

TREE ISLANDS

Play among the trees! These gentle green giants can save you



Goal: The children will become familiar with where trees are found and learn to appreciate how enormous their crowns can be during this fun survivor game. They will draw maps of the “tree islands” and include their experiences among the trees.

How long: 15–30 minutes

Who: 5 to adults who remember how to play. Younger children can play a simplified version.

Where: A place with trees or shrubs with lots of room to run

When: All year round

You need: Papers, pencils, a pad for each group, colouring pencils

1. LOOKING FOR ISLANDS

In a suitable place (park, garden, playground, meadow, grove, etc.) explain to the children that we have found ourselves in the middle of a stormy sea and the only places we can save ourselves are on „tree islands“. Tree islands are places around tree trunks and as far as their crowns go. For some trees with narrow crowns it is right at the trunk and at others it might be a few metres around. In the beginning, it is advisable to walk together with the children to see what trees are available to us. It is also important to set the boundaries within which the game is played.

2. HIGH TIDE

Once the guide announces that the tide is coming in, the children must try to save themselves by running to the nearest tree island as quickly as they can. If it is already occupied, they need to run to the next available tree island.

3. SHARKS

Sharks arrive with high tide, injuring or pulling those who are not safely on an island (those who haven't reached an island or left a leg or another part of their body beyond the treetop circumference).

4. RESCUE

Everyone has been saving themselves until now. In the next rounds the children have to run in pairs or triplets and hold hands. That's the only way to stay safe. They can try the same but in larger groups, e.g. 5–6 children, when they have mastered each round. This challenge can develop group perception, sensitivity to others and empathy but it is necessary to maintain a safe and supportive cooperation between everyone.

5. LOW TIDE

After a short while of fighting with the sea and sharks, the tide turns and the sea recedes again. Children can leave the islands and move about freely, ever on the alert for the next high tide. It won't take long. It might come in right away or after a few minutes. It depends on the guide to see if the group is ready for action or in need of some rest.

TIP: Introduce some more demanding challenges if the children have mastered the game and are enjoying it. The guide may specify which type of island is available and which is not. You may for example only save yourself on deciduous, coniferous or large tree islands, under shrubs, in the trees' shadows, on smooth bark tree islands, under a tree whose roots are visible or leaves are large, or on a linden or maple tree island. It is up to you how you determine your islands' specifications. Make sure the children know the different types of trees first before using them. This game should not serve as a quiz. Its goal is to enjoy a good run among the trees.

TIP: Try to play this game in different environments – in the woods, in a park, in a meadow, in a garden, on a playground, on a sports ground, etc. The children can then describe how the game felt and why. They will be able to compare the different places based on the number of trees around.

TIP: Start by playing the game on a flat, easy terrain but don't be afraid to try playing in more demanding environments (hilly terrain, on slopes, the ground covered with branches and other obstacles, etc.).

6. MAP THE TREE ISLANDS

When the children have run enough, everyone can sit together in the shade of a tree or in smaller groups within sight of each other and start another challenge. On a sheet of paper, draw a map of the tree islands at this particular place – this sea / ocean. Each group can draw their own map or all children can work on one map together. It depends on everyone's preferences and time. Children can also fill in the most popular rescue routes or add pictures of the arriving sharks. It is a great opportunity to document spaces with trees in our surrounding areas or the places we go to play and discover.

7. REFLECTION

At the end of the game, it is good to sit down on one of the tree islands and reflect together. Chat about: How did it feel to play this game? How did I feel running between the islands? What was difficult? What was pleasant? What made me laugh? What did I notice? What would I do differently next time? How did rescues in pairs or groups differ? If you feel like it and have the time, it's great to get kids to draw pictures, symbols, comics or record their best experiences on the map. We can then exhibit the map in the classroom, at home or in the clubhouse to remember the time between the tree islands.

EVALUATION OF THE ACTIVITY'S GOAL (EVIDENCE OF LEARNING)

- Children recognised that there are trees all around them and saw how big their crowns can be
- Children found out where trees are in the different places they play and were able to create a map of the trees, on their own or in groups
- In the group, each child had the opportunity to reflect on and evaluate the game and his/her experiences

