

# **Low Ropes Obstacles**

**Updated August 2002**

### **Disclaimer**

The information in this manual is designed to be used in conjunction with a one-day training program at YMCA Camp St. Croix. The information contained herein does not represent the requisite information to operate the obstacles of the Low Ropes Course, nor does it constitute a complete and accurate portrayal of all the necessary safety protocols.

YMCA Camp St. Croix cannot be held responsible for misuse of this material.

## How To Use The Following Pages...

### Name of the Activity

- Level:** One = Minor Potential for Physical Risk (if not run properly)  
Two = Fair Degree of Physical Risk (if not run properly)  
Three = Major Physical Risk (if not run properly)
- Sequence:** Early = Schedule near the beginning of the day.  
Middle = Can be used after the team is working together.  
End = Should only be used if the team is working well.
- Location:** Main Camp = Low Ropes Course near River Center  
North Property = DayCroix Area  
Both Courses
- Focus:** Communication  
Cooperation  
Caring (Trust)
- Description:** What the obstacle physically looks like?
- Objective:** What is the basic premise of the obstacle?
- Story One:** A story to tell groups to make the activity more interesting.
- Variations:** Other options to allow you to reconfigure the obstacle to meet other needs or present different challenges to your group.
- Rules:** 1. What you need to abide by to remain safe and not cheat on the activity!

### Safety Considerations

- What to watch out for. These are just general guidelines and do not represent all of the physical, mental and emotional hazards that you may encounter. There is a cardinal rule to teambuilding: as soon as you say that you've seen it all, God will prove you wrong.
- Check surrounding environment for roots, stumps, branches, etc. is a default safety consideration. Always check to make sure it is safe to use the obstacle!

### Processing Questions

- What questions can you ask to facilitate discussions? These are provide in case you get stuck on what to say or how to relate an activity to your group.

### Records:

These are records from other groups and camps. If you beat them, let me know and I will update this manual. (I use records to motivate some groups to achieve.)

## All Aboard

**Level:** One  
**Sequence:** Early  
**Location:** Both Courses  
**Focus:** Cooperation



**Description:** A series of five progressively smaller platforms.

**Objective:** To get the entire group onto a wooden platform.

**Story One:** The group is a bunch of penguins that are adrift on icebergs that are slowly melting. They must keep their feet out of the water due to sharks that have been following the icebergs in the hopes of a snack.

**Story Two:** Mount St. Croix, a volcano we thought was extinct just erupted. Lava is rushing this way very fast and the only place of safety is the rocks in front of them. Unfortunately “lava waves” keep taking out the rocks and reducing the ground they have to stand on.

**Variations:** Have a group sing a song, recite poetry, give a synopsis of their organization’s mission, etc. while all balanced on the final platform.

**Rules:**

1. No heroic sacrifices for the team. (Everyone must be on the platform.)
2. No body part can be touching the ground for ten seconds.
3. There are no wrong solutions, only unsafe ones.

### Safety Considerations

- Check surrounding environment for roots, stumps, branches, etc.
- Watch younger groups “charging” to get onto platforms.
- Instruct participants that if they start to fall, to simply step off.
- Be careful of the group falling off a platform in a “clump”.
- Facilitator should be prepared to spot, if necessary.
- For younger and/or dysfunctional groups, do not allow participants to get on shoulders.

### Processing Questions

- When looking at the size of the platforms, did you think you would be able to complete the task? Why or why not?
- As the icebergs/rocks disappeared, what happened to the challenge?
- Was there a particular leader at the beginning of the activity? How about at the end?

### Records:

Large Platform –

Medium Platform – 22 Adults (Subway Regional Managers – 1998)

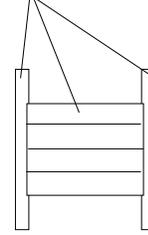
Small Platform –

Tiny Platform -

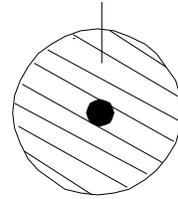
## Barrel Roll / Meat Grinder

**Level:** Two to Three  
**Sequence:** Middle to End  
**Location:** North Property  
**Focus:** Cooperation

Safe to Touch



Unsafe! Blades!  
Both inside and out!



**Description:** A wire spool suspended off the ground.

**Objective:** To move the entire group over the barrel.

**Story One:** Famed nature magazine, International Geographic (not “National Geographic” so they can’t sue me), has sent you on assignment to a meat factory to discover what truly lurks inside a hot dog. Unfortunately, as you work the night shift one Thursday, you get locked inside the factory. With the “Meat Chunk” holiday going on, no one will be back to rescue you until Tuesday!

You realize there is only one way out: climb through the meat grinder, drop to the floor below and go through the emergency exit.

- Rules:**
1. Everyone must go over the Meat Grinder, not around, under, etc.
  2. All participants not in the process of going over must spot!
  3. All participants must land feet first on the other side.
  4. No one going across can walk back around to lift.
  5. The last person is NOT allowed to try to jump over! (They will hit their chest on the barrel, their feet will go underneath and they will land on their back!)
  6. You may not touch the inside (vertical) or outside of the grinder as they are covered with “blades”! The only “safe” areas to touch are the horizontal surfaces facing you. (See diagram.) Touching the blades results in everyone starting over. (You may also not allow the participant to use that body part.)

### Safety Considerations

- Check surrounding environment for roots, stumps, branches, etc.
- If the barrel rolls forward with someone lying on their stomach, the participant will land on their head and break their neck. If it looks unsafe, it probably is...
- The barrel can be lowered to accommodate different skill levels.

### Processing Questions

- How long did it take your group to find a safe solution?
- Were you nervous going over the barrel? Why or why not?
- What was the greatest challenge for this activity?

### Records:

None.

## Beam (Adjustable)

**Level:** One to Three  
**Sequence:** Early to End  
**Location:** North Property  
**Focus:** Cooperation



**Description:** A horizontal beam of adjustable height.

**Objective:** To move the entire group up and over the beam.

**Story One:** *If used as an Early Activity:* Have you ever wondered how High Jump people get started? Do they simply start leaping over tall objects? What if they are afraid of heights? Here is the St. Croix Olympic High Jump obstacle, and we are going to train you to clear this bar safely!

**Story Two:** *If used as an End Activity:* Welcome to the Beam! You must be good! Not many groups get to play on this puppy! The Beam is pretty straightforward: you must move your group up and over.

**Variations:** Adjust the height to the level of difficulty required by the group. If this is an opening activity, lower it to approximately four feet. If you are using this as an ending activity, raise it to the full eight feet mark.

**Rules:**

1. Everyone must go over the Beam, not around, under, etc.
3. You are allowed to touch the Beam, but not the support poles. If you do, the whole group starts over.
4. Everybody must land, feet first and gently, on the other side. If anyone lands unsupported, the whole group will start over.
5. Up to two people may sit on top of the Beam and lift, but they are only allowed to lift twice before they must come down.
6. Everyone must spot. Anyone not spotting (hands up, attention focused) will cause the group to start over. If this becomes a big problem, quit this activity.
7. Once over, you may assist people as they come down and spot on either side, but you cannot walk back around and lift!

### Safety Considerations

- If your group cannot handle it, don't attempt it!
- Check surrounding environment for roots, stumps, branches, etc.

### Processing Questions

- This is bragging rights to simply reach this obstacle. If the group completes it, they have finished one of the more difficult obstacles!

### Records:

None. To attempt this as a timed activity is simply too dangerous.

## Blind Maze

**Level:** One  
**Sequence:** Early  
**Location:** North Property  
**Focus:** Trust



**Description:** A maze of bungee cord ropes.

**Objective:** To move the entire group through the maze while blindfolded.

**Story One:** You have entered the maze of the minotaur. This is not a good idea, and it certainly wasn't a good idea to do it at night! You must find your way through the maze as a team. The group may decide if they will work together or, since there is a big, scary monster in the maze, let it be everyone for themselves.

**Variations:** The Blind Maze can be adjusted so that there is an actual end. If the group successfully moves their team from Point A to Point B, they have accomplished the task.

Adjust the cords so that there is no ending. Tell the group that they are working as individuals. If you get completely stuck, however, you can stop moving, raise your hand and ask for help. When someone raises their hand, take off the blindfold and lead them quietly out of the maze. With this variation, it teaches people that there are times when you can't do it on your own.

Place "obstacles" on trees. The group may touch each obstacle only one time. If touched more than once, the whole group must start over.

**Rules:**

1. No running!
2. Be gentle when moving around others.
3. If you don't want a blindfold, we will trust you to keep your eyes closed.

### Safety Considerations

- Check surrounding environment for roots, stumps, branches, etc.
- Watch moving too fast!

### Processing Questions

- How much did you rely on others around you? Why or why not?
- Is it easier to depend on your team or your own abilities? Why?
- How many of you found it difficult to ask for help? Why?

### Records:

None.

## Cargo Net

**Level:** Two  
**Sequence:** Middle  
**Location:** North Property  
**Focus:** Cooperation



**Description:** A rope net suspended parallel to the ground.

**Objective:** To move the team through the net.

**Story One:** I don't really have one for this obstacle. If you find a good one, let me know.

**Variations:** If you look at the cargo net, you will notice that there are essentially two directions you can move: side/side and high/low.

I usually start with the side-to-side variation. All the group must do is move their teammates from one side to the other without touching the ground. (If you really want to be nice, let them touch the ground.) This is just to get participants used to stepping on the ropes and moving safely.

The high-to-low variation requires the group to move their team from the high side to the low side without anyone touching the ground. Touching the ground or "falling" from the net causes the group to start over.

**Rules:**

1. Everyone must go through the net, not under, around, etc.
2. Everyone must stay on the side of the net they are on. No running around to other sides to assist teammates.
3. If anyone touches the ground, the whole group must start over.
4. If anyone jumps out of the net, rather than being spotted, the whole group starts over.

### Safety Considerations

- Check surrounding environment for roots, stumps, branches, etc.
- Flipping into the cargo net! This is exceptionally dangerous!
- Watch how the group dismounts on the far side. It must be spotted.
- Caution the group against sudden tugs on the net when someone is moving.

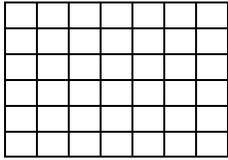
### Processing Questions

- Did your teammates help or hinder your movements? Why?
- What could the group have done better to assist you?

### Records:

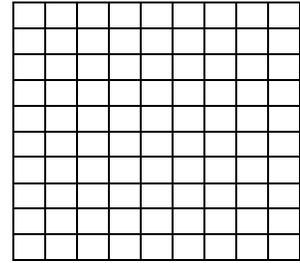
None. To attempt this as a timed activity is simply too dangerous.

## Corporate Maze



Main Camp (6X7)

North Property (9x10)



**Level:** One  
**Sequence:** Early to Middle  
**Location:** Both Courses  
**Focus:** Communication

**Description:** A wooden platform with a grid marked on it.

**Objective:** To move the team through the hidden path.

**Story One:** Use the analogy that the maze represents the path to the future. Each step you take is a movement toward your goal. For students, it may be graduation from High School; for corporate groups, the path to success.

Every day we are confronted with choices that will affect our success or failure. There is only one path to the finish, however, unlike in the real world.

**Variations:** Have “trap doors” in the maze. A trapdoor can either be positive (reveal the next correct square, two free mistakes, etc.) or negative (maze route changes, everyone silent) consequences. Inform the group ahead of time about this rule, however, otherwise it will look like you are changing the rules.

**Rules:**

1. One person steps into the maze to begin.
2. Every misstep will result in a “buzz” from the Facilitator. If they are buzzed, the participant must step off the maze and let someone else try.
3. No placing objects to mark correct squares. (Hansel and Gretel approach.)

### Safety Considerations

- Falling off the edge of the platform. (Have people use stair on raised maze.)

### Processing Questions

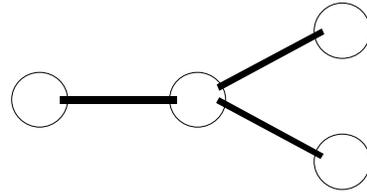
- How many times did you repeat the same mistake? Why did this happen?

### Records:

Best time for Main Camp: Not recorded.  
Best time for North Property: Not recorded.

## Corporate T

**Level:** One  
**Sequence:** Middle  
**Location:** North Property  
**Focus:** Cooperation



**Description:** Four stumps (telephone poles) connected by 2” x 10” boards.

**Objective:** To move two teammates from the far right poles, to the middle pole and to have them work together to reach the final pole. (In some respects, it is similar to a “Wild Woozy”.)

**Story One:** I don’t have one. Play with the obstacle and find something that works!

**Rules:**

1. One person starts on each of the two ends of the “T” (more of a “Y”, actually).
2. The two teammates must work their way to the middle pole and, from there, reach the final pole before stepping down.
3. If one of the partners touches the ground, both start over.
4. All participants standing on the obstacle must have at least two spotters, one on either side of them. (The more, the merrier!)
5. No jumping or running on the obstacle!

### Safety Considerations

- Check surrounding environment for roots, stumps, branches, etc.
- Make sure spotters are in place *before* someone begins their attempt!
- Falling off the obstacle can injure ankles. Make sure spotters are paying attention!

### Processing Questions

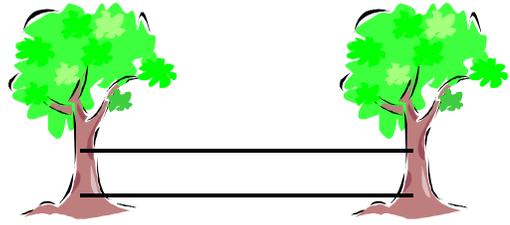
- How did individual movements affect the partners attempting the obstacle?
- How did spotters play a role in this activity?

### Records:

None.

## Electric Fence / High-Low

**Level:** Two  
**Sequence:** Middle  
**Location:** North Property  
**Focus:** Cooperation



**Description:** Two shock cords strung between trees.

**Objective:** To move the group from one side of the obstacle to the other.

**Story One:** You are out on assignment with International Geographic (not “National Geographic” so they can’t sue me) photographing the famous Upidstay Hyenas in the grasslands of Africa. Suddenly you realize that may they aren’t that stupid after all; they are all staring hungrily at you! You take off running back to the village at a pace that would put an Olympic sprinter to shame, the hyenas on your heels! At the village, however, you encounter an electric fence that is designed to keep out the hyenas and which happens to be, quite coincidentally, blocking your entrance! You must get over the electric fence to safety!

**Variations:** Instead of an “Electric Fence”, this obstacle can be treated as a “High-Low”. Half the group must go over the highest line and half must go under. The team must have at least two people on each side before they are allowed to pass someone over the cord. (Similar to a “Spider Web”.)

**Rules:**

1. Everyone must go over the Fence, not under, around or through!
2. No one may attempt to climb the trees and no other items may be used to cross the Fence. (This gets rid of the idea of pole-vaulting.)
3. Everyone must land, in control (spotted), on their feet. If not, you start over!
4. If anyone touches a rope, the group starts over.
5. The group must remain connected at all times. If contact is ever broken between all team members, the whole group must start over.

### Safety Considerations

- Check surrounding environment for roots, stumps, branches, etc.
- Make sure spotters are in place *before* someone begins their attempt!
- If you’re group can’t handle Electric Fence, consider switching to High-Low.

### Processing Questions

- How many times did you start over? Why?
- Did you have to change your plan as the activity went along? Why or why not?
- How did spotters play a role in this activity?

### Records:

None.

## Energy Circle / Combination Lock

**Level:** One  
**Sequence:** Early  
**Location:** North Property  
**Focus:** Communication



**Description:** Two circles of stumps (telephone poles), one within the other.

**Objective:** To move around the circle(s) to arrive back at your original position.

**Story One:** Have you ever wondered how a combination lock works? Well, today let's find out! We have shrunk you down, thanks to our handy shrinking ray, and have put you inside your standard padlock. To open the lock, you must move in a predetermined manner. If there is a mistake, the lock won't open and you have to start again.

- Rules:**
1. Have everyone choose a pole to start from (preferably not too far apart).
  2. Everyone must stay on the poles. If you fall off, everyone starts over. If you step on a pole that is not in use (had no one standing on it at the start), the whole group starts over.
  3. Choose two people from the group and designate them the combination people. They have exclusive use of any pole they stand on. In other words, nobody may share a pole with him or her.
  4. No more than two feet may touch a pole at any time.
  5. A variation that may be introduced is to require the group to remain connected at all times. If contact is ever broken between all team members, the whole group must start over.

### Safety Considerations

- Check surrounding environment for roots, stumps, branches, etc.
- It is not inconceivable to fall and injure an ankle.
- Although it is unlikely, someone may fall and land on a stump. Spot anyone that may be a risk. If you have someone who may have problems, have everyone hang onto each other to provide additional supervision.

### Processing Questions

- How did individual movements affect the whole group?
- How did the combination lock person/people affect the movements of the group?
- How does working with others here reflect upon your life outside of camp?

### Records:

None.

## Meuse / Raging River

**Level:** One  
**Sequence:** Early to Middle  
**Location:** Meuse (North Property) / Raging River (Main Camp)  
**Focus:** Cooperation



**Description:** A series of small platforms with 2" x 6" boards.

**Objective:** To move the group from one side of the obstacle to the other using the boards.

**Story One:** The group has found itself on the edge of a raging river of lava that they must cross. The vapors of the lava are so intense that you cannot jump to the islands without toasting like a marshmallow. The only safe way to cross the river is using the two ("Meuse" has three) "fire-proof" boards. However, the heat is such that once you begin to cross, you cannot return for fear of heat stroke.

**Variations:** In a "Meuse" setup, there is a point where the participants must place a board between two of the islands and, from the center of that board, extend a second board to reach the next island. This results in one board being left behind; hence the reason "Meuse" has three and "River" only has two.

For added difficulty, assess penalties for touching the River. For example, if I touch with my leg, I "lose" my leg (it is lava, after all). If a board drops in the river, it is swept away and disappears.

**Rules:**

1. Everyone must go through the river, not around it!
2. Everyone starts on the same side and works their way across the River.
3. Once you begin to cross the river, you cannot go back.
4. No jumping from platform to platform, you must use the boards to cross.
5. No running on boards.
6. Be careful as you hand the boards to each other. No throwing boards! Boards must be passed at waist level or lower.
7. If a person touches the ground in the River, they start over.
8. If you throw a board, the group starts over.

### Safety Considerations

- Check surrounding environment for roots, stumps, branches, etc.
- Watch for participants messing around on the boards or platforms.

### Processing Questions

- What did your group do to move people across? What worked and what didn't?
- How does this relate to your group and the goals you have set for yourself?

### Records:

None.

## Mohawk Walk

**Level:** Two  
**Sequence:** Middle  
**Location:** North Property  
**Focus:** Cooperation / Caring



**Description:** A zigzag of foot wires with a hand rope on the central tree.

**Objective:** To move the group from one side of the obstacle to the other.

**Story One:** While pursuing the fabled Road Runner for International Geographic (not “National Geographic” so they can’t sue me), you encounter a canyon that makes the Grand Canyon look less than “grand”. Thankfully, you brought the ACME Canyon-Crosser 4000 which will, when activated, create a four-lane interstate highway across the gap. However, as you fire it, true to the cartoon nature of ACME products, you only get a single wire and a hand rope.

**Variations:** Depending on how much challenge you want, you may choose to not allow the use of the rope. Make the group get to the rope, rather than hand it to them.

**Rules:**

1. Everyone must go across the canyon, not through it, around it, etc.
2. There must be two spotters for each person attempting to cross. They are to be placed in front and behind the participant and should always have their hands up, ready to catch the person if they should fall.
3. I will allow participants to “tag” a tree, announce they are stepping down and then come back to help spot other people to that point. When they are ready to continue, they start again from the tree they stepped from.
4. If someone touches the ground, leans to the point a spotter must catch them or steps down at a tree before announcing they are going back to spot, the whole group must start over. The rope (if used) goes back to the tree it started from.
5. No other means of support can be used to cross the canyon except what is given to the team. No “crutches” out of sticks, etc. If the group drops the rope, they may retrieve it, but it must be done by hand!

### Safety Considerations

- Check surrounding environment for roots, stumps, branches, etc.
- A number of “athletic” participants will attempt to run across the wire, especially as they work to reach the rope. It can be done safely if the spotters are ready.

### Processing Questions

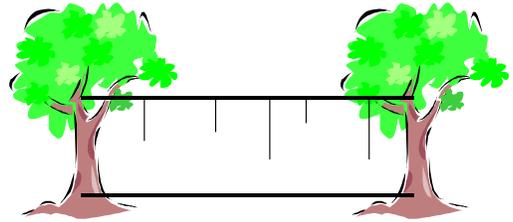
- Who had the least problems? Who had the most? Why is there a difference?
- Who helped out the most? Could the group have made it without them?

### Records:

None. It is simply too dangerous to

## Multivine Traverse

**Level:** One  
**Sequence:** Early  
**Location:** North Property  
**Focus:** Caring



**Description:** A foot wire with multivines hanging above.

**Objective:** To move a participant safely from one side of the obstacle to the other.

**Story One:** Don't have one. Sorry! (But I do have the lovely artwork above to show you what the activity looks like.) 😊

**Variations:** Have two people link left arms. They must now move as one person across the wire, utilizing each other and their one free hand to keep their balance.

**Rules:**

1. Two spotters are needed for each person, one in front and one behind.
2. If two people cross together, you will need to have four spotters, two for each.
3. If a participant touches the ground or leans on a spotter, they must restart. If they are with a partner, both people go back.

### Safety Considerations

- Check surrounding environment for roots, stumps, branches, etc.
- It is common for adults to fall from this obstacle. Make sure spotters are attentive!
- At most, only allow two people on the activity at any one time!

### Processing Questions

- How easy was it to do the obstacle alone? Did it help or hinder you to have a partner?

### Records:

None. To attempt this as a timed activity is simply too dangerous.

## Nitro Crossing / Prouty's Landing

**Level:** Two  
**Sequence:** Middle  
**Location:** Both Courses  
**Focus:** Cooperation / Caring

**Description:** A rope swing with optional boundary markers.

**Objective:** To move the team and a bucket of water over a "canyon".



**Story One:** You wonder if your boss doesn't like you. I mean, you are the most successful smoke jumpers (firefighters who leap out of planes and fight the fire from the inside out) in the entire country! But, on this mission, you notice that your boss has soaked your parachutes with kerosene and, instead of water, you have been given a canister of nitroglycerin. (It's probably just your imagination.) You leap into the middle of the fire and immediately your 'chutes burst into flames. You land safely (though uncomfortably) but unfortunately the can of nitro lands on a small cliff in the middle of a canyon with only a small vine above it. You must retrieve the nitro and cross the canyon to successfully complete your mission.

**Variation:** "Prouty's Landing" is played with the same rules as below. However, the group must start on one platform and swing across to the other. Landing off a platform results in the group starting over.

**Rules:**

1. Everyone must go over the canyon, not around or through.
2. The can of water starts in the middle of the canyon, right underneath the rope.
3. Everyone starts on one side and must safely reach the other. The distance between boundaries can be no more than sixteen feet. (Ten is usually sufficient for a challenge while still maintaining the safety of the team.)
4. Groups must figure out how to retrieve the rope. I generally discourage the run-and-leap method, although for some groups, that is acceptable.
5. Everyone must land gently on the other side. If someone leaps off the rope, unspotted, I usually make the group start over.
6. If the water spills, the group starts over. If someone touches the ground between the boundaries, the whole group starts over.

### Safety Considerations

- Check surrounding environment for roots, stumps, branches, etc.
- Don't let the group leave someone behind! This is an emotional safety consideration.

### Processing Questions

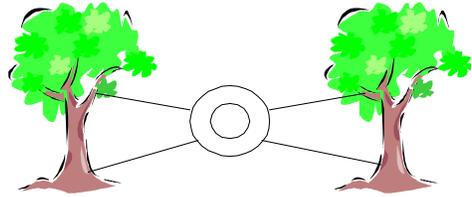
- Did your group work on getting the team across or did they focus on retrieving the water?

### Records:

None.

## Porthole

**Level:** Two  
**Sequence:** Middle  
**Location:** North Property  
**Focus:** Cooperation / Caring



**Description:** Two hula-hoops suspended by shock cord.

**Objective:** To pass the team through the hoop without touching the sides.

**Story One:** Your ship is sinking. This, to many people, is a problem. You, however, are in a worse state: you are trapped below decks and must escape. Your only chance is for the group to work their way through the porthole and into the storm-tossed, freezing, shark-filled ocean below. (And this is what you consider safe?) You break the glass out, but some of it remains stuck in the frame. To be safe, you must avoid touching the edges or else you will be cut.

**Variation:** The middle hula-hoop can be removed to provide a large hole, just in case you have some larger people in your group...

**Rules:**

1. Everyone must go through the hoop, not around it, under, over, etc.
2. Everyone must be involved in spotting. If someone is not paying attention or steps back from the group, end the activity!
3. The Facilitator will spot for the first person coming through. After that, the group is on its own.
4. Touching the ropes or hula-hoops will cause the group start over.
5. The group must explain to you how they will safely protect the first person and the last person as they move through the obstacle.

### Safety Considerations

- Check surrounding environment for roots, stumps, branches, etc.
- Due to the lack of ability to spot the first and last participants, this can be a dangerous obstacle. Facilitators need to spot these people to ensure their safety!

### Processing Questions

- How difficult was it to come up with a plan? Did you have to modify the plan as you went along? Why or why not?
- How safe did you feel with your teammates spotting you? What did they do well? What could they have done better?

### Records:

None. To attempt this as a timed activity is simply too dangerous.

## Pyramid

**Level:** Two  
**Sequence:** Middle  
**Location:** North Property  
**Focus:** Cooperation / Caring



**Description:** A pyramid-shaped wooden structure.

**Objective:** To move the team over and under the cross beams to reach the other side.

**Story One:** International Geographic (not “National Geographic” so they can’t sue me) has sent you on assignment to explore the farthest reaches of the remote jungles of Arizona. (They have a lot of money but not a lot of intelligence.) You are out photographing nature when suddenly you stumble into the home of the terrible Gonnegetcha Gorillas who would like to have you for dinner (correction, as dinner). You run away as fast as you can, a pack of gorillas on your heels. You come to the edge of a ravine and find there is a bridge that will lead you to safety! It’s built a little funny because the local natives know that the only thing these gorillas are afraid of is heights! Wasting no time, you begin to cross the bridge!

- Rules:**
1. Everyone must go over the “Pyramid”, not around, under, etc.
  2. Everyone must be spotted by at least two teammates as they cross. Failure to do so will cause the group to start over. Participants who have completed the activity may return to help spot.
  3. To move across (and elude the gorillas) you must use the over/under method. You must go over the first board, under the second, over the third, etc.
  4. Anyone who is supported by a spotter (as in a fall) or that touches the ground will cause the group to start over.
  5. No more than five people are allowed on the “Pyramid” at any one time.

### Safety Considerations

- Check surrounding environment for roots, stumps, branches, etc.
- Spotters need to be stationed under the Pyramid. For lower levels, their only goal is to prevent the participant from landing on their head. Higher levels may be spotted in whatever fashion works best.
- Be aware of emotional safety during this activity. Don’t let the group leave people behind! (Usually the athletic ones will go first and leave the rest behind.)

### Processing Questions

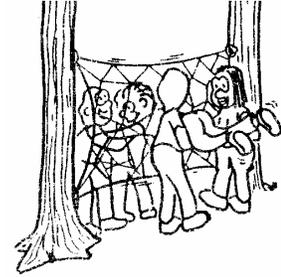
- Did the group simply attempt the activity or figure out how to get everyone through first?
- How did you have to work together to make it across the bridge?

### Records:

None.

## Spider Web

**Level:** Three  
**Sequence:** Middle to End  
**Location:** Both Courses  
**Focus:** Communication / Cooperation / Caring



**Description:** A web of string or shock cord hung in trees.

**Objective:** To pass the team through the web without touching the sides.

**Story One:** International Geographic (not “National Geographic” so they can’t sue me) has sent you on assignment. A satellite has detected a new valley in a strange land (like Arizona) and you are sent to explore. You see plants no one has ever seen before, animals no one has ever seen before and giant spiders from “Arachnophobia” that no one has ever seen before. One morning, you wake up to find yourself faced with a giant spider web. Being the clever people you are, you realize that if there is a giant spider web, there must be a ... (giant spider). If you look at the top of the tree, you’ll see the monster! Spiders spin webs and wait for something to get trapped in them. You must get through the web without touching it, otherwise you will be trapped and the spider will come to investigate!

- Rules:**
1. Everyone must go through the web, not around it, under, over, etc.
  2. Each hole can be used once; larger groups can use the upper holes twice.
  3. Everyone must be involved in spotting. If not, stop the activity!
  4. People going through the bottom holes may go under their own power. However, do not allow jumping, diving or rolling through the web!
  5. There must be two people on each side before you can pass someone through!
  6. A person must go through the web feet-first. When passing, the participant’s head should never go below their waist. On the other side, their feet must be lowered to the ground so that they are able to stand.
  7. If someone touches the web, the group starts over. If they are passing someone at the time, they are to put that participant down safely before starting over. (I make them shout, “Go away, spider!” before starting over. If I do not make them say it, they can continue without restarting.)

### Safety Considerations

- Check surrounding environment for roots, stumps, branches, etc.
- Spotters must be extra careful to protect the participant from landing on their head/neck!

### Processing Questions

- How supported did you feel throughout this activity?
- What other “webs” will this group face? How will you support each other in the future?

### Records:

None. To attempt this as a timed activity is simply too dangerous.

## Team Wall

**Level:** Three  
**Sequence:** End  
**Location:** Both Courses  
**Focus:** Cooperation



**Description:** A large, smooth wall with a deck and ladder on the back.

**Objective:** To cross over the wall using teamwork skills only.

**Story One:** Behold the Wall! You have been sent to Basic Training by International Geographic (not “National Geographic” so they can’t sue me). After weeks of running through toxic peanut butter swamps, challenging Upidstay Hyenas, identifying differences between mosquitoes and giraffes (they look similar, don’t they?), you are given the final challenge: the Wall!

- Rules:**
1. Everyone must go over the Wall, not around it, under, etc.
  2. The team may climb only the front of the wall, and no other objects may be used. (I discourage letting the group use belts and clothing for assistance.) Also, do not let them grab clothing, jewelry, etc. for lifting purposes!
  3. Stress proper lifting techniques so the group won’t hurt their backs.
  4. Everyone must spot! Failure to do so will end the activity. No exceptions! Once a person has gone over the top, they may return to spot (but not lift). Spotters need to be in a horseshoe shape in case the participant falls sideways.
  5. No running up the wall! It doesn’t work!
  6. Each person may only assist two teammates from the top of the wall.
  7. At most, only three people may remain at the top of the Wall at any time. Once a fourth person is up, someone must come down.
  8. Be aware of how you lift someone. If it is hurting them, change your plan!
  9. Group must present their plan to the Facilitator before beginning.

### Safety Considerations

- Check surrounding environment for roots, stumps, branches, etc.
- If your group cannot handle this activity, do not do it. It is that simple...

### Processing Questions

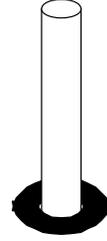
- This is one of the toughest challenges at camp. How did it feel to get here?
- Had we started with this activity, would it have been impossible? Why or why not?

### Records:

None. To attempt this as a timed activity is simply too dangerous.

## Tire Pole / Giant's Finger

**Level:** Two  
**Sequence:** End  
**Location:** North Property  
**Focus:** Communication / Cooperation



**Description:** An 11-foot vertical telephone pole with a tire at its base.

**Objective:** To remove the tire without touching the pole.

**Story One:** Oh no! While researching an upcoming seminar on “Pollution and its Impact on Small, Fluffy Creatures”, you discover that the new, multi-billion dollar, anti-pollution, pollution control device has been installed on the specially designed, non-polluting factory’s single, non-used smoke stack has been installed upside down! Because of this, the smoke stack is now pumping out two times the amount of pollution that it would if the device was installed correctly! (Confusing, I know, but remember the key thought: this is an *unused* smoke stack.) You must remove the delicate device, turn it over and lower it back to the base of the stack. This must be done carefully!

- Rules:**
1. The tire must be lifted off the pole, flipped over and then lowered back down.
  2. The tire cannot touch the pole. People can, however. (For an added challenge, don’t let anything touch the pole!)
  3. No other materials, save what the group has on them, may be used. If the group is younger, or is having problems, you may allow them to use whatever they can find in the immediate area...
  4. The tire may not be thrown. It is a delicate device, remember?
  5. People are allowed on shoulders, if necessary, but only if the entire group is working to spot that person! If it looks unsafe, it probably is!

### Safety Considerations

- Check surrounding environment for roots, stumps, branches, etc.
- If you allow people onto shoulders, make sure the team is capable of protecting that individual. If not, do not allow it!

### Processing Questions

- Is there a “best” way to solve this puzzle? Why or why not?
- Would all the ideas you suggested work? Why or why not?
- Disclaimer: the reason I group this with Communication is because they need to have a solid plan in place to successfully complete the activity!

### Records:

None.

## Toxic Peanut Butter Swamp

**Level:** One  
**Sequence:** Early to Middle  
**Location:** North Property  
**Focus:** Communication / Cooperation



**Description:** Four tires sitting over a small pole.

**Objective:** To use the tires to move the group between two boundaries.

**Story One:** While on assignment for International Geographic (not “National Geographic” so they can’t sue me), you are sent to the deep, darkest jungles of Arizona to photograph wild, rabid mongooses. You are doing well until they realize you are there, and then they begin to chase you. Quickly you go from a few animals to herds of wild, rabid mongooses! You dodge, you shimmy, you shake and, even though your moves would win any modern dance competition, the creatures are gaining on you. In front of you, you find a toxic peanut butter swamp. Knowing that wild, rabid mongooses hate toxic peanut butter swamps, you decide to cross!

- Rules:**
1. The entire must cross through the swamp, not around it.
  2. Once someone begins to go across, they must continue going forward.
  3. The tires may move back and forth, however they cannot be thrown or rolled. If a tire is lost to the group, they can retrieve it unless it is lost behind them. (The team can’t go backward, even to get a tire!)
  4. The tires are the only thing toxic peanut butter proof! You cannot use any other items for assistance, as they will all sink into the swamp.
  5. If someone touches the swamp, the group must start over. If you are feeling particularly vindictive, you can assess a penalty to the participant (i.e. mute, blind, unable to use leg, etc.)

### Safety Considerations

- Check surrounding environment for roots, stumps, branches, etc.
- Avoid letting participants leap from tire to tire. Not all people can do the jump and it’s not safe, anyhow. It also violates the MD<sup>2</sup> rule: “Manic Dash = Many Damaged”.
- Be careful, the tires will get slick if it is wet.
- If it looks unsafe, it probably is...

### Processing Questions

- What was the most difficult part of this exercise?
- Were the original solutions realistic? Why or why not?
- Could you have done this if you had less tires? Why or why not?
- Was there something that could have been useful had I allowed you to use it?

### Records:

None.

## TP Shuffle / Birthday Log



**Level:** One  
**Sequence:** Early  
**Location:** Both Courses  
**Focus:** Communication / Cooperation

**Description:** A horizontal log or telephone pole.

**Objective:** To switch positions on the pole without touching the ground.

**Story One:** Explain to everyone that we are just out through a stroll through nature. Hey, look! It's a bridge. Let's go across! Well, sure enough, as soon as everyone is on the pole, a troll jumps out and tells them they must line up in alphabetical order before he/she/it will let them cross.

**Variations:** You can add an "acid rain cloud" which will make people mute (make sure you cover your mouth, otherwise it will affect you); you can have groups line up in alphabetical order by middle name; you can blindfold people, etc.

My favorite variation is to first do talking by last name, next is not talking by middle name, then to have them line up by favorite animal by size. As you give the directions, however, do NOT say they have to stay on the log. Use a phrase like, "If too many of you step down, I will point it out." Then, when they step down, say, "Wow, I'm sorry but we have a lot of people on the ground." Note, you did not say they had to start over. However, they will assume they have to...

**Rules:**

1. Everyone must stay on the log (unless told otherwise).
2. If one person (or a few if you're nice) touches the ground, the whole group must return to their starting positions.
3. No other items may be used to keep people on the pole (e.g. sticks). (They may use trees if they can safely lean on them, but don't say that out loud.)

### Safety Considerations

- Check surrounding environment for roots, stumps, branches, etc.
- I generally discourage putting blindfolded people on the log...
- If the log is wet, it will be very slippery!
- Tell people if they are starting to fall, they should save themselves!

### Processing Questions

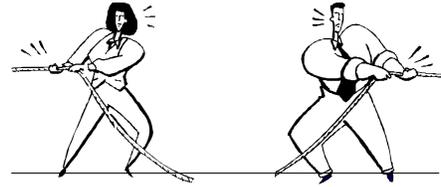
- How challenging was this activity? What was challenging about this?
- How did the group feel when they realized they were "tricked" into staying on the log?
- Where did the idea that they had to stay on the log come from?

### Records:

None.

## Triangle Tension Traverse

**Level:** One  
**Sequence:** Early  
**Location:** North Property  
**Focus:** Caring



**Description:** A wire triangle between three trees with two multivines.

**Objective:** Partners attempt to move in opposite directions around the triangle.

**Story One:** Sorry. No story here.

- Rules:**
1. Everyone must be in partners to attempt this obstacle.
  2. Both partners start at the same tree, each with their own rope.
  3. Two spotters must accompany each participant, one inside the triangle and one outside. Spotters need to have their hands ready at all times.
  4. If one partner touches the ground, both start over. If a partner leans to the point a spotter must intervene, both start over.
  5. If you start to slip, save yourself!

### Safety Considerations

- Check surrounding environment for roots, stumps, branches, etc.
- Participants usually slip in the middle of the first and middle of the last wires. These are areas to be especially aware of.

### Processing Questions

- Did your partner help you? If so, how?
- What was the most difficult part of this activity? Why?
- Did you ever have a point that you were glad you had people spotting you?

### Records:

None.

## Trolleys

**Level:** One  
**Sequence:** Early  
**Location:** Both Courses  
**Focus:** Communication

**Description:** Two 4" x 4" logs with ropes every 16 inches.

**Objective:** To move on the trolleys from Point A to Point B.



**Story One:** Mount [Insert Camp Name Here] exploded. (If you've already played "Raging River" or "All Aboard", you can continue the storyline of lava.) I thankfully thought to bring my lava-proof skis and will happily share them with you. You must walk your group to safety.

**Rules:**

1. Everyone must be on the "Trolleys".
2. If someone steps off the "Trolleys", everyone starts over.
3. If you start to fall, save yourself and those around you.

### Safety Considerations

- Check surrounding environment for roots, stumps, branches, etc.
- Watch people getting their toes underneath the "Trolleys".
- Be careful about emotional states. This can be frustrating for some groups.
- If the group says, "Stop", make sure everyone stops!

### Processing Questions

- Was there one person in the group who acted as a leader? If so, who?
- What makes a good leader? Experience? Being loud?
- How many times did you start over? Why?
- How could you have prevented people from slipping off?

**Records:**  
None.

## Trust Dive

**Level:** Two to Three  
**Sequence:** End  
**Location:** North Property  
**Focus:** Caring



**Description:** A series of stair steps from ground level to approximately four feet.

**Objective:** To “dive” safely into the arms of the people below.

**Story One:** No story. This is, in many ways, similar to “crowd surfing” at a concert.

- Rules:**
1. If the group talks/jokes about dropping someone, the activity is over.
  2. The team selects one person to be a “diver”. The rest of the team divides into two even lines, as in “Trust Fall”. They “zipper” their hands (see diagram below) and then wait silently for the “diver” to take position. All eyes must be on the “diver”.
  3. Before diving, use the following commands:
    - a. Diver – Ready to dive.
    - b. Team – Ready.
    - c. Diver – Diving.
    - d. Team – Dive.
  4. The “diver” has the ability to either climb up a step or to have the group take one step away from the stairs. Each time the “diver” is successful, they may continue to climb higher or dive farther, depending on their level of comfort.
  5. When you dive, you do not dive as in a pool. Instead, your goal is to fly like Superman, arms stretched out in front of you and body straight.



### Safety Considerations

- Check surrounding environment for roots, stumps, branches, etc.
- If your group cannot handle this, they cannot do it!
- Facilitators need to be *first* in line in case the “diver” arches or fails to jump far enough!
- Watch out for wet stairs and ground!

### Processing Questions

- This is a great test for “Trust Fall”. If the group can handle this, they can handle “Trust Fall”. If not, wrap up your day and go home.

### Records:

None.

## Trust Fall

**Level:** Three Plus  
**Sequence:** End  
**Location:** Both Courses  
**Focus:** Caring

**Description:** A platform attached to a tree 3 – 5 feet from the ground.

**Objective:** To fall safely into the arms of your team.

**Story One:** This is it. The ultimate level of Caring a team can show for its members and the highest level of Trust a person can show in their team. It is a victory for a group to make it to “Trust Fall”, and they have already won by getting here!

- Rules:**
1. If the group talks/jokes about dropping someone, the activity is over.
  2. Have the group line up in two equal teams on either side of the platform. You will need *at least* four people on each side! The catching team will stand tightly together in a line, with the first person touching the platform with their shoulder. Everyone else will be shoulder-to-shoulder down the line.
  3. The catching team will stand with the foot closest to the platform back about 12 inches behind their other foot. (This is not critical, but makes it less likely a falling person will land on a knee.)
  4. The catching team will “zipper” their arms (see picture for “Trust Dive”). They are to keep their elbows bent slightly, their hands raised (the faller will push them down) and their hands at least to the middle of the forearm of the person across from them. (I discourage hand-to-elbow contact because it puts the catching team very close together!)
  5. When they are ready, a catcher at the end will make sure the line is straight and even. Any adjustments to the line should be made *before* the falling person gets into position. At this time, the catching team leans back, looks at the platform and waits silently.
  6. The falling person climbs to the platform (spot them as they go up) and then leans with their back to the tree. As soon as the catching team is ready, the falling person is to take their position. They are to stand with their ankles just off the edge of the platform, feet tightly held together, body locked so that it is stiff and with their hands wrapped into the sleeves of their shirt.
  7. Caution the falling person to stay locked stiff from this point on! They are not to bend as they fall!
  8. When they are ready to fall, they give the following commands:
    - a. Faller – Ready to fall.
    - b. Team – Ready.
    - c. Faller – Falling.
    - d. Team – Fall.
  9. Set the falling person upright on their feet before the catching team lets go.



## Safety Considerations

- **Quick Rule Of Thumb:** If you do not think that your group could catch you safely if you were the first person to go, they are not capable of doing “Trust Fall”. Walk away! In my opinion, 9-out-of-10 groups that come out here should not be doing this activity! (By the way, to “reward” your group, offer that if all of the team are willing to trust the group, you will, too. After everyone has gone, allow them to catch you. You can’t imagine how powerful of a message it sends to the group.)
- I have two swear words I do not allow the catching team to say. These are both four letter words that all of you are familiar with. The “D” word and the “F” word. “Drop” and “Fall”. (Shame on you for thinking of other things!)
- Check surrounding environment for roots, stumps, branches, etc.
- Watch out for wet ground and platform. This can make things slippery. Be sure to spot people who are climbing up as that is where they are in the greatest danger.
- If your group cannot handle this, they cannot do it! If someone jokes/talks about dropping someone, there is no second chance. The team is done because they have violated the emotional safety of their teammates.
- Remember at all times, this is “Challenge By Choice”, no matter what a team leader says!
- This is “Trust Fall”, not “Trust Flips”, etc. You may only do the stated activity!
- Have people remove cell phones, pagers, jewelry, glasses, etc.
- Do not allow a falling person to get in place until the team is silent and looking up.
- Have people rotate in the to give people a chance to rest from catching. Rearrange the group, as necessary, to protect the falling person. (I usually allow them to place people where they want to guarantee their emotional safety.)
- Review that they need to fall flat. Show them what it looks like if they bend and explain why they will only have two arms catching them if they do bend!
- Position yourself under their bottom, and choose someone strong to stand across from you. If they bend, you want training and strength there to protect them!
- If nothing else, make sure the head and back are caught! If they break a tailbone, they will sue me and I’m fine with that because they are alive to sue me. If they die...

## Processing Questions

- If your group has gotten this far, praise them! They have done very well! Even if you must remove them for someone talking about dropping someone, they still had to be very impressive to even reach the obstacle, so congratulate them!
- Praise team members for going and for not going. It is a choice that is acceptable for them, and so they should be proud for making that choice.
- “Trust is the toughest thing to earn in a group and is the quickest thing to lose.” Are there times you have trusted someone with a secret only to find they told others? Did you go right back to that person when you had another secret? Why or why not? If we had dropped the first person, the ambulance had come, resuscitated them and took them away, how many of you would **not** have done this activity? Why or why not? Remember to keep the trust people place in you!

## Records:

None. Brag about how you have a perfect record of keeping participants safe!

## Whale Watch / Four Way

**Level:** One  
**Sequence:** Early (Whale Watch) / End (Four Way)  
**Location:** Both Courses (Whale Watch) / North Property (Four Way)  
**Focus:** Cooperation



**Description:** A large wooden platform mounted on a pivot.

**Objective:** To balance the platform.

**Story One:** You are about to embark on a boat trip. However, the captain has moored the boat right over a reef and, if the boat is even the slightest bit off-balance, the hull will break and the ship will sink. You must all board the ship in such a way as to prevent the ship from touching the reef (pronounced “ground”).

**Variations:** There are a million ways to play this. Here are some:

1. Have the group balance the platform with half on one side and half on the other. They must now switch sides without letting the platform touch.
2. Have the group all stand on the platform and then try to balance it.
3. Have the group stand in a circle around the perimeter of the platform. See if they can rotate all the way around the circle without touching the ground.
4. With the platform balanced, see if the participants can (safely) exit from one side without touching the ground.
5. Assign everyone a board. See if they can balance the platform without their feet leaving their board.

**Rules:**

1. Everyone must be on the platform when it is balanced.
2. You must balance the platform for 10 seconds to count.
3. No hands can touch the platform at any time.
4. No feet may ever go under the platform!
5. If the platform touches, everyone starts over.

### Safety Considerations

- Check surrounding environment for roots, stumps, branches, etc.
- Watch toes under the platform. If they get crunched, it will take their toes off!
- Direct people on how to get off the platform so no one gets injured.
- Don't let the group discuss “weight”, rather talk about “balance”.

### Processing Questions

- How well did your team work together?
- What ideas were successful? Why?
- Was it hard to communicate ideas? Why or why not?

### Records:

I had a group that wanted a record. They sat on a balanced platform for 32 minutes... Go figure.

## Wild Woozy

**Level:** Two  
**Sequence:** End  
**Location:** Both Courses  
**Focus:** Cooperation



**Description:** A V-shaped set of wires close to the ground.

**Objective:** To move in pairs as far as possible along the cables.

**Story One:** No story, just rules.

- Rules:**
1. The group needs to divide itself into pairs.
  2. Before the partners step on the wire, they need to have at least one spotter behind each of them. I usually recommend two per participant, however.
  3. The partners will stand on the wire and clasp hands in a “mitten grip”. Do NOT let them interlace their fingers, as they will break them!
  4. As the partners move along the wire, they will be forced to lean further out. As soon as room permits, place one person in between the two in a semi-crouched position. This way, if the two fall they will have a spotter in the middle to help them. Add additional spotters as the partners move further along.
  5. Spotters in the middle will start in a semi-crouch, with their hands on their knees for added support. As the partners lean more, the spotters in the middle may be forced to go to a kneeling position.
  6. Once a partner steps down or requires the aid of a spotter, that team is done.
  7. Everyone must reset before the next partners are allowed to start!

### Safety Considerations

- Check surrounding environment for roots, stumps, branches, etc.
- If possible, participants should tell the rest of the team if they are stepping down/falling.
- Don't allow people with bad backs to fill in the middle positions. They may spot from the outside of the wires.
- Make sure all spotters are ready prior to a participant stepping onto the wire!

### Processing Questions

- Which team got the farthest? Why?
- Were there different strategies by different partners? Why or why not?
- Would it have helped to have more than two people attempting this at a time?

### Records:

I had a team of two teenagers (Region Two FFA in Michigan) that reached an extension of eight feet before they stepped down.

## Appendix A: Cross Reference of Activities By Course

### Activities - Both Courses

All Aboard	Team Wall	Whale Watch
Corporate Maze	TP Shuffle	Wild Woozy
Nitro Crossing	Trolleys	
Spider Web	Trust Fall	

### Activities – Main Camp

All Aboard	Spider Web	Trust Fall
Corporate Maze	Team Wall	Whale Watch
Nitro Crossing	TP Shuffle	Wild Woozy
Raging River	Trolleys	

### Activities – North Property

All Aboard	Meuse	Toxic Peanut Butter Swamp
Barrel Roll / Meat Grinder	Mohawk Walk	TP Shuffle
Beam (Adjustable)	*Multivine Traverse	*Triangle Tension Traverse
*Blind Maze	*Nitro Crossing/Prouty's Landing	Trolleys
*Cargo Net	Porthole	*Trust Dive
Corporate Maze	*Pyramid	Trust Fall
*Corporate T	Spider Web	Whale Watch
Electric Fence / High-Low	Team Wall	Whale Watch – Four Way
Energy Circle/Comb. Lock	Tire Pole	*Wild Woozy

\*In progress or scheduled for future expansions.

## **Appendix B – Cross Reference By Level**

### **Level One**

All Aboard  
Beam (Adjustable)  
Blind Maze  
Corporate Maze  
Corporate T  
Energy Circle / Combination Lock  
Meuse / Raging River  
Multivine Traverse  
Toxic Peanut Butter Swamp  
TP Shuffle / Birthday Log  
Triangle Tension Traverse  
Trolleys  
Whale Watch  
Whale Watch – Four Way

### **Level Two**

Barrel Roll / Meat Grinder  
Beam (Adjustable)  
Cargo Net  
Electric Fence / High-Low  
Mohawk Walk  
Nitro Crossing/Prouty's Landing  
Porthole  
Pyramid  
Tire Pole / Giant's Finger  
Trust Dive  
Wild Woozy

### **Level Three**

Barrel Roll / Meat Grinder  
Beam (Adjustable)  
Spider Web  
Team Wall  
Trust Dive  
Trust Fall

## **Appendix Three – Cross Reference By Focus**

### **Communication**

Corporate Maze  
Energy Circle / Combination Lock  
Spider Web  
Tire Pole  
Toxic Peanut Butter Swamp  
TP Shuffle / Birthday Log  
Trolleys

### **Cooperation**

All Aboard  
Barrel Roll / Meat Grinder  
Beam (Adjustable)  
Cargo Net  
Corporate T  
Electric Fence / High-Low  
Meuse / Raging River  
Mohawk Walk  
Nitro Crossing / Prouty's Landing  
Porthole  
Pyramid  
Spider Web  
Team Wall  
Tire Pole / Giant's Finger  
Toxic Peanut Butter Swamp  
TP Shuffle / Birthday Log  
Whale Watch  
Whale Watch – Four Way  
Wild Woozy

### **Caring/Trust**

Blind Maze  
Mohawk Walk  
Multivine Traverse  
Nitro Crossing / Prouty's Landing  
Porthole  
Pyramid  
Spider Web  
Triangle Tension Traverse  
Trust Dive  
Trust Fall