

The importance of play

Stage 4 (Years 7-8) Lesson Plan

Level Up! Understanding Games, Inclusion and the Right to Play



What does UNICEF do?

UNICEF is the world's largest children's charity working to protect children, globally and here in Australia. We help children realise their full potential by providing access to clean water, lifesaving vaccines, quality education and health care. We ensure every child is safe and protected from harm and we're always there during times of emergency.

UNICEF and the importance of play

Play is an important part of children's learning and growth – it's how they explore their environment, practice developing skills and bond with the people around them.

Did you know play is actually a right? According to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, every child has the right to rest, relax, play and take part in cultural and creative activities.

UNICEF champions the transformative power of play for children in Australia and overseas. Unfortunately, many children around the world lack access to play opportunities, particularly those affected by malnutrition or living in challenging circumstances. UNICEF works to address these challenges through initiatives like repurposing materials for play, promoting access to safe play spaces and advocating for every child to have the opportunity to play, as a fundamental right and crucial tool for learning, health and development.



Activity Overview

In this lesson, students explore the concept of ludology—the study of games and how they are played—through participating in a chosen physical game (e.g., basketball, soccer, ultimate frisbee, netball, dodgeball). They will take turns being players, peer coaches and team leaders to explore different perspectives in gameplay. The lesson embeds inclusive practices to ensure every student can participate meaningfully, fostering teamwork, leadership and empathy.

Mapped Curricula Outcomes in Appendix at the back.

Materials Needed



Digital Screen with internet connection to show video
UNICEF WeShare: Ukraine – Juniors Spilno Sport Club
<https://youtu.be/S4Xjk0u2uVg> (55 secs)

NOTE: Preview the video to ensure it's appropriate for your students



Sporting equipment (based on the selected game)



Cones or markers for modified field/court



Bibs or coloured bands for teams



Clip boards for worksheets



Worksheet:

Ludology in Action: Exploring Basketball OR _____ (game of choice)
(1 back-to-back handout)



Pens/pencils



Large whiteboard or **poster paper** for team roles/rotations



Student **self-assessment rubrics** (provided below)



iPads/tablets or **video modelling** (if needed for inclusive practice)



Whistle and **timer**

Learning Intention

We are learning to understand how games are structured, how they include or exclude players and how we can use feedback and leadership to make gameplay more inclusive and fun for everyone.

Success Criteria

- I can describe how rules, roles and communication affect gameplay.
- I can give and receive peer feedback respectfully.
- I can demonstrate leadership in a team setting.
- I can suggest ways to make a game more inclusive.
- I understand that play is a human right for all children.

Lesson Structure

Activity 1: Game Design Lens

Begin with a short provocation: **“What makes a game fun and fair?”**

- Various student responses
- Teacher Prompt:
 - *“A game is fun and fair when everyone knows the rules, has a chance to participate and feels included — no matter their skill level. It’s not just about winning, it’s about playing together in a way that respects and supports each other.”*
- Introduce ludology as the study of games—rules, goals, structure and player experience.
 - *“Ludology is the study of games—how they work, what rules they follow, what goals players try to achieve and **how people experience playing them**. It helps us understand why games are fun, how they challenge us and how they can include or exclude others.”*

“Game Hack!” – What Makes a Game Tick?

Objective:

Introduce ludology by getting students to break down and “hack” a simple playground game.

Steps:

1. **Choose a familiar game** (e.g., Rock Paper Scissors).
 2. Ask:
 - “What are the **rules**?”
 - “What is the **goal** of the game?”
 - “What’s the **structure**—how does it start, play, end?”
 - “What makes this game **fun or frustrating**?”
 3. In pairs or small groups, students brainstorm **one quick “game hack”**—a small rule change to make the game more fun, fair, or inclusive (e.g., “What if everyone had to hop instead of run?” or “Add a safe zone!”).
 4. **Quick share back:** A few groups explain their hack and how it changes the player experience.
 5. Wrap with:
 - “Congratulations! You’ve just done your first ludology challenge—studying and redesigning a game!”
- Use video to explain that children all around the world have the right to play. Show video clip on digital screen with internet connection to whole class.
 - UNICEF WeShare: Ukraine – Juniors Spilno Sport Club
<https://youtu.be/S4Xjk0u2uVg> (55 sec)
 - Briefly link to Article 31 of the UNCRC – the right to rest, leisure and play.
 - *“Did you know... that Article 31 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child says every child has the right to rest, leisure and play.
This means play isn’t just fun—it’s a human right. When we create games that are fair and*

inclusive, we're helping to protect that right.

*It also connects to the Sustainable Development Goals, like SDG 3 (Good Health and Wellbeing) and SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities), **because inclusive play helps everyone feel valued, healthy and connected.***

- In small groups, students brainstorm the essential parts of a fair and inclusive game. Teacher copies responses on to whiteboard. Possible responses may include;
 - **Clear, simple rules** that everyone understands
 - **Equal turns or chances** to participate
 - **Teams that are balanced** in skill and number
 - **Encouragement and support**, not just competition
 - **Adapted or flexible rules** for different abilities (e.g., walking instead of running, larger goals)
 - **Safe and respectful behaviour**
 - **Opportunities for different roles** (e.g., player, coach, referee)
 - **No one is left out**—everyone is invited to join
 - **Fun is more important than winning**
 - **Different ways to succeed**—not just physical skill (e.g., strategy, communication)

Activity 2: Playground Audit

“Today, we’re going to become *game designers* and look at basketball through a new lens—called ludology.

Ludology is the study of how games work. It helps us break games down into four parts:

- Mechanics – the rules and how the game works
- Dynamics – how players interact and what strategies they use
- Aesthetics – how the game feels when you play it
- Player Psychology – what motivates or discourages people during the game

You’re going to work in small groups and use the “**Ludology in Action: Exploring Basketball OR _____ (game of choice)**” worksheet to analyse basketball. We’ll explore how fun and fair it is, who it includes and how we might make it even better.

NOTE: game does not have to be basketball and you can choose your own.

Think about:

- *Who enjoys playing this game—and who might feel left out?*
- *What could we change to make the game more fun, inclusive, or creative?*
- *How does this connect to the idea that all children have the right to play?*

At the end, you’ll do a quick ‘**Game Hack**’—a small change to the rules or structure to improve the player experience. Be creative!”

Activity 3: Let's Play and observe (on the court)

Teacher Instructions:

*"Now we're heading outside to apply what we've learned! Some of you will play a short game of basketball (or another familiar game) and others will be **observers** using the Ludology in Action worksheet to analyse the game.*

We'll rotate roles so everyone gets a chance to both play and observe.

*Observers—your job is to watch how the game works and think like a game designer. Focus on the **rules, teamwork, player experience and fairness.***

Players—your goal is to play fairly, include others and show leadership and communication skills.

After both groups have had a turn, we'll come back together for reflection."

Inclusive Adjustment suggestions:

- Offer modified rules (e.g., extra bounce, walking only, smaller team size).
- Model skills with visual/video examples.
- Give students extra time, repetition, or alternative equipment (e.g., lighter balls, lower the net).
- Use team planning boards to help visual learners understand structure and tactics.

Activity 4: Cool Down and Reflect

Teacher Talking Points for Group Discussion:

"Before we finish, let's take a moment to reflect on what we did during our game and why it mattered. This isn't just about sport—it's about how we treat each other and how we make sure everyone gets to enjoy their right to play."

Ask the Class:

1. **What helped the game be fun for everyone today?**
(Prompt: Was it the way rules were explained, how teams worked together, or how people encouraged each other?)
2. **What leadership skills did you use or see in others?**
(Prompt: Did someone help organise, support, include others, or give helpful feedback?)
3. **How can we make sure everyone has the right to play in our school and community?**
(Prompt: What changes can we make to rules, teams, or equipment to make play more inclusive?)

Link to Children's Rights & the SDGs

Teacher Prompt:

*"Today, you all helped protect a human right—the right to play. Under **Article 31 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child**, all young people have the right to rest, leisure and play in safe and inclusive ways. When we include others and adapt games, we are making sure no one is left out."*

Ask students:

- **How did this activity support children's right to play?**
(e.g., "We made sure everyone could join in, we changed the game to be fairer, we worked as a team.")
- **Which Sustainable Development Goals connect to this?**
(Expected answers might include...)
 - **SDG 3: Good Health and Wellbeing** – being active helps our physical and mental health.
 - **SDG 4: Quality Education** – learning to include others is part of respectful learning.
 - **SDG 10: Reduced Inequalities** – we made changes so that everyone could participate.

Student Self-Assessment (Rubric):

Have students complete the **Student Rubric: Physical Activity and Inclusion (Self-Assessment)** rubric provided to reflect on their own contribution, inclusivity and understanding of the game.

Assessment:

Formative assessment through:

- Observing peer coaching, gameplay participation and leadership.
- Student use of inclusive strategies during games.
- Exit ticket question: "How did I help others have fun and feel included today?"

Follow-Up Activity Options:

- **Design Your Own Inclusive Game:** Students work in teams to invent a new game with specific inclusion strategies built into the rules.
- **Video Analysis:** Watch short clips of inclusive sport in action (e.g., wheelchair basketball, unified sports) and discuss.
- **Right to Play Campaign Posters:** Students create posters advocating for inclusive play at their school.



More Teacher Resources and Lesson plans
are available on UNICEF Australia's website
unicef.org.au/teacher-resources

Appendix: Alignment to Curriculum

	NSW Curriculum	Australian Curriculum Version 9
Syllabus Area:	7-10 PDHPE (2024)	HPE,
Sub-topic:	• Movement skills and strategies	• Movement and physical activity
Syllabus Outcomes / Content Descriptors:	A student PH4-MSS-01 transfers movement skills and concepts for use in a range of dynamic movement environments PH4-MSS-02 demonstrates how strategies and actions can be transferred to solve movement challenges. PH4-SMI-01 refines and applies self-management and interpersonal skills to manage complex situations	Year 7-8 students AC9HP8M05 participate in physical activities that utilise community spaces and outdoor settings and evaluate strategies to support increased use of these spaces AC9HP8M06 design and justify strategies to increase physical activity levels to achieve health and wellbeing outcomes AC9HP8M08 investigate modifications to equipment, rules and scoring systems that support fair play and inclusive participation AC9HP8M09 practise and apply leadership, collaboration and group decision-making processes when participating in a range of physical activities
Links to General Capabilities:	1. Personal and Social Capability Social awareness and collaboration: Recognises and respects diversity and individual strengths, Collaborates and contributes to group outcomes. Link to lesson: Students work in diverse teams, take on leadership roles and modify games to be inclusive of all abilities. Self-awareness and self-management: Reflects on personal strengths and challenges, Applies strategies to manage emotions and develop resilience. Link to lesson: Through gameplay and reflection, students consider their role in teamwork, leadership and inclusion.	

Links to General Capabilities:
(continued)

2. Critical and Creative Thinking

Inquiring – identifying, exploring and organising information: Analyses problems from different perspectives.**Reflecting and generating ideas:** Explores alternatives and applies creative solutions.

Link to lesson: Students evaluate the structure of a game using ludology principles and creatively “hack” game rules to improve fairness and engagement.

3. Ethical Understanding

Understanding ethical concepts and issues: Considers ethical dimensions of fairness, inclusion and empathy.

Link to lesson: Students reflect on the right to play (UNCRC Article 31) and how inclusive practices support all participants, aligning with SDG goals.

4. Intercultural Understanding

Recognising culture and developing respect: Develops respect for diversity of perspectives and experiences.

Link to lesson: Students explore how gameplay can be adapted for different needs and backgrounds, promoting global values such as equality and inclusion.

Student Work Sheet

Ludology in Action

Exploring Basketball OR _____ (game of choice)

Name: _____ Class: _____

What Is Ludology?

Ludology is the study of games—how they're made, how they're played and how they make us feel. It helps game designers (and players like you!) create games that are fun, fair and inclusive for everyone.

Part 1: Break Down the Game

Fill in the table below using what you know about how basketball or the game you chose works.

Ludology Principle	Your Answer (based on basketball or the game you chose)
Mechanics (Rules and systems)	What are the key rules? How is the game scored?
Dynamics (Player interaction)	How do players interact? What strategies or teamwork are needed?
Aesthetics (Experience/feelings)	What feelings does the game create (e.g. excitement, stress)? Why?
Player Psychology	What motivates players to keep playing? What might discourage someone?

Part 2: How Fair and Inclusive Is This Game?

Discuss with your group and answer:

1. Who might find this game difficult to join or enjoy?

2. What changes could be made to make it more inclusive or accessible?
(Think about rules, equipment, team sizes, movement, communication)

3. How can players show leadership and fairness during a game?

Part 3: Design Challenge!

Imagine you are *game designers*. Choose **one** rule or element of basketball or the game you chose to **“hack”** and make the game better for *everyone*.

Our Game Hack:

We will change _____

This will make the game more: (Tick all that apply)

☐ Fun ☐ Fair ☐ Inclusive ☐ Strategic ☐ Exciting

Why we made this change:

Student Rubric: Physical Activity and Inclusion (Self-Assessment)

Criteria	Emerging 	Developing 	Proficient 	Extending 
I played fairly and followed rules	I needed reminders	I followed most rules	I consistently followed rules	I followed rules and helped others understand them
I included others in play	I didn't always include others	I included most people	I included everyone in my team	I encouraged and led inclusive strategies
I gave/received feedback respectfully	I found it hard to give/receive feedback	I gave or received some feedback	I gave and received helpful feedback	I coached or supported others positively
I used leadership skills	I followed others	I helped sometimes	I took on a role and helped my team	I led and adapted the game for others
I reflected on the right to play	I needed help to connect my learning	I made some connections	I explained how games relate to rights	I showed deep understanding and can explain to others