

Introduction

Now we'll begin approaching the game, one step at a time. During this journey we'll try to get in touch with our body in its entirety, we'll get acquainted with the space where our children spend most of their days, and we'll let go of words little by little, replacing them with gestures, facial expressions and bodily tension. Through every step, one of us will guide the others by reading these instructions out loud, and together we'll all play a few small preliminary games.

It's normal to feel scared or weirded out by the idea of letting go of words. Let's try to picture ourselves as shivering swimmers, trying to walk into the cold sea and feeling every inch of skin we manage to sink into the freezing waters. Even at the very end, we'll need a bit of courage to dive in!

The game proper will begin right after *Step 6: I never want to grow up!*, with no further readings or instructions. Before that, we're still allowed to exchange words or sounds. But with every step we'll be encouraged to speak more and more softly, or to stay quiet, especially as we focus on individual activities. All through this introduction, let's concentrate on the feelings we get from the lack of words.

Step 0. The secret garden

Let's spread evenly about the room, on our own, without forming groups or pairs.

We can begin moving around, focusing only on our own steps. Let's imagine we're in a public park: It's green and well-kept, lined with paths and covered in flowers. We're not alone here, but everyone else is a perfect stranger. When we cross paths with someone, let's greet each other politely and exchange a few pleasantries, just like we do in our everyday lives. Our interactions must be brief and devoid of emotion. We can use all the words we want, but in the end, they don't really mean anything.

The goal of this step is to break the ice and warm up a bit. We're starting off with a way of communicating that's the opposite of what we'll do once we're children again, surrounded by silence. In this Age of Grownups, we should be as neutral as possible and resist the temptation to crack jokes or be ironic. These formalities are inevitable in a civilised society: There's no need to distance ourselves from them.

This step lasts 5 minutes, counted by a timer.

Step 1. Someone's been sleeping in my bed!

Two of us must pick up two rolls of masking tape and stand at opposite ends of our game space. One at a time, we all go stand next to one or the other, until we have two groups of roughly equal size, with a big empty space in the middle. When we're all in position, we can let silence fall as each of us tries to think of a song, rhyme, or lullaby they remember fondly from their childhood. We don't need to recall the words, the melody is more than enough.

Now let's lie down as comfortably as we can and imagine a little Bed that fits us just right, big enough to take a nap in. Let's pass around the masking tape and help each other mark down the edges of every Bed in our group. If we have actual beds to lie down in, we should spend this time carefully tucking in the bedsheets and fluffing up the pillows. Let's try to speak at little as possible as we make our Beds; instead of chatting, we should quietly hum our Bedtime song.

The goal of this step is to get acquainted with this space and make the Beds truly our own, as we'll be required to lie in them over and over during the game.

This step lasts as long as needed, no timer required.

Step 2. Off to Never-Neverland

Let's all gather in the middle of the room and imagine we're back in the gardens, although we're now in the Age of Teens: We're all about sixteen or seventeen, and we've agreed to meet up here and play a friendly match.

Let's agree on a sport: Volleyball, football, dodgeball, whatever comes to mind. Then we'll decide who's bringing the ball. That person begins to give it shape with their hands, holding it between two fingers like a tiny ping pong ball, or maybe picking it up with both hands like a hefty, invisible basketball. When they're ready, they can throw the ball and we'll all begin playing together, trying to catch it or kick it, calling for passes and running to get it if it falls to the ground.

The goal of this step is to warm up our whole body, stretching our limbs and learning to move together as a group.

This step lasts 5 minutes, counted by a timer.

Step 3. Red and yellow, green and blue...

Let's pick up the pouch we've filled with chalk and stick our hand in it one at a time, to draw three pieces of chalk each. If we get two of the same colour, we must put one back and try again until we've got three different pieces. The chalk sticks we pick up this way stand for our *Base emotions*. To know which is which, we can take a look at *All the colours of emotion*, the sheet we've already put up. Still, let's do our best to learn these associations by heart. If we notice we're missing one of the suggested colours, this is the time to agree on a substitute and update the list accordingly.

Once we have our chalk, let's all go back to our Beds and spend the rest of this step colouring in the masking tape around them; if we're using actual beds, we should put some tape on their frames and colour that instead. Let's go wild with our imagination. We can find inspiration in the colours we've drawn, or in our childhood memories. This is another good time to quietly hum our Bedtime song. Let's leave our chalk sticks in our Bed once we're done doodling.

The goal of this step is to get to know our chalk and finish making our Beds.

This step lasts 5 minutes, counted by a timer.

Step 4. Who's afraid of the big bad wolf?

Let's all gather in the middle of the room and return to the gardens one more time, though this is the Age of Kids: We're all around nine or ten years old, and the park is suddenly much bigger, a vast and mysterious place. Our movements and interactions change, as does the way we see the world. Words become less important, gestures matter more and more, but our goal is still the same. We're here to play.

One of us immediately becomes It, and their goal will be to tag everyone else by touching them. When we're tagged, we freeze up like a statue and stay still until one of our friends manages to run up and touch us. To avoid being tagged and frozen, we can either run away or hug another child: This way we'll both be protected, as long as we keep holding each other. Be careful, though, because someone else might become It all of a sudden! The player who's It can give their role off to any of the frozen children just by ruffling their hair. Let's keep passing around the role of It and just enjoy the freedom of playing Freeze Tag without a care in the world.

The goal of this step is to learn the rules of Freeze Tag, the game that makes up one of the phases of every *Season*.

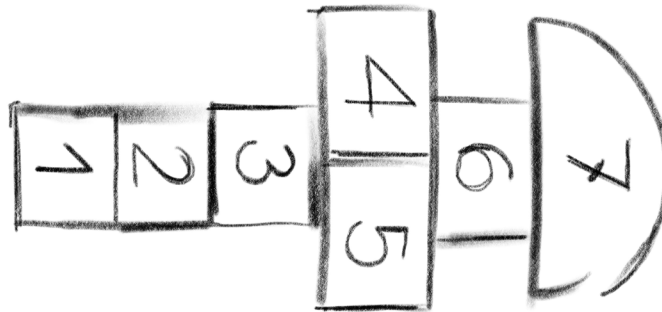
This step lasts 5 minutes, counted by a timer.

Step 5. Scurry, hurry, and a worry

Let's all go back to our Beds and choose one of our chalk sticks. Then let's all meet at one end of the game space, away from both rows of Beds.

Let's start drawing a Hopscotch court on the floor in chalk, like the one below. If we can't draw on the floor directly, we can make the court out of masking tape and colour the lines instead. Once our Hopscotch court is ready, let's pick up the two *Endings* and place them in the corresponding squares, 0 and 7.

The goal of this step is to create the Hopscotch court and play with chalk one last time. *This step lasts as long as needed, no timer required.*



Step 6. I never want to grow up!

Let's all gather in the middle of the room and go back to the gardens for one last time. This is the Age of Toddlers: We're all little children now, about five or six years old.

In this last step, the game finally becomes quiet: From now on, we must do our best to let go of words entirely. This is where we let our bodies do the talking, speaking through gestures, conveying meaning through touch. What does it feel like for such a small child to be all alone in such a big park? How did we end up here? Will we try to leave as soon as we can and run back into Mother's arms, or will we turn this wondrous jungle into our new home?

The goal of this step is to complete our *Return to childhood* and introduce *The quiet game*. When the alarm rings, we'll go back to our Beds. Someone will set a 2-minute timer for *Naptime*, then we'll close our eyes and let our Bedtime song lull us to sleep. When we open them again, the game begins.

This step lasts 5 minutes, counted by a timer.