

Snatch It & Sneak-A-Tag

4 team invasion flag “snatching” or tagging experience



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Play is our brain's favorite way of learning

- Diane Ackerman

Introduction

Welcome to **Snatch It** and **Sneak-A-Tag** this is my flag snatching and tagging series of games. I hope they provide a unique flag snatching and tagging experience. It's a specialized activity that only a trained elementary physical educator can provide. And personally I was delighted to teach this exciting experience and now thrilled to share it with you and the PE community.

The experience is offered in two systems or methods.

1. **Snatch-It:** For **grades 4-5** by using flags.
2. **Sneak-A-Tag:** For younger students, grades 2-3, I offer additional tagging challenges beyond the basic **Tagging section**.

Question: once youngsters learn how to play some of these Sneak-A-Tag games, are the younger students skilled and mature enough to handle a few **Snatch-It** games with flags? That is your question...Read on...

The overall Sneak-A-Tag and Snatch-It experience of space awareness, running, chasing, fleeing, dodging, quick thinking, teamwork, and of course, sheer fun is hard to put into words in this game. One other note, these mini-games provide excellent motivation for a cardiovascular fitness activity. As you will read, this is actually many quick little "mini-games" with a combination of small-sided, medium sided and full class games to create a memorable physical education experience.

Why are we playing Snatch It and Sneak-A-Tag?

- ✓ To practice being honest
- ✓ To practice social and character skills of saving a player
- ✓ To practice our offensive and defensive skills, chasing and fleeing
- ✓ To practice caring
- ✓ To use quick thinking and problem-solving with your teammates

Equipment and Facility:

- Typical size gym or field set-up (see diagram below)
- Safety cones
- Use color coordinated cones/wall posters to mark the four colors of the gym/teams
- Four sets of Snatch-It flags (blue, red, green and yellow) I recommend one fantastic commercial flag set which are the **Sonic Flag-A-Tag** (see photos/Great Lakes Sports) flag football belts and flags. They are available in the recommended classic four colors. Also a smaller elementary belt size is available. (42" waist) Kids have nicknamed them "*poppers*" because as the flag is "snatched" the connecting device makes a popping sound! This lets the child feel and most importantly hear- he/she's snatched out! Along with the great popping sound,

without question, these are substantially one of the, if not the finest quality flags in the industry, more expensive, but well worth the investment. Others work adequately, with the **Velcro**, and GOPHER makes some interesting ones, but the Flag-A-Tag system dramatically improves the games and they will last for years of tough play.

Note: They dry out, so putting a dot of Vaseline on the popping device every few years works wonders.

- Four separate storage crates or jump rope rack
- Four color sets of pinnies for Sneak-A-Tag
- Four sets of color coordinated taggers for Sneak-A-Tag (optional)
- Safe cones, boundary lines
- Large cones/tape to mark four color play areas
- Rules and diagram mini posters

Organization

From a programming standing point, Sneak-A-Tag and Snatch-It can be played for an entire class as part of a territory games unit, or once learned played sparingly throughout the year as a fitness game, possibly skipping the fitness development routine for the day.

Note: For reader clarity, the following description concentrates on Snatch-It and not as much on Sneak-A-Tag. But in Sneak-A-Tag a reentry method is needed for inclusion and the recommended ways are:

Sneak-A-Tag:

1. **Saving:** When a player is tagged out they must be quickly rescued by a Hero like in Character Tag by using:
 - Leap Frog
 - Tunnel
2. **Fitness reentry:** Or if you prefer to create a faster **individual/self-reentry method** that works wonders too. Such as, you could have the students performs five fun fitness exercises, like jumping jacks, and then right back into action.

The principle holds, that the **pause/out** must not be too easy or too punitive-perfect balance is the key. And of course the down side to the self out reentry is, it removes the charming cooperative character element but this game is so intense that is not necessarily going to change the personality of Sneak-A-Tag. The saving ritual can be overdone too. Experiment a see what works best for your program. (Please let me know how it goes.)

Players in their “home” courts & “starting” positions



- Court and outside field set-up is critical prior to play. (See diagram above) Each team needs a color coordinated **home court** / quarter play area. Therefore if your gym floor is not marked indicating the classic four PE colors mark your court or field to match the four colors of the team and flags. (Red with red, blue with blue, etc.) For example when directing the red team to the red court they must know where to report and where their $\frac{1}{4}$ court is. You will get this!

How we play Snatch-It:

The students are broken into four equal heterogeneous groups by the four colors of the Snatch-It flag/belt colors. By breaking the class into four groups/teams, the “mini-games” are many as you will see from the following list at the end.

- **Prerequisite Skills and safety:**
- Students are able to play the previous Honesty & Character Tag games with excellent physical and safety skills prior to this game, which involves intense running, chasing and snatching skills and challenges.
- Review and practice your program running, chasing and tagging safety skills prior to play.

- Review and play the **Stopping Game** so that players practice excellent balanced upright stopping and not knee sliding. (See below) In fact, be sure to make this your introductory activity prior to play.
- Review your character education program.
- Students have above average to high level of fitness and experience in intense physical education games.
- Teacher consistently demonstrates excellent classroom management and has behavior, social skills and safety controls soundly implemented.

General Game Rules, Helpful Hints and Unique Information:

1. **Safety first:** Students will play with personal safety skills; specifically in this game: no out of control running or swing of arms, scratching others, grabbing other players' clothes and belts to get the flags, and no running out of bounds.
2. **Belts where?** Wear belts outside of all clothes, up high and around waists, not hips; around the player's navel. It is helpful if the players tuck in shirts into pants/shorts/skirts and take off all sweatshirts, sweaters and light jackets. Tighten the belts fairly snug, slip the extra loose end of the belt (spaghetti) in their front pockets or wrap the spaghetti around the front of the belt. The actual flags are worn on the sides of the player, not the front or the backside. During the mini-games it will be necessary to remind all the players to tighten the belts and to slip the flags to their sides. Also, it is very important to have the student's keep the belts, buckled at all times while putting on and taking off the belts. The buckles are confusing, (very confusing) to manipulate for most students. Once the package arrives from the catalog company I buckles the belts together and they are never unbuckled again.
3. **Flag snatched?** When one or both flags are snatched off, **kneel down**. (See below) No grab backs. In all mini-games, it only takes one snatched flag to be out. *"Toss it to their toes."*

I got her!



Snatch-it, “pop” and toss to his/her toes, and keep playing!

This is so fun!

4. **Pop!** Just like in tag, when you pull a flag say, it is not necessary to say, “*Got yours!*” just toss it gently down at her/his toes. Allow the “popping” sound and the feeling of the “snatch flags” to do its work. If using “regular flags” the same principle applies, snatch it and they are out, the player will feel the “Velcro” rip. (My kids played this game for a decade before getting the nice popper flags with little problems.)
5. **No elimination:** Once the player is seated or kneeling s/he is permitted to replace flag(s) and reenter the game. This also gives the player a much needed few seconds rest break! Whew... (Reattach and back in!)

“When it’s off, I’m down... when it’s on, I’m up, and in!”



Pop! Oh no someone got me out!

No worries, I just kneel down, place it back on, take a few deep breaths and back in!

Now where did he go...

6. **No knee slides!** If the player falls down, does a knee slide or steps out of bounds, he/she must, pause the action and kneel/sit down for a slow ten- second **pause/self-penalty time out**. This critical rule and theories drastically eliminates wild and out of control running. Once the player counts slowly to ten, the player reenters the game. Again, this is part of our **honesty policy**, and **independent play theory**.
7. **Is a player in or out?** There should be no confusion; but there is. So I made up this simple slogan; “(standing) **Up you’re=in. Down you’re=out.**” Therefore, if the player is standing up, flag still in, running around they are an active player, still in the game. If they are kneeling they are temporarily out/pause, putting on their flag back and not to be approached.
8. **Out-don’t do it:** When a player is kneeling out, she/he may not pull flags of a passing player.
9. **Both out!** If two players pull each other’s flags at the same time - both are out. This happens all the time.
10. **Yikes:** If a player accidentally pulls his/her “own” flag or a **teammate** pulls his flag they are out and must quickly replace the flag. This happens too.
11. **No tucking:** Do not hide, hold or tuck flags into your clothes or pockets...
12. **No MMA:** No blocking, pushing or defending with your hands. This is not marital arts/MMA...
13. **Not flag time:** No running around with opponent’s flag. Toss it at their toes, “here you go!”

Procedure and more Helpful Hints: A brief guide to teaching this rather usual game.

1. **Fun and fitness:** Introduce Snatch-It as a very challenging, fun, athletic game. Snatch-It certainly requires offensive skills but also good defensive skills will help players to become successful. All students will play and have high time on task and be successful.
2. **Goals:** Remind students of your program goals, safety procedures, prosocial skills, and discipline procedures.
3. **Safety:** Review basic Snatch-It safety rules.
 - a. Controlled Running: eyes up and forward and able to stop instantly when needed or on teacher whistle/stop signal. Possible practice a few **Stopping Games** before play.
 - b. No running out of bounds.
 - c. No falling down and/or diving to get flags.
 - d. No knee slides-no knee slide snatches.
 - e. No slapping, scratching or blocking with hands and arms.
 - f. Heads up when snatching. Be mindful of heads bumping when reaching in for a flag.
4. **Introduction:** Introduce Snatch-It game rules for flag chasing mini-games. Explain to the students you are now going to introduce just the **Game Rules** of how to play Snatch It mini-games not which mini game they are going to play. This is backwards what we normally do, because all the rules are the same, for all the mini-games, and you will tell them what mini-game they will play in several minutes, once they know the rules. At that time, all you will need to do is quickly **describe the game** and direct them to the proper **starting formation**, and then play it! The mini-games are so simple that just a very brief description is needed, if at all. For example: “*STOP! Great job yellow team going after the other three teams. All teams go back to your “house” and get ready for the next team to be it! Red team is it.... Go Red Team, You’re It!*” Teachers, please note: that I have included for your information almost every possible rule that has happened over the years of teaching Snatch-It. You will not need to discuss all 13 rules, but the basics and then incidentally teach the remaining rules as they occur, or as you feel necessary.
5. **Four teams, belt on practice snatching own off:** Students are placed into four equal heterogeneous teams and they put on the belts. It is not necessary to have exact numbers but try to balance the team strengths. Have them practice snatching off their own flags and replacing the flags, then practice with a partner. While faster kids are snatching and replacing, you will need to assist some students with the belts and spaghetti.
6. **Spread out and go!** Begin the following Snatch-It mini-games. (See below) The first listed game is **All It** and it’s the best introductory game for many reasons, one being because a few kids are still struggling to place on the belts! As they finish they join in the fray. Playing several All It games is a great tip until their safety skills improve which takes a few games to be sure. Calling a class meeting to polish the **no knee slide-snatch rule** is almost a guarantee. Recommended time for each mini-game is only a 60-90 seconds or so due to players’ exhaustion.
7. **Succinct speech:** As we know, succinct speech is imperative to be an effective teacher. Being succinct with Snatch-It is more important; due to the fact that the mini-games are played quickly and with intensity and quick structural team changes are needed. Use short enthusiastic bursts of directions such as: “*Stop! Ready...Go! Go to your home court, and get ready to play! Red team is it, go red!* Or, “*Same game...ready go!*”

8. Snatch It starting formations:

Mini-games begin in several distinct starting formations for fair play and for exciting challenges.

The formations are:

- **Scatter:** Spread out in the whole, half or quarter of the play area.
- **Home Court:** As discussed, cue work for the color-coded four courts. For example: When the class is asked to go their **Home Court**, each team will quickly report to their color-coded $\frac{1}{4}$ area. They will not know who will be it, but once you announce the game, everyone will know it!
- **Combination formation.** When you combine two teams together to play against the other two teams. Invite one team to join the other team to their end of the gym or Home Court. In the **combination formation**, game **two teams vs two teams**.

The various formations create unique cooperative – competitive links. In one moment they were playing against each other, then in an instant they are now buddies working on a team, and simultaneously, we teachers', revisit our goal and friend the ***character program***. How are learners handling all this? How is the mood, the game spirit? Are all players accepting of the spirit of **joy**? (P. Ferrucci, 2007) Probably so, due to the effort we put in. If not, call a quick meeting to address it. A little polishing will be in order.

Sneak-A-Tag



Snatch It & Sneak-A-Tag

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Mini Games – Progression of Games

1. **All It:** Scatter starting position, and may chase anyone. Any player, wearing any color, may get anyone else out- even the same color.
2. **Four Team All It:** Four separate teams and games going at the same time. Each team scatters and plays in their quarter of the gym. Four mini games played simultaneously against same team! Blue plays against blue in blue area. Red plays against red in red area. Green plays against green in green area. Yellow plays against yellow in yellow area.
3. **Blue Team It:** blue team chases the other 3 teams. “Home Base” formations to begin for each team.
4. **Red Team It:** Home courts. Go get them red!
5. **Green Team It:** Home courts. Go get them green!
6. **Yellow Team It:** Home courts. Go get them yellow!
7. **Blue VS Red and Green VS Yellow:** “Home Court formation” to begin and 2 separate games at the simultaneously, each team is It and able to get the other.
8. **Red VS Green and Blue VS Yellow:** “Home Court formation” to begin and 2 separate games at the simultaneously, each team is It and able to get the other.
9. **Blue VS Green and Red VS Yellow:** “Home Court formation” to begin and 2 separate games simultaneously, each team is It and able to get the other.
10. **Four Teams VS Four Teams:** “Home Court” starting formation and one game, each team against the other three teams.
11. **Blue and Red VS Green and Yellow:** one game, two teams, “Combination Home Court” formation to begin to play against the other two combined teams, both combined teams are it and may play against each other.
12. **Red and Green VS Blue and Yellow:** one game, two teams, “Combination Home Court” formation to begin to play against the other two combined teams, both combined teams are It and may play against each other.
13. **Blue and Green VS Red and Yellow:** one game, two teams, “Combination Home Court” formation to begin to play against the other two combined teams, both combined teams are It and may play against each other.
14. **Blue> Red> Green> Yellow> Red:** from their “Home Court”, the four teams must be in the proper order for this to work. Each of the four teams points to the team to their left (clock wise), this is the only team they go after...but the team behind them is coming for them!
15. **Blue> Yellow> Green> Red> Blue:** Reverse the order. From their “Home Court”, the four teams must be in the proper order for this to work. Each of the four teams points to the team to their right (counter clock wise), this is the only team they go after...but the team behind them is coming for them!

Variation and progressions

- See above, list of mini games.
- Create other structures/mini games and add to the list/progression (Let me know)

Teaching Tips

- After each mini game it's okay to repeat the same game for practice and refinement. Good time on task.
- Or, progress on for additional challenge and excitement. Follow the progression prescription list of games.
- Ask the students their favorite, the one they liked the best!

Conclusion and closure

- Have the entire class sit in a general area. Check that both flags are on and secure. Demonstrate, without unbuckling the belts, how to remove them and store them properly.
- Also each team should get a well-earned, quick drink and join you for game debriefing.

*Piero Ferruci, *The Power of Kindness*, 2007 pg. 253-264

Get those flags!



This looks really fun!

Quick closure to Snatch It and Sneak-A-Tag. Congratulations adding extra running chasing tagging and flag snatching/adventure games to your program. We get so busy teaching PE and our core program - it is not easy offering these extra special activities. For those of you that do, well done!

Please let me know how it went. *Dale*

