.** Lastly, during the closure, provide a time for each student to complete the CM Assessment, giving you and your students additional insight into the process.
- **Get Real** - As an option, use the SPARK Authenticating Strategies to amp up the fun, cooperation, and healthy competition, making for a more festive, engaging learning environment, and a more meaningful student experience.

### Lesson Overview

- **Preparation** - Start by reading the plan, and the associated materials in advance, then gather all equipment and materials and organize the activity space as outlined. Modify equipment, activities, and setup based on your context and students.
- **Warm-up** - Begin each lesson with a *SPARK ASAP*, during which time you can also take roll, conduct other similar managerial tasks, and engage students in meaningful discussion.
- **Instruction** - Rely on the plan and associated materials. Keep directions clear and concise, draw connections to similar games, use whole-part-whole demonstrations, actively monitor during practice and games, use cues to prompt students and provide feedback, and be encouraging.
- **Practice** - Progress students through the sequenced learning tasks and scrimmage, helping them to develop the skills and knowledge needed to play the game successfully. As an option, use a game-practice-game format, where you begin this time with a scrimmage, then complete the practice tasks, and finish with another scrimmage. This game-practice-game format is highly enjoyable for students and makes for more focused, meaningful practices.
- **Tournament** - Select one non-elimination tourney format, then implement it playing each game for a set amount of time. Use a single clock to begin and end all games simultaneously. After each game, rotate players/teams to a new court based on the outcome of the game.
- **Closure** - End with a focused reflection, helping students process the experience using the daily objectives.