Build It Better

Mission: the thief locked the mascot again and bet no team could build their way to the code. Build, test, improve, crack the blueprint code on the whiteboard, whisper the password, open the box, free the mascot. Character trait today: **Social Awareness**.

1 · Tallest Tower (5–16 min) — same materials, build, test, improve

Fair test Per team: ~10 sheets of scrap paper + one short strip of tape, identical for all. Build ~4 min, measure, then a ~4 min improve round: knock it down, beat your own height.

Coach "What is holding it up?" · "Where does it wobble?" · "Does folding beat flat?" · "You have little tape, where does it matter most?" Praise the team that improved, not just the tallest.

Diff TK–2: more paper, no tape, no contest, just beat your own tower. 3–8: 6 sheets, one 3-inch strip, hard 4-min clock, head-to-head on height AND a 5-second wind test, rotating student referee, ties go 60-second sudden-death.

2 · Human Bridge (16–31 min) — only bodies, span a gap or hold a shape

Builds Span a gap: link arms in a line, lean into an arch, or lie head-to-toe. Hold a shape: tunnel (hands and knees in a row), star (backs together, arms out), triangle (three lean in). Hold a 5-count, then iterate stronger or longer.

Safe No standing on shoulders, no full weight on anyone, feet on the ground. Reward the biggest improvement, not the flashiest.

Diff TK–2: simple tunnel or star, adult calls the plan, hold a 3-count. 3–8: tournament bracket judged on spanning the gap / holding a 10-count / fewest bodies, winner-stays-on, sidelined students referee, call your design and prediction first, whiteboard champion.

3 · Blueprint Code (31–45 min) — steps out of order, sort them, letters spell the password

BUILD B "Base goes down first" · U "Uprights rise on the base" · I "Iron beams tie them together" · L "Level each floor" · D "Deck the roof last." Build order B-U-I-L-D.

TOP T "The ground floor first" · O "Over it go the walls" · P "Put the roof on top." Build order T-O-P. Good for a first round or younger team.

Diff TK–2: short 3-step TOP set, coach reads each step aloud. 3–8: 3-min race, 5–6 letter codeword (BUILD, GIRDER), 20-sec penalty for a wrong guess, then teams invent and defend their own scrambled build-code for rivals.

4 · Finale + Wristband (45–60 min)

Open Winning team announces the password to the room, coach turns the key, mascot lifts out, big cheer. Optional "thief's note" inside: "You built it better than I could lock it. I surrender!"

Award the **Social Awareness** trait wristband to detectives who shared ideas and built on what teammates suggested ("let's try Maya's idea", "that fix from the last try worked").

3–8 For older kids and the two middle schools, run the whole hour competitive: fixed teams, score every game on the whiteboard, visible timer each round, crown a champion here. Games bank adds **Detective Mafia** (2–3 Culprits + a Detective, 5–7 min rounds) — the one middle schoolers ask to replay.

Detective's Oath (say together, magnifiers up): I am a detective. / My brain is my best tool. / I don't guess, I reason. / I follow the clues to the truth.