



MAGIC TAG

"Just play. Have fun. Enjoy the game."

—Michael Jordan

OVERVIEW

Two or three “magicians” tag players who then become frozen “magic wands.” Those who have not been tagged encircle the magic wands, freeing them by calling out “Abracadabra!”

PLANNING FOR IT

WHEN YOU MIGHT USE THIS PRACTICE

- At the beginning of the school year to promote positive relationships and inclusion
- When an opportunity presents itself for a break outdoors
- At recess

TIME REQUIRED

- 10–15 minutes

LEVEL

- Lower Elementary

MATERIALS

- A large play area
- 2–3 plain t-shirts, pinnies, bandanas, or other method to designate magicians

LEARNING OBJECTIVE

Students will:

- Engage in active exercise
- Play as a team
- Practice kindness and helping behavior

ADDITIONAL SUPPORTS

- [Making Practices Culturally Responsive](#)
- [Adapting Practices for Students with Special Needs](#)
- [Making Classrooms and Schools Trauma-Informed and Healing-Centered](#)

SEL COMPETENCIES

- Self-Management
- Social Awareness
- Relationship Skills

HOW TO DO IT

REFLECTION BEFORE THE PRACTICE

Think of the last time you played a fun game with friends or family. How did it make you feel? Did it strengthen the connection between everyone?

INSTRUCTIONS

SETUP

- Designate a large play area with clear boundaries for players to run.
- Give plain t-shirts to the players who will be magicians (taggers).
- Demonstrate safe and gentle tagging with butterfly fingers (a light touch with the tips of fingers) and appropriate tagging areas (arms, back, and shoulders).
- Explain that when you are tagged, you turn into a magic wand and freeze.
- Designate 2–3 magicians to start the game.
- Review the consequences for stepping outside the boundaries: you automatically become a magic wand.

HOW TO PLAY

- The object of the game is to not get tagged by the magicians who are turning everyone into magic wands.

- Magicians use butterfly tags. If a player gets tagged, they turn into a magic wand and freeze.
- Players stay frozen until two players join hands in a circle around a magic wand and say "Abracadabra!"
- If players are not tagged, they're avoiding the magicians and undoing the spell for the magic wands.
- Rotate the magicians so that everyone has a chance to be a magician.

MID-GAME QUESTIONS

How can the magicians work together?

- What can the players do to be successful in this game?

END-OF-GAME QUESTIONS

- How did the players work together to free the "magic wands"?
- How did it feel to be helped by other players?

VARIATION

- Change the speed for players. For example, they can skip, hop, heel-to-toe walk, etc.

REFLECTION AFTER THE PRACTICE

Are students playing more cooperatively with each other after playing Magic Tag?

THE RESEARCH BEHIND THE PRACTICE

EVIDENCE THAT IT WORKS

A longitudinal study of 77 first graders in two diverse urban American schools found that [playing games at recess](#) predicted greater social competence, including being liked by peers and reciprocal friendship, at the end of the school year as compared to the beginning, especially for boys. This finding supports decades of research that [links games and play](#) to children's social development.

WHY DOES IT MATTER?

[Positive peer relationships](#) are key to long-term student well-being and [academic success](#). Students who tend to be [accepted rather than rejected](#) by their peers exhibit strong social skills, such as cooperating, negotiating, communicating, and compromising. Playing games that require students to demonstrate kindness and cooperation helps students to both practice these skills and to foster stronger bonds with their fellow players.

SOURCE

Playworks' new [SEL Game Guide](#) contains more than 150 games that you can use to reinforce social and emotional skills. Inside, you will find brain breaks, recess favorites, variations on classic games, and facilitation tips that make playtime fun, safe, and inclusive for all kids. Visit www.playworks.org to learn more about Playworks and how play can help kids stay active and learn valuable life skills.