

Outdoor Tic Tac Toe

If your child would rather stay glued to the TV instead of playing outside, try this simple and fun outdoor game to convince him otherwise. Everyone loves the game tic-tac-toe because it's competitive but is easy enough for smaller kids to understand. Add this twist to the family favorite that your child will love. Paint designs onto rocks to use in place of X's and O's so you can play outside on a chalk tic-tac-toe grid! Since you're using rocks, it's easy to play over and over again. This game will help your elementary student develop her thinking skills by strategizing what her next move will be. It's a great game for kids because it gets them outdoors, using their creativity, and get them thinking!

What You Need:

- 10 rocks
- Sidewalk chalk
- Paint in assorted colors
- Paintbrushes

What You Do:

1. **Prepare:** Hunt for rocks! Look for 10 between the size of a half-dollar coin and the palm of your hand. It's best if the rocks are round, smooth, and flat.
2. Help your child come up with a design, or pick 2 colors she likes. Paint 5 rocks with one color or one design on them, and 5 other rocks with a different color or design on them. Some fun ideas for designs are ladybugs, bees, stars, hearts, flowers, smiley faces, or animals faces. Set aside the painted rocks and let them dry.
3. With the chalk, draw a tic-tac-toe board on the ground. The size of the grid will depend on the size of the rocks you're using. Start with two lines vertically, with two horizontal lines overlapping the vertical ones. You should end up with a grid of 9 squares.
4. **Play:** Now it's time for some outdoor fun! Have the players decide which design they want to use.
5. Players compete against each other to see who can outsmart the other by getting 3 of their rocks in a row horizontally, diagonally, or vertically! The first person to do this is the winner. This game is great because once it's over, there's no need to erase and start over. Simply take the rocks out and start again! You can even play on rainy days; just make a tic-tac-toe grid on a poster board, take out the painted rocks, and you're ready to go!
6. To add extra educational value to this game, help your child practice a certain letter of the alphabet by creating designs that start with the letter. For example, the letter B could be represented with 5 banana designs and 5 boat designs!

