

Think Tank:

1. Minefield

Arrange some sort of obstacle course and divide students into teams. Students take turns navigating the "mine field" while blindfolded, with only their teammates to guide them. You can also require students to only use certain words or clues to make it challenging or content-area specific.

2. A Shrinking Vessel

This game requires a good deal of strategy in addition to team work. Its rules are deceptively simple: The entire group must find a way to occupy a space that shrinks over time, until they are packed creatively like sardines. You can form the boundary with a rope, a tarp or blanket being folded over or small traffic cones. (Skills: Problem-solving; teamwork)

3. Boats Afloat

Materials: aluminum foil and weighted material (coins, marbles, sand, etc.)

Give each child a 1 ft. piece of aluminum foil. Explain that there is a competition to see who can build the sturdiest boat and hold the most pennies. Boats can be tested in sink or buckets. You can vary this depending on the age of the kid. You can set time limits, if necessary.

4. ZOOM

Zoom is a classic classroom cooperative game that never seems to go out of style. Simply form students into a circle and give each a unique picture of an object, animal or whatever else suits your fancy. You begin a story that incorporates whatever happens to be on your assigned photo. The next student continues the story, incorporating their photo, and so on.

This activity is based on the picture books "Zoom" and "Re-Zoom" by Istvan Banyai which consist of 30 sequential "pictures within pictures". The team is tasked with putting together a story from a set of sequential images. Each person is given an image but is not permitted to show it to anyone else. Together, the team has to figure out the correct sequence. The activity focuses on effective communication and problem-solving skills.

Resources:

You'll need to purchase the picture books "Zoom" and "Re-Zoom" by Istvan Banyai.

Alternatively, you can create your own set of sequential images that tell a story. Each image should be on one sheet of paper (you can laminate them so that they last more than one session). The number of images should match the number of participants.

(If you're in a pinch, you may be able to find Zoom and Re-Zoom as images online, but if you're planning for a later session, please support the author by buying his books!)

Space Required: Small. Indoors or outdoors.

Group Size: 8 to 30. You can use the variations provided for smaller groups.

Total Time: 30 minutes

5 minutes to brief and setup

15 minutes for the activity

10 minutes to review and debrief

Running the Activity

Explain the activity: The group has to piece together a story from the set of the images that is handed out. Each participant is given an image but is not permitted to show it to anyone else. Without looking at each other's images, the group must put the images in sequence.

Hand out one image to each participant. Encourage them to study the details of the image so this will help them put together the full story.

Once they are ready, they can begin the activity.

When the group believes that they have the images put into the correct sequence, the images should be laid on the table/floor in order face down.

Turn the images over so that they can see if they got it right.

If there are any mistakes, let participants correct the order and then go through the correct sequence so that they understand the full story.

Rules

Participants are not allowed to show anyone else their image

Participants are able to describe their image or demonstrate through actions

Once the sequence of images has been agreed on by the group, they should be laid down on the table/floor in sequence.

Suggested Learning Outcomes

Communication

Problem solving

Time management

Activity Guidance and Notes

This is a great activity that allows teams to display communication and problem-solving skills. The activity becomes more complex with a large number of participants as there are more pieces of the story-puzzle that they have to put into sequence. It also works well with smaller groups if you use the variations provided below.

Typically, you may notice that one or more participants will step up and assume a leadership role to help guide the group.

Variations

If there are more people than cards, you can pair up participants

For smaller groups or to increase difficulty, don't let participants talk at all during the activity. Let them use gestures and actions to put the images in sequence.

For smaller groups, you can give each participant more than one image.

You can make the activity more competitive and measure team performance by the number of images that are in the wrong sequence.

You can enforce a time limit to make it more difficult.

5. Sneak a Peak

This problem solving activity requires little more than a couple of sets of children's building blocks or duplicate lego. The aim of the challenge is for each group to try and build an exact copy of a pre-built sculpture – the catch is only one person in each group can look at the model at a time and for only ten seconds. They then return back to their team and describe what they see.

Equipment Required: Enough Children's building blocks or duplicate lego for each group

Space Required: Small. Indoors or outdoors.

Group Size: Minimum of 4

Before the challenge begins you will need to build a small sculpture with some of the building blocks and hide it from the group.

Next up, divide the participants into small teams of four (or similar). Each team should be given enough building material so that they can duplicate the structure you've already created.

Place the sculpture in an area that is an equal distance from all the groups.

One member from each team can come up at the same time to look at the sculpture for ten seconds and try to memorize it before returning to their team.

After they return to their teams, they have twenty-five seconds to instruct their teams about how to build an exact replica of your sculpture.

After one minute of trying to recreate the sculpture, another member from each team can come up for a "sneak a peek" before returning to their team and trying to recreate the sculpture.

The challenge should be continued in this pattern until one of the team's successfully duplicates the original sculpture.

Suggested questions to ask in the review:

Did you have a strategy before attempting the challenge?

How did you decide who would go first?

Did anyone in your group struggle to memorise the sculpture and how did you help them?

How well did you communicate as a team? How could you improve?

Was everyone involved in the build?

What skills can you take away from the challenge and how can you apply these to (insert subject) in the future?

6. Traffic Jam

Traffic Jam is a real, 'Brain Buster' that requires a lot thinking and communication. This challenge is very similar to a human chess game. The group is split in 2, with both sides working together to complete the challenge. Cooperation and planning are essential to complete this task.

Equipment Required

Cones/Floor Markers

Solution (full solution available in The Team Building Activity Book)

Space Required: Small. Indoors or outdoors.

Group Size: 8-12 participants. No more than 20 (even numbers only)

Total Time: 55 minutes

5 minutes to brief and set up

40 minutes to achieve outcome

10 minutes to review and debrief

Brief/Challenge Instructions

Split participants into two smaller groups (Side A and B).

Both groups must line up vertically (one behind the other) with A facing B and vice-versa.

Everyone should have a cone next to them with a free space in the centre separating the two sides.

The goal of the game is to get side A to side B and Side B to side A, all facing forward.

Rules are as follows:

No moving backwards

A person can only move forward to an empty space

A person can not "jump over" their own team mate

Only one person may move at a time

One spot per person, no sharing

If any of these rules are broken, the group must begin again

Start Order: A B C D – 1 2 3 4

End Order: 1 2 3 4 – A B C D

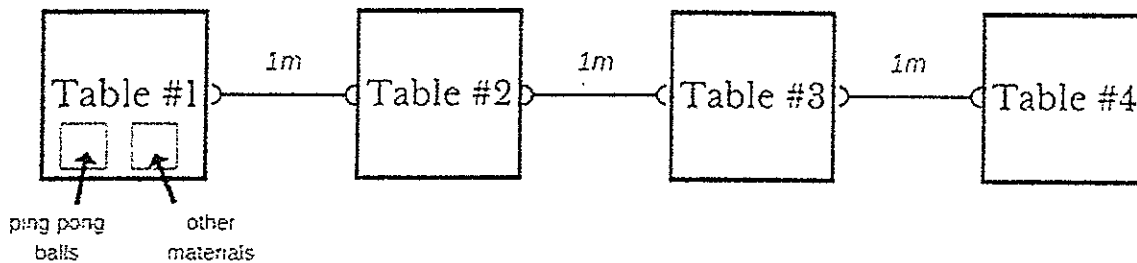
Set Up

Position the 4 tables in a row, with a 1m gap between each table (see diagram for the layout).

Label the desks with the index cards in numerical order.

Place the 2 small boxes on Table #1: one of the boxes will hold the 15 ping pong balls while the other will hold the other remaining materials.

Set Up for Ping Pong Move Along



Running the Activity

Explain the activity: The team has to move 15 ping pong balls from Table #1 to Table #4 without touching the balls and using only the materials provided. There is a time limit of 10 minutes, and any ping pong balls that drop to the floor are out of play.

Scoring system (if there is more than one team participating): Each team will receive 1 point for each ping pong ball on Table #2, 2 points for each ball on Table #3 and 3 points for each ball on Table #4. The team with the most points at the end of the game wins.

Once they are ready, the trainer can start the clock for the team to begin the activity,

At the end of 10 minutes, the activity ends, and the trainer tallies the points. The higher the team score, the better they worked together.

Rules

Only the provided materials can be used during the challenge.

You have 10 minutes to complete the challenge.

The 2 wooden rulers and 15 ping pong balls given to the team cannot be changed in any way.

Participants are not allowed to directly touch or lift the ping pong balls in order to move them.

Any ping pong balls that fall to the floor are out of play.

7. PING PONG MOVE ALONG

In this activity, the team is tasked with moving 15 ping pong balls from Table #1 to Table #4 without directly touching or lifting the balls, and using only the materials provided.

Resources:

Set-Up:

4 tables

4 index cards to label the tables

2 small boxes

Materials for the challenge:

1 piece of masking tape (40cm)

1 long cardboard tube (40cm)

1 piece of string (40cm)

1 paper/plastic cup

2 wood rulers

5 sheets of paper

5 paper clips

10 rubber bands

20 toothpicks

15 ping pong balls

½ package of stick-tack

Space Required: Large. Indoors or outdoors.

Group Size: 8 to 12 ideally. With bigger groups, you can split them into smaller teams and prepare one set of resources for each team.

Total Time: 40 minutes

15 minutes to brief and setup

15 minutes for the activity

10 minutes to review and debrief

Variations

If the team has difficulty moving the ping pong balls or you have a small space to run the activity, you can place the tables closer together.

To make it more challenging, instruct the team to move each ping pong ball one by one.

Suggested Learning Outcomes

Problem solving

Communication

Strategy

Creative thinking

Cooperation

Review

Suggested questions to ask:

What did you do well? How did you decide on the method of moving the ping pong balls?

What was your strategy to maximise the points you scored?

Did any accidents happen during the challenge (i.e. did you lose any ping pong balls?) How did you get back on track? Did you change your strategy?

Did you identify a leader?

What leadership skills were demonstrated during the challenge?

How well did you communicate during the challenge?

What did you learn from the challenge?

8. Water Carry

The aim of this challenge is for the team to try and retrieve 10 cups full of water from around the room and place on a tray without spilling any of it. During the task, each person is only allowed to use, just one hand and one leg to complete the task

Equipment Required: 10 paper cups (filled with water 3/4), tray

Space Required: Medium. Can be delivered either indoors or outdoors.

Group Size: 6 to 12 ideally (for larger groups, split into smaller sub-teams)

Total Time: 20 minutes

5 minutes to brief and set up

10 minutes to achieve outcome

5 minutes to review

Water Carry Team Challenge Instructions

Before you start the activity, fill ten paper cups with water. Place five cups on the ground at one end of the room at the other five on the opposite side of the room. Aim for having these at a minimum 20ft apart if possible.

Provide a tray for the group and explain that their challenge is to retrieve all 10 cups of water and place them on the tray without spilling any water.

The group are only allowed to retrieve, just one cup at a time. They cannot return to the same side of the room, twice in a row and must alternate between sides.

Each person in the team can only use just one hand and one foot for the duration of the challenge. Once the group have retrieved all 10 cups of water, they must then return back to the middle of the room and place the tray on the floor.

If they spill any water, they must start over again.

Suggested Learning Outcomes

Goal Setting

Leadership

Problem Solving

Communication skills

Useful Tips

Most of the time, groups will try to hop with the tray and the contents which results in water spillage. The best way of completing this task is for the group to form a chain and pass the tray down the line and then reverse the chain to the opposite and repeat until they have retrieved all 10 cups.

Add a time limit to the challenge to make it harder for the group and put pressure on them to complete the task. Allow enough time before they start the challenge to plan.

Suggested questions to ask during the review:

How did you feel when working as part of a team?

Is there anything you would do differently next time?

What did you find most difficult? Why did you find it difficult and how can you prevent it from happening again?

Did anyone lead the task and why was important to nominate a leader?

How did you plan for the task? Did everyone share their ideas?

9. Grid Master

Materials Needed: 25 square grid, Whiteboard grid (for host), markers

Set Up:

Create the 25 square grid on the classroom floor.

How to Play/Game Rules:

Lay out the 25 squares on the floor to create the grid.

Have all players line up at the corner of the grid (this is where they enter).

The Grid Master (instructor) will tell the first player they may enter the grid.

Once the player enters, she has to decide what square to move to next.

Players may only advance 1 square at a time by moving forward, backward, sideways or diagonally.

Once the player moves to a new square he asks the Grid Master "Am I on the right path?"

The Grid Master will say YES or NO. If YES, the player gets to move again. If NO, the player must go to the back of the line.

The next player must start from the beginning in order to retrace the last player's path and continue past it.

All players should be paying attention to the correct and incorrect moves.

The goal is to find the correct path out of the grid.

Variations:

Split class into 2 teams and see what team can get out of the grid first.

Create special squares like free pass (the Grid Master tells them where the next square is) or Bonus (player gets 2 guesses for their next step).