



Adventure Based Learning (ABL) Activities

Good Practice Guide

Version 2

2021

Adventure Based Learning Activities

Adventure Based Learning (ABL) describes the purposeful use of sequenced activities, including games, trust activities and problem solving or team challenges, for personal and social development outcomes.

ABL activities involve minimal or portable props and can be used in a wide range of environments. Outcomes can be focused on individual or group learning and development.

This GPG includes large group games, also referred to as 'wide' and 'night' games and are often played in camp and other youth development focused environments.

This GPG covers situations where participants are being supervised by a designated leader and is not intended to cover unsupervised or free-time use.

This guidance is specific to **ABL** activities and is designed to be used in conjunction with the [General Guidance for Organised Outdoor Activities](#) and the [Adventure Based Learning Activities Planning Template](#).

Potential value of activity

ABL ACTIVITIES CAN PROVIDE OPPORTUNITIES FOR PARTICIPANTS TO:

- Learn more about themselves and each other
- Enhance ability to communicate and work co-operatively
- Overcome challenges - as individuals and/or in groups
- Increase their awareness of, and respect for, each other's strengths
- Develop better relationships with each other (and others, e.g. teachers)
- Develop their confidence and self esteem
- Experience different teaching styles and learning contexts
- Develop their team leadership skills
- Meet goals associated with the curriculum
- Explore large or holistic concepts through the use of metaphor.

To generate valuable outcomes, incorporating principles of ABL is recommended. These include building group rapport prior to the activity, developing a group contract, 'challenge by choice', personal and group goal setting, frontloading the activity then processing during and after the activity.

“You can learn more in an hour of play, then you can in a year of conversation”

Planning considerations

Activity specific planning.

In addition to the generic considerations (see [General Guidance for Organised Outdoor Activities](#)) consider:

- Checking the venue:
 - Can you run your activity safely in the area provided? Identify any potential hazards, e.g., other users, slippery, sloping or hard surfaces.
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 - Any additional portable equipment (planks, ropes etc.) needs to be fit for purpose.
 - What boundaries (if any) need to be placed on the activity area. Are the boundaries obvious? Will they also be obvious at night if the activity happens at night?
- Sequencing of activities:
 - Outcomes: what do you hope your participants will learn?
 - How will you brief and frontload your activities, and how will you help your participants process what they experience during and after the activity?
 - Participants’ energy and focus will fluctuate, your sequence of activities should allow for this. Include activities or time to give a break from focused time.
 - Plan a sequence of activities that build on challenge, skill and concepts to maintain participants’ interest, and to meet the outcome



Participants

How to ensure the activities match the participants' abilities and needs.

In addition to the generic participant considerations (see **General Guidance for Organised Outdoor Activities**) organisers of ABL activities should consider:

- Do the participants have sufficient fitness and mobility to be able to undertake the planned activities?
- Can participants be relied on to carry out safety sensitive tasks (either as participant or spotting).
- Consider sequencing trust and spotting activities so that participants can demonstrate reliability, before moving to activities with higher safety consequences.
- Consider what variations could be implemented if participant have taken part in the activity or challenge before.



Supervision

The level and style of supervision typically required for this activity.

CONSIDER THE FOLLOWING WHEN DETERMINING THE APPROPRIATE SUPERVISION STRUCTURE FOR ABL ACTIVITIES:

- The need to understand each activity, including its risks and challenges
- The need to understand the purpose and desired outcome of each activity and therefore, how to facilitate discussions to help the participants process their experiences
- Use sufficient leaders to ensure that participants can be supervised at a level where leaders can detect and correct improper procedures
- Know where to position leaders in order to be able to intervene or provide additional support if required
- Spectators or participants that are not actively involved should not interfere with the activity(s). They should be appropriately engaged and may require additional supervision.

“Competent leaders are one of the mainstays of ensuring safety”

Leader competence

The experience and knowledge required by those running the activity, both for normal operation and for managing emergencies. What competence assistant leaders need should also be considered (e.g. where parents or other adults are helping the person running the activity).

Skills and knowledge

Requirements of a leader who is working independently, or is responsible for a larger group of activity leaders include:

- Are they familiar with the area, any site-specific requirements and emergency procedures?
- Do they understand each separate activity, including risks, challenges and instructions for use?
- Do they understand the set-up requirements for the activities, including determining the suitability of the environment? Do they know how to dismantle the activity?
- Can they identify, manage, communicate and monitor hazards and risk?
- Can they prepare the group, including:
 - The group's understanding of safety roles (e.g., spotting)
 - Ensuring the group are appropriately clothed and equipped
 - Briefing activity outcomes and instructions?
- Can they monitor use of the activity, including spotting if required, and intervene to manage safety or behavioral issues?

Other activity leaders (including parents, other adults or trainee leaders helping to run an activity) should be operating under supervision and have received training that includes:

- Understanding the activity they are responsible for, including risks, challenges and instructions for use
- Ability to brief, monitor use of the activity and intervene to manage safety or behavioural issues
- Understanding their role in relation to the other leaders.

Relevant qualifications

The following qualifications contain components relevant to ABL:

- Unit Standard 24665 (Level 5): Facilitate adventure programmes for the personal and social development of the participants
- Unit Standard 468 (Level 3): Assist in facilitation of an adventure based learning programme for the development of the participants
- National Certificate in Outdoor Recreation (Instruction) Level 4-5, with strand in Adventure based learning.

Resources and equipment

Consider what equipment and resources are required to run the activity safely. The participants may be required to bring this or it maybe provided to them.

Participant

- Personal clothing should be suitable for active participation, and for the weather conditions
- Consider tying long hair back, limiting loose clothing and jewelry and ensuring pockets are empty
- Closed footwear may be necessary
- Personal medication (EpiPen, asthma inhaler), sunblock and insect repellent
- Sufficient water and food.

Leader

- Site map and information (e.g., instructions for using the venue, emergency evacuation information)
- Activity specific operating procedures
- Group medical and contact information
- Communications device
- First aid kit.

Venue

- The surrounding area and grounds should be suitable. Identify any potential hazards (e.g. fallen branches, slippery or sloping surfaces).
- Any additional portable equipment (e.g., planks, tyres, ropes) needs to be fit for purpose.



Further support

Places to gain more information from.

Activities / Ideas / Tools for EOTC:

<http://eotc.tki.org.nz/EOTC-home/For-teachers/Teaching-resources/Activities-ideas-tools>

Project Adventure Publications:

<https://www.flaghouse.com/General-Education/Project-Adventure/Publications/>

Playmeo – online Group Game Activity database, training and books:

<https://www.playmeo.com/>

Education Outdoors New Zealand:

<https://www.eonz.org.nz/>



Adventure Based Learning Activities Planning Template

Overarching Risk Management Guidance