



## HEALTH

# Let's Play Ring the Stick!

## ESSENTIAL UNDERSTANDINGS

- **Time Immemorial**
- **Identity**

## LEARNING OUTCOMES

Students will understand

- that traditional games connect Tribes to their ancestors,
- Oregon Tribes developed games since time immemorial, and
- traditional games contribute to community connections.

## ESSENTIAL QUESTION

- What can we learn about Native identity and values through shared games like Ring the Stick?

## REQUIRED TIME

- 30 minutes

## Overview

In this lesson, students will learn about the cultural significance of Ring the Stick, a traditional game played by many Oregon Tribes. Through making and playing this shared traditional game, students will understand how Indigenous peoples have maintained connections to their land and cultural practices since time immemorial, and how games contribute to Native identity and community.

## Background for Teachers

This lesson teaches students about the Essential Understandings of Time Immemorial and Identity through the lens of the game, Ring the Stick, a traditional game played by many Oregon Tribes.

Oregon's Tribes have lived in their respective homelands since time immemorial. Traditional games like Ring the Stick represent countless generations of cultural knowledge and demonstrate a deep connection to a specific homeland. The materials traditionally used - carved wood from local trees, sinew from animals, and rings made from natural materials



- show intimate knowledge of local resources developed over time.

Traditional games like Ring the Stick are also living expressions of both shared and unique tribal identities. Ring the Stick served multiple purposes: developing skills needed for hunting and daily tasks, bringing community members together during long winter months, and passing down cultural values through play. Some Tribes believed that playing Ring the Stick during winter would help spring arrive more quickly, connecting games to spiritual beliefs and seasonal cycles.

Each Tribe had their own variations and cultural meanings for the game, but the core elements remained similar - developing hand-eye coordination, bringing communities together, and connecting to seasonal cycles.

Today, Oregon Tribes continue to practice traditional games while adapting to modern contexts, demonstrating that tribal identity is both rooted in ancient traditions and vibrantly contemporary.

## STANDARDS

### Oregon Physical Education Standards

- **PE.1.2.1** Demonstrates mature patterns in locomotor skills in a variety of physical activities.
- **PE.4.2.1** Exhibits responsible personal and social behavior that respects self and others in physical activity settings.
- **PE.5.2.1** Recognizes the value of physical activity for health, enjoyment, challenge, self-expression and/or social interaction.

## KEY WORDS and IDEAS

- **Time Immemorial:** So long ago that nobody can remember when it started
- **Traditional:** Practices and knowledge passed down through generations
- **Cultural Practice:** Activities that express the identity of a group of people

## Considerations for Teachers

### Practices

While teaching this lesson, the following principles can help guide your decision-making and engagement with students:

- Focus on teaching Time Immemorial and Identity through the example of Ring the Stick as a shared practice among Oregon Tribes.

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- When sharing content with students, address the "why" not just the "what" - explain how games served multiple purposes across Native societies while having specific meanings for individual Tribes.
- Highlight that Oregon Tribes continue to practice traditional games today while also adapting to modern life.
- Ensure your teaching practices are accessible and appropriate for Native and non-Native students.

## MATERIALS

### What materials are needed for students to engage in this activity?

- Object to use as the "stick"
- Object to use as the "ring"
- String
- Chart paper for recording responses
- Document camera for demonstrations

## Assessment

During this lesson, observe and listen to students during discussions and as they work independently and collaboratively to determine how their learning is progressing. Write down what you notice about what students say and do in relation to the success criteria. Use this formative information to provide feedback to students and plan next steps.

At the end of the lesson, provide students with an opportunity to reflect on their learning through a self-assessment. Students can indicate their level of learning in relation to specific success criteria. They can also explain why they believe they are at that learning stage.

## Success Criteria

- I can play ring the stick.
- I can describe why games are important to Tribes in Oregon.



## Lesson Activities

### Opening

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**Time: 10 minutes**

#### Step 1:

In a whole group setting, activate students' prior knowledge about games.

- Ask: "What are your favorite games to play? How do games bring people together?"
- Record student responses on chart paper

#### Step 2:

Introduce students to Oregon Tribes and Ring the Stick. Say to students:

- "Today we're going to learn about a traditional game called Ring the Stick that was played by many Oregon Tribes who have lived in their homelands since time immemorial - that means since before anyone remembers."
- "Oregon Tribes created many games, including Ring the Stick, that they played during winter to bring their community together and help spring come faster."
- "This game was passed down from elders to children year after year. It is for fun, to help hunters stay in shape and for children grow strong and learn to coordinate their eyes with their hands!"

#### Step 3:

Pause for questions and reflection.

### Main Activity

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**Time: 20 minutes**

#### Step 1:

Explain to students that traditionally, Oregon Tribes used whatever material they had available to them to make the ring and stick game piece. Let students know that they

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will be making their own ring and stick game using what they have available in the classroom.

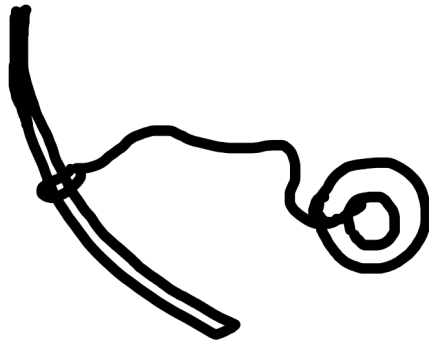
### Step 2:

Organize materials for students to make the ring and stick game pieces. These can include any combination of recycled or everyday materials you have on hand. For example:

- The stick can be a pencil (not sharpened), chopstick, or stick.
- The ring can be a metal washer, a loose-leaf book ring, or a pipe cleaner made into a circle.
- The string can be any kind of string available.

### Step 3:

Support students to make Ring the Stick game pieces. Show students one you made beforehand as a model. It should look roughly along the lines the following image.



Distribute the materials to students.

Demonstrate each step. Use a document camera if available.

- Tie one end of the string to the stick.
- Tie one end of the string to the ring.

Get students started on their own game piece. As students work, circulate and ask: "What materials do you think the Oregon Tribes used long ago instead of the ones we're using today?"

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- Examples: sticks, bones, sturdy plant stems and leaves

**Step 4:**

Demonstrate the gameplay. Hold the bottom of the stick, then swing it to get the ring around the stick.

Give students an opportunity to practice. Encourage students to be patient and persistent, explaining these qualities were valued for Native American hunters.

Provide students with time to play Ring the Stick.

**Closing****Time: 5 minutes****Step 1:**

Connect to the Essential Understandings.

Ask: "What materials from the land could people have used to make this game long ago?" Prompt and reinforce answers such as: sticks, bones, rings made from bone or antler, strong plants made into rings, thin plant strands for strings.

Add: "Each Tribe adapted the game using materials from their specific homeland - Tribes near the ocean might have used different materials than Tribes in the mountains or high desert."

Ask: "How do you think playing games like Ring the Stick helped Oregon Tribes feel connected to each other and their traditions?"

Ask students to turn and talk and describe in their own words why games are important to Tribes in Oregon.

Emphasize: "Games like this are still important to Oregon Tribes today - they help people remember their traditions and stay connected to their identity, while also being fun ways to bring communities together."

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### Step 3:

Have students complete the self-assessment based on the success criteria.

### Additional Resources:

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4th grade lesson, [Indigenous Oregon](#), by the Confederated Tribes of the Siletz Indians



## Student Self-Assessment

**Name:**

**Directions for teachers:** Read aloud the lesson success criteria in the first column to students. Have them indicate if they were able to meet the criteria by marking it in the handout, with hand gestures, or by sharing aloud. Ask students to explain why they chose “not yet” or “yes” to a peer.

Success Criteria	Not Yet	Yes
		
I can play ring the stick.		
I can describe why games are important to Tribes in Oregon.		