

FUN AND GAMES

END



No matter when you look in our history, any time kids have a few spare minutes, they'll find something fun to do. Here's a bit more about just some of those things.

START

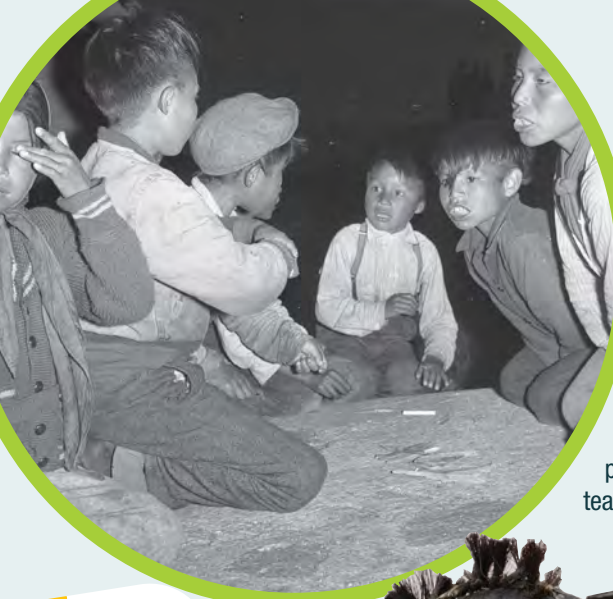
OUTSIDE

Whether they met on a crowded city block, amid a group of tipis, in a gravel pit or around a prairie coulee, kids have always used their imaginations to come up with outdoor fun. You've probably played games like tag, hide and seek or capture the flag — some go as far back as ancient Greece and Africa. Beginning in the 1700s, kids headed outside to fly simple homemade kites or race little boats they'd made themselves. Roller skating, trick bicycle riding, climbing trees, handball against a wall, making forts in the woods, skateboarding — many historic outdoor activities are still popular today.



ON THE PLAYGROUND

Recess has always been time to get out and play. For more than a century, kids have played marbles, trying to knock other kids' marbles out of a circle with their own. Jacks is a modern version of a game that used to be called knucklebones, because it was played with small animal bones. In jacks, you throw a ball up in the air, pick up a certain number of small playing pieces, and then catch the ball on the first bounce. Skipping, either with one rope or two, known as Double Dutch, had songs to go with it. Although kids still collect sports trading cards today, not long ago it was also very popular to play games with them on the schoolyard. Holding a corner of a hockey card between your scissored first and second fingers, you'd flick your wrist to shoot it toward a wall. Whoever got closest took all the cards. During their breaks from class, students also played games in groups. In Red Rover, teams stood in two lines and held hands. One team would chant "Red Rover, Red Rover, we call [name of kid on other team] over." The person named ran as hard as possible toward the other line. If they broke through, they went back to their own team; if not, they joined the other team. Ask a parent or grandparent about other recess games such as Simon Says, British Bulldog, What Time is it Mr. Wolf and Mother May I. Have you ever played any of them?



TRY IT!

Indigenous **hand games** are still very popular at pow wows and other gatherings. One player hides something in a hand while the other team tries to guess who's holding it. If they guess right, they get a point, usually represented by a small stick. If they get it wrong, the other team gets a stick, but the player they guessed is eliminated. The winning team is the first to take all the scoring sticks.



GAMES AND TOYS WERE NEARLY ALL HOMEMADE UNTIL THE LATE 1800S, WHEN COMPANIES STARTED MAKING THEM IN LARGE NUMBERS. OVER TIME, MORE AND MORE TOYS AND GAMES WERE BOUGHT IN STORES.



TOY GIANT

Toronto's Reliable Toy Company, which still exists, was once the biggest toy-maker in the British Empire. It started in the 1920s with other things, but soon focused on dolls. By the mid-1930s it had whole departments devoted to making things like the dolls' clothes, hair, eyes and shoes. Reliable was the first maker of plastic toys in Canada, starting during the Second World War to put out toy soldiers, ships, airplanes and more. It joined with another big Canadian toy-maker, Viceroy, in 1985.





FAMOUS FADS

A **fad** is something a lot of people get really excited about but that usually only lasts a short time. (Looking at you, fidget spinners!) Most fads started in the United States and spread to Canada. Kids have played with hoops for thousands of years, but in 1958, an American inventor created a plastic version called the **hula hoop**, shown above. Nearly 100 million were sold before the fad died after less than a year. In the late 1990s, it seemed nearly every kid was carrying around a little electronic “pet,” the **Tamagotchi**, shown at left, which required you to press buttons to look after it. **Pogo sticks** (top centre) boomed in the 1920s, when the craze saw people jumping as many times or as high as they could on the stick-and-spring gadgets. In the early 1980s, nearly every young person had at least one **Rubik’s Cube** (top left) but not everyone could solve the puzzle to make each side all one colour. For a few months in 1975, kids went crazy for the **Pet Rock**, advertised as a pet you didn’t have to look after. It was an ordinary rock in a cardboard box.

TRY IT!

Decorate five large popsicle sticks, each with a different pattern, but just on one side. Give each a value from one to five. Each player tosses the handful of sticks into the air and counts their total score. If you get a blank side up, that’s zero. First person to 20 points wins. This is based on the traditional Blackfoot bone game.





AT HOME

If it was cold outside, or there was company over, or if it was a boring weekend afternoon, or if the family just wanted something enjoyable to do after work was finished, there was indoor entertainment even before TV, radio or computers. Of course kids have always played with toys, from dolls and spinning tops to favourite card games. If the family was from China or other parts of Asia, they might play mah-jong, a game of matching tiles. If someone came from India or Jamaica, they'd likely play the board game Ludo. Mancala came to Canada from the Middle East and Africa. Jigsaw puzzles started out as handmade wooden creations, but became widely popular and affordable in the early 1900s when machines started stamping the pieces out of thick cardboard. Experts at passing time in extreme cold, the Inuit still play many different games involving a loop of string woven in and out of the fingers to make ever-changing patterns, as do many people around the world — cat's cradle is probably the best-known. At many gatherings, everyone was expected to have a party piece ready — to sing a song, recite a poem from memory, or play something unusual like the spoons or harmonica. Maybe your family still plays guessing games such as charades (silently acting out clues), I Spy, or Twenty Questions.

**CANADA'S FIRST
PLAYGROUND WAS
BUILT IN SAINT JOHN,
N.B., IN 1906.**



Library and Archives Canada, iStockphoto

TRY IT!

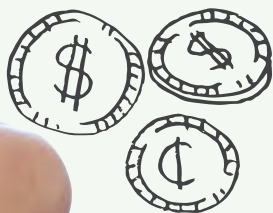
Animal muk is an Inuit game. Form a circle of friends. One person goes in the middle and tries to make someone in the circle laugh by making animal sounds. If you laugh, you switch places with the person in the middle. That's why it's also called the laughing game.



FROM NEWSPAPERS AND MAGAZINES TO A LIBRARY BOOK OR COMICS, READING HAS ALWAYS BEEN A POPULAR WAY TO SPEND TIME. IN THE PAST PEOPLE READ THINGS IN PRINTED FORM. NOW THEY CAN ALSO CHOOSE TO READ ON A SCREEN.

HANDY HOBBIES

Making things in their spare time was often a way for children to learn skills they'd need as adults, from a kid-sized bow and arrows to pillows or handkerchiefs decorated with embroidery. Sometimes kids used smaller versions of adult tools for things like cooking or woodworking. In later years, they might use kits created for fun, not work, such as corking (knitting in long tube shapes) or wood-burning (using a heated metal tool to decorate wood). Maybe, like countless kids before you, you collect something: stamps, coins, figurines, comic books, buttons or other items.



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