

# **“PECKING ORDER”**

## **A GROUP GAME ABOUT THE SOCIAL LIFE OF POULTRY**

### Background information:

Most birds organize their flock into an almost numerical order. The top bird can peck or boss around any other bird in the flock. The second highest bird can peck or boss any bird except for the number one bird. The number three bird can peck any bird except numbers one and two, and so on and so forth down the line. The last birds in the pecking order just spend their lives staying out of everyone else's way, or else trying to better their status in the flock by challenging higher birds (by pecking or fighting, usually). Age is important, and usually the older birds are higher in the pecking order. They stay at the top until they get so elderly that their strength and health start declining. Any bird born with a defect of any kind is automatically at the bottom of the pecking order and is likely to be pecked to death.

How many players: any number (the more the merrier!)

Time required: about two minutes times the number of players (five players would need at least ten minutes)

Space required: An area marked off as the “coop.” Chickens must stay within the bounds of this coop area. The exact size of the coop area is not crucial. You could use something as small as a living room, or as large as a fellowship hall.

Materials needed: For each player you will need five clothespins, two identical numbered tags, and something to adhere the numbers to clothing (paperclips at the collar, pieces of duct tape, safety pin, whatever you feel is most appropriate for your setting).

### How to play:

- 1) Prepare number tags according to the number of children playing, with two tags for each number. For example, if you have ten players, you will have two number one tags, two number two tags, two number three tags, and so on, till ten.
- 2) Each player is randomly assigned a number to start with. They put a number tag on their front and on their back. For example, chicken number two will have a 2 showing on their front, and a 2 showing on their back. (This will be their number just for the first round.)
- 3) Each player is given five clothespins that they may “peck” other chickens with. To “peck” someone, you just clip the clothespin to their clothes. The object of the game is to get rid of all your clothespins in each round.
- 4) The players must obey the pecking order! Players may only peck someone who has a number higher than theirs. Of course, the player who has the highest number can't peck anyone. His goal is to escape getting pecked. He just holds on to his clothespins.
- 5) A round lasts for 60 seconds. At the end of 60 seconds, players must freeze right where they are and count how many clothespins they have in their hand and how many clothespins they have clipped to their clothing. They add these two

numbers to get their score. (They want to have as low a score as possible.)

- 6) After the scores have been added up and written down, the players then trade numbers. An easy way to do this is to have them line up in numerical order, then just pass their numbers the same direction, either up or down. (Of course, one of the players on the end will have to pass theirs to the person on the other end.)
- 7) The 60-second rounds continue until everyone has had a turn being each number. If you have a ten players or less, everyone can have a turn with each number. If you have a very large group, you may want to adapt the assignment of numbers so that there are several players playing each number. For example, for twenty players, you would have two ones, two twos, two threes, etc., up to ten.
- 8) After all the rounds are over, the player(s) with the lowest score are/is the winner(s).
- 9) A less competitive way to end the game is to let each player take a prize (candy is always well-received!) according to their score. You could have two baskets, one for tens units and one for ones units. If a player score 34, for example, they would take three things from the tens basket and four things from the ones basket.

