

## 9. Capture the Castle

If you don't think, you lose!

Themes	Peace and Human Security
Level of complexity	Level 2
Age	8 – 13 years
Duration	120 minutes
Group size	16 – 30 children, 2-3 facilitators or adults
Type of activity	Active adventure game, experiential learning
Overview	Children represent different groups in a battle and need to organise themselves in order to win. Afterwards they discuss the different feelings on different sides of a conflict, the reasons and mechanisms behind it.
Objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To develop empathy with different sides of a conflict</li> <li>• To cooperate with each other</li> <li>• To become aware of emotions in a conflict</li> <li>• To foster strategic thinking and planning</li> </ul>
Preparation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If the game is played outside, examine the area and mark clear boundaries for the activity. Locate any potentially dangerous areas and point them out to the children and group leaders.</li> <li>• Prepare imaginary 'action plans', each on different coloured paper. Cut each one into ten pieces and put each plan into a separate envelope.</li> </ul>
Materials	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A very large space that allows the children to run and to hide</li> <li>• 6 imaginary 'action plans', each on paper of a different colour, cut into 10 pieces each</li> <li>• 3 different distinguishing signs for the 3 different groups (e.g. colours or face paints or visible ribbons)</li> <li>• Drinks for after the game</li> </ul>



### Instructions

1. Explain there is a beautiful city with a castle at its centre. The city is controlled by the Purple Party, but there are two opposing groups who want to invade and take over the castle, the Blue Party to the south and the Orange Party to the north.
2. Divide the children into 3 groups: 50% Purples, 25% Blues and 25% Oranges. Explain the boundaries of the playing area. Give the Blue Party and the Orange Party three 'action plans' each.
3. Explain the activity carefully so that all the children understand:
  - a. Everyone must stay within the boundaries of the activity area.
  - b. Each group will establish a camp within the game's boundaries; no other group is allowed to enter another group's camp. The city that the Purple Party is defending should be exactly in the middle, the Blue Party's camp on one side and the Orange Party's camp on the other.
  - c. To be able to capture the Castle, the two invading parties must try to exchange their 'action plans' with each other. Each of these groups has three plans on different coloured paper, which are cut in 10 pieces each. Each piece needs to be brought separately by one of the invaders to the other camp. Only one piece at a time can be carried. A Blue is not allowed to transport pieces of the Orange workers or vice versa. Pieces can only be handed over once a Blue or Orange 'courier' reaches the other camp.
  - d. To defend the Castle, the Purples must try to prevent the Blues and Oranges from exchanging

**Source:**  
Adapted from  
"Praxismappe"  
Bundesjugendwerk  
der  
Arbeiterwohlfahrt  
(Federal Youth  
Foundation of the  
Workers' Welfare  
Association  
Germany).



- their plans. They try to catch the invaders and take away the pieces of their plans. 'Catching' means just touching lightly on the shoulder or arm.
- e. When he or she is caught, the Blue or Orange player has two choices: 1) give their piece of the plan away to the Purples and then be free to rejoin the game; 2) refuse to give the piece away and remain a 'prisoner' in the city until the game is over or the piece is handed over to the Purples. The Blue and Orange Parties can help each other.
  - f. All pieces of the plans must be carried in a visible way.
  - g. The two or three facilitators will not take part in the game but supervise to see that the rules are respected.
  - h. Once the Blue Party or the Orange Party has collected all ten pieces to make a complete action plan, they can take all the pieces the Purple Party are carrying, and they have won! If the Purple Party manage to get all ten pieces of either the Blue Party's or Orange Party's plan, this group is out of the game. However, the remaining Party can still succeed: if it can carry a whole plan to the other camp, they and also the already-eliminated Party win.
  - i. The game is over when one Party has won or when the set time limit decided by the facilitator has run out.

### Debriefing and evaluation

1. Debrief the activity by asking question such as these:
  - a. How do you feel?
  - b. What happened with your action plans?
  - c. Did you succeed in getting a complete plan? What strategy did you have? How did you make decisions?
  - d. Did everyone participate in the game? Were there different roles?
  - e. How did you feel about the other two parties?
  - f. Did the Blue and Orange Parties team-up or fight each other? How did their relationship affect the outcome of the activity?
  - g. Did the Blue and Orange Parties fight against the Purple Party and vice versa? If yes, why? Where did the conflict come from?
  - h. Was the situation realistic? Do you know of similar situations in real life? What are some reasons that such conflicts happen in real life?
  - i. How do you think this situation could be changed? How could such conflicts be prevented?
  - j. Do you know of any other conflicts in your life? What, if anything, are you doing to resolve them? What could be done to change these situations?
  - k. How do conflicts arise? What can we do to avoid them, solve them, manage them and/or safeguard peace (depending on the examples discussed)?
2. Relate the activity to human rights by asking questions such as these:
  - a. What are some human rights that could be violated when people are in conflict? In an armed conflict?
  - b. How are different parties in a conflict affected by having their rights violated? How will this affect their futures?
  - c. How are children affected by conflict? How will this affect their futures?
  - d. What can be done to prevent conflicts and human rights violations such as these?
  - e. Can all conflicts be resolved? If not, how can human rights help people to manage their conflicts?



### Suggestions for follow-up

- Look deeper into some ongoing conflicts in the group in the community, as well as the country, region or world. Try to understand the bases for a conflict and discuss the situation.

### Ideas for action

- If your debriefing discussions focused on armed conflict and peace, try to organise/join a demonstration for peace and/or visit a peace organisation. Help the children find out about how peace organisations understand peace and approach conflict resolution.
- Discuss with the children the ways they deal with conflict among themselves. Help them develop some ground rules for addressing conflicts within their group that reflect human rights standards (e.g. no physical violence, no insulting language, everyone has the right to an opinion and expression, and equal opportunity to participate).

### Tips for the facilitator

- No-one has to fight over anything in this activity. Children in weaker physical conditions can achieve much more through strategy, quickness and cooperation than those who may rely on aggression and strength.
- Prepare the adult facilitators or helpers. Make sure they understand the rules and boundaries and are aware of any potential dangers in the area.
- Explain to the Blue and Orange Parties the importance of having a strategy in order to avoid losing pieces of each plan and therefore never getting one completed.
- Emphasise that 'to catch' means simply touching the person. See some variations below to adapt to differently-abled groups.
- The duration of the game very much depends on the group. Be prepared for the activity to be shorter or longer than expected.
- In the follow-up discussion make a clear distinction between armed conflict and peace, or conflicts in general, such as children experience in everyday life. Both are important but need separate approaches.

### Adaptation:

- If one group or an individual child is weaker than the others, provide some hints on possible strategies (e.g. verify how many pieces of which plan already reached the other camp; risk the loss of some pieces to save the others; don't send pieces of all the plans in the very beginning but save some until you have understood the rhythm of the game).
- Rather than a simple 'catch' someone, include a test after a Purple Party member tags a Blue or Orange Party member (e.g. when they meet, they play 'rock, paper, scissors'; if the Purple wins, then the Blue or Orange gives up the piece; if the Blue or Orange wins he or she goes free). This variation is effective when the children vary in their ages and physical condition, because it gives younger or the weaker children an equal chance.

