

# CANDLESTICK RELAY

This fun activity gets students thinking and acting together to master an obstacle course, either using their entire bodies in a big space or their minds and limited movement in a smaller one. Before conducting the activity, determine if you want students to compete or collaborate. Read through all the instructions to determine which approach best fits the learning outcomes you want your group to achieve.

**Time:** 45–60 minutes

**Age:** Grades 3 and up

**Group Size:** Unlimited, divide large group into smaller teams of 8–10

## LEADERSHIP LEARNING CONCEPTS

Teamwork

Problem-Solving

Communication

Creative Thinking

## SUPPORTING STANDARDS

This activity supports the development of Leadership Skills and Social-Emotional Learning.

## MATERIALS NEEDED

- tennis balls or similar, enough for each team to have one
- three-foot lengths of foam pool noodles, enough for each team to have two (purchase six-foot long foam pool noodles at a dollar store and cut each in half)
- tape to mark each end of the obstacle courses
- props and navigable, physical obstacles such as mats and cones in a gym, or playground equipment

Or, for alternative desk method:

- sturdy, non-bendable straws, enough for each team to have two
- marbles, enough for each team to have one
- tape to mark each end of the obstacle courses
- small props and navigable obstacles such as books or personal items set up on a path across desktops or throughout room. Students will have to pass the straw to their teammates without leaving their seats (unless you have space for students to do the relay physically moving around the space)

## GETTING READY

Lay out a long strip of tape to mark each end of the obstacle course. (Alternatively, you could just mark a beginning line and have students loop through the entire obstacle course, returning to the beginning for their turn.) If using a playground, identify the path you want students to follow in the relay races. If using classroom space and props (either with foam candlesticks or straws), you can either lay out the obstacles you want teams to navigate or, if class time allows, have props in a pile for students to set up the obstacle course once class starts.

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## CANDLESTICK RELAY, continued

### ACTIVITY

Depending on class dynamics, decide if you want to conduct this activity as cooperative or competitive. Follow the respective instructions below.

**Cooperative:** Have the class work together to create several different obstacle course paths. Allow up to ten minutes for the class to strategize, set up the courses, and draw a map for each. Divide students into teams of four to six. (When the activity is characterized as cooperative, teams tend to be creative and collaborative. Observe if this is the case for your students and note during debrief.) Once the courses are set, ask teams to divide into two halves, sending one half of their team to the far end for the relay, with half staying at the start.

Pass out a map to each team for the course they'll follow. Then pass out a pair of "candlesticks" (foam noodles or straws) and one ball or marble per team. When taking their turn through the obstacle course, students must complete the course while carrying the ball or marble on top of their candlestick. To complete their turn, when they arrive at the next teammate they must pass the ball or marble to the next person, from candlestick to candlestick, without using their hands. Activity is complete when every member of each team has been through the obstacle course. Collect all props and bring group together to debrief and apply leadership learning.

**Competitive:** Divide students into teams of four to six and have each team create an obstacle course, space allowing. (If space is limited, identify how many obstacle courses are possible and divide the larger group into that number of "course-designing teams." You will divide students into their competitive teams of four to six later.) Explain that teams are to use props to create the obstacle course for another team against whom they will compete. Allow up to ten minutes for teams to strategize, set up their obstacle course, and draw a map. (When the activity is characterized as competitive, teams typically and intentionally create obstacle courses that are very difficult for the other teams. Observe if this is the case for your students as you prepare for the next step, as well as to note during debrief.)

Once the courses are set, divide your group into its competitive teams. Have each team send half of its members to the far end for the relay, with half staying at the start. Prior to sending students to their respective places, have them explain to the entire group the path through their course. Once all teams have completed the explanation, but before beginning the course, announce that you're changing the rules: Each team will follow its own map and complete its own obstacle course.

Pass out a map to each team for the course they'll follow. Then pass out a pair of "candlesticks" (foam noodles or straws) and one ball or marble per team. When taking their turn through the obstacle course, students must complete the course while carrying the ball or marble on top of their candlestick. To complete their turn, when they arrive at the next teammate they must pass the ball or marble to the next person, from candlestick to candlestick, without using their hands. Activity is complete when every member of each team has been through the obstacle course. Collect all props and bring group together to debrief and apply leadership learning.

### TALK ABOUT IT (COOPERATIVE)

- What did you consider when designing the map for your team? How would your map and motivation change if you were told to create a map for another team with which you were going to compete?
- How did your team consider the strengths and/or limitations of all of your team members when determining the obstacles?

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## CANDLESTICK RELAY, continued

- When completing the challenge, how did team members react when the ball fell off one of the candlesticks (either while moving through the obstacle course or when passing it to the next teammate)?
- If someone emerged as a leader, what qualities put them into that role?
- How do you deal with obstacles when you feel like you're the only one facing them? How do you deal with obstacles when you have a team working with you?

### TALK ABOUT IT (COMPETITIVE)

- What did you consider when designing the map for another team to follow? How did you feel when you realized you had to follow your own map?
- Would you have done anything differently if you knew ahead of time you were competing with others using the map you designed? (Appropriately challenge individuals or teams who say they would have created the same path—human nature in competitive situations contradicts this attitude.)
- When you make decisions, how often do you consider the impact these decisions will have on others?
- How do you define what's fair? How do you act in ways that others consider fair? How often do you think people take advantage of others around them because they act as if life is a constant competition of "us against them"? What are some examples?
- How do you deal with obstacles when it feels like the "rules of the game" are stacked against you—particularly when you made those rules?