



On your marks

The doctrine of the Trinity is one of the mysteries of the Christian Faith that no amount of clever analogies or explanations can quite unravel. How one can be three and three can be one has puzzled the minds of some of the greatest saints. Indeed it is certainly a stumbling-block for those of other monotheistic faiths who quite understandably claim that Christians believe in three gods and not one. It is probably best with your children's group simply to "enjoy the mystery" and accept that there are some things - indeed many things - about our faith that are more than our human minds can take in.

What follows is a collection of suggestions for activities and games that play on the themes of three-in-one and one-in-three. These will hopefully provide a helpful context for your children to come close to the mystery of the Trinity as expressed in a prayer such as that found in Corinthians 13:14

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all

Get set

The following games, activities and craft ideas vary in their use of equipment. Some need no special preparation, whereas others require some time making what is needed. Read each one carefully first to decide what you might need to do.

Go!

1. **Three-in-one clothes**

Divide the group into three teams. Provide each team with the same set of three items of clothing - soft hat, a jacket and a wrap. At a given signal one member of the team each time must put on these three items of clothing as quickly as possible. However, with each new turn, each person in the team must wear the items in a different way. How many ways can each team think up of wearing the three items as one set of clothes?

2. **Three-in-one words**

Play a game of "taboo" where one person has to try and give clues to a particular word without mentioning that word, while the others guess the word. Words for this game are all ones that have three possible meanings but which look or sound the same. For example:

Bank = a place to store money; the edge of the river; the turning of a plane in the sky

Rock = a sweet you can eat; a stone you can touch; a movement you can make

Roll/Role = a type of bread; the movement of a die; a part in a play

Road/Rode/Rowed = something to travel on; what you did on a horse; what you did in a boat

Vain/Vein/Vane = full of oneself; something that carries blood; part of a windmill

Praise/Preys/Prays = saying something is great; what a lion does; how we talk to God

Rains/Reins/Reigns = water from the sky; straps on a horse; what a king or queen does

3. **Three-in-one challenge**

Pass around various items among your group. As individuals or as teams, they should try and come up with three different ways the same object could be used. Encourage them to use their imagination as vividly as possible. Objects could include:

a cardboard tube; a piece of hose; a plain piece of cloth; a coloured square of plastic; a twig from a bush; a juggling ball; a ball of cotton wool; a jam-jar; a piece a bamboo cane; a free CD disc

4. **Three people in one**

Depending on the size of the group create a human family tree. Have the children sit on the floor. Firstly, four should sit on the ground in two pairs to represent two sets of grandparents. Now, using a piece of string link each set of grandparents to two or three 'children'. Now link up one child from each family group to another as 'husband-and-wife' and give them three children. Create some other children from others who 'marry'. Use string to link these up to create a network of three generations: parents, grandparents, children, cousins, aunts and uncles. Now challenge each of the children sitting down to describe who they are in relation to the others in at least three different ways. e.g. I am X's son, Y's husband and Z's father etc

5. **Three-in-one pictures**

Using only the number three **3** and the number one **1** create a drawing which contains as many objects or people as possible. Perhaps the children could do this as two teams with large sheets of paper.

For example, two threes together and a one could become a tree. Or a three on its side might be a bird in the sky etc

6. **Three-in-one choreography**

In teams of three, work out some synchronised movements that the group will do together (moving as one) to go from one side of a room to the other. They must move as a single unit and try to include as many different types of movements as possible.

7. **Three-in-one statues**

In teams of three challenge the group to create self-supporting statues with the following definitions:

The statue should be all joined-up but there should only be three feet on the ground (and no other support)

The statue should be all joined-up but there should only be three hands on the ground (and no other support)

The statue should be all joined-up but there should only be one foot, one hand and one bottom touching the ground (and no other support)

8. **Three-in-one hunt**

Play a game of linking up three words with a 4th word that connects them all. Write these words out on pieces of card first and hide them around the room. In teams they should try and collect as many complete sets as possible. Here are the sets:

- Composer - Musician - Instrument = Music
- Sap - Branch - Leaves = Tree
- Electricity - Filament - Bulb = Light
- Tyre - Hub - Spokes = Bike Wheel

- Water - Ice - Steam = H²O
- Body - Mind - Spirit = Human Being
- Caterpillar - Egg - Cocoon = Butterfly
- Envelope - Stamp - Writing paper = Letter
- Page - Cover - Binding = Book
- Hand - Pen - Ink = Writing
- Faith - Hope - Love = Virtues

9. **3 illustrates 1**

In teams of three, play a game of group charades, in which three people have to mime the following phrases/words, which are all linked to three in some way. Can the others guess what they are miming?

Blind mice; French hens; Musketeers; a hat-trick; wishes; guesses; little pigs; Goldilocks' bears

10. **1-2-3**

Can the group, working pairs, create a perfect square of nine numbers **3×3** in which each line adds up to three, horizontally and vertically?

Here is a solution:

- 1 2 0
- 0 1 2
- 2 0 1

11. **Bible Threes**

In groups give out the following stories from the Bible which involve threes in some way. Each group could try to act out (in under one minute) this story without words and see if the others can guess which Bible threesome is being presented:

- The three visitors to Abraham *Genesis 18*
- Jonah's three days in the whale *Jonah 1 and 2*
- Daniel's three friends in the furnace *Daniel 3*
- Peter, James and John go up the mountain with Jesus *Matthew 17*
- Three gifts brought by wise men to Jesus *Matthew 2*

(P.S. Which Bible book is literally mixed-up 'threes'? Answer: Esther)

For further Bible explorations of three-in-one and one-in-three see also:

[Making a Splash for God - John the Baptist](#) - i.e. The Father's voice, the Son being baptised and the Spirit descending

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12. **Triangles, triangles everywhere**

This needs more preparation but could be used as a way into talking about the Trinity using the symbol of a triangle. You will need to prepare 9 equilateral triangles to create one set, with which to work. If you make these large enough then one set could be used by a group of children. Once you have the nine triangles, divide them into two piles of 5 and 4.



The pile of five should be marked as follows:

Put a blue dot at the top and then in the bottom left angle a red dot and the bottom right angle a yellow dot.

The pile of four should be marked in the following way:

Put a blue dot at the top and then in the bottom left angle a yellow dot and in the bottom right angle a red dot.

The challenge now is to link up all these 9 triangles as one big triangle (three by three), however wherever the triangles meet there should be three primary colours together (Blue/Red/Yellow) and at the centre of the triangle where 6 triangles meet there should be: two blue, two red and two yellow all together.

These primary colours could represent the Trinity from whom all colours come: blue for the Father; red for the Son and yellow for the Holy Spirit. Once you have created your large triangle, you could put in the top triangle God the Father; in the bottom left triangle God the Son; and the bottom right triangle God the Holy Spirit. The other six triangles could be filled with ways in which the Trinity is experienced by Christians today with words such as:

God makes; God loves; God rescues; God forgives; God fills; God changes

Finally, if each of the triangles is now linked to its neighbouring triangles with a small piece of clear tape, it should be possible to fold them all together as one single triangle and this could be kept as a visual aid of the Trinity.

Have some 3-in-1 fun!!