

Warm-Up **Set**

Use these cards to lead fun activities with the aim of preparing your group for a certain mode of working.



Warm Up Set



HPI Academy | Education for Professionals

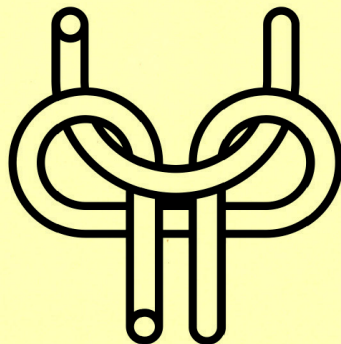


This is a random collection of warm up exercises collected by the HPI Academy. Feel free to spread the word.

HUMAN KNOT

Learning goals

This warm-up sparks a group feeling and supports working together.



>6



8'



No materials needed

Step by Step

- 1 Everyone stands in a circle. Now close your eyes, stretch out both your hands in front of you, cross your wrists and walk slowly into the middle of the circle, simultaneously with everyone else.
- 2 Each of your hands grabs someone else's free hand. You must connect hand-to-hand, and with only one hand.
- 3 Now try to unknot yourselves without letting go of your hands. More than one circle may emerge.

Variations

You can also run the game twice: First you choose one person who instructs the group; in the second round, the group untangles itself on its own. The first version will probably last longer or be impossible, demonstrating the power of self-organization in groups.

Notes

DANISH CLAPPING GAME

Learning goals

This is a short warm-up to get everyone into a playful mood and to get their blood flowing.



≥ 2



5'



No materials needed

Step by Step

- 1** Everyone finds a partner.
- 2** Position yourself opposite to one another so that you can look at your partner's face.
- 3** You will start this game at the same time. Clap both your hands on your thighs. Then each of you is free to move both your hands either left, right or overhead. Clap on your thighs again, and then move again in one of the three directions. Repeat.
- 4** Every time your and your partner's hands are pointing in the same direction, your next move (after clapping your thighs) must be to give your partner a double high five.
- 5** Continue, constantly increasing speed.

Variations

You can also make other movements or use your feet, e.g. jump left, right or up. When you meet, try a low-five with one foot.

Notes

CLAP & NAME

Learning goals

This group warm-up requires everyone's attention and fosters the process of remembering names in a playful way.



>5



8'



No materials needed

Step by Step

- 1** Everyone stands in a circle.
- 2** Now start all together the following rhythm: clap both your hands onto your thighs, then clap your hands, snap right, snap left.
- 3** The rhythm continues flowing. Now one person starts and says his/her own name on the right snap and a random name of someone in the circle on the left snap.
- 4** The called person proceeds directly in the next phase of the rhythm to say their own name on the right snap, and the pattern continues.

Variations

Instead of names, you can allot numbers and do the same procedure with numbers.

Notes

1, 2, 3

Learning goals

A seemingly easy exercise which guarantees blunders in order to provide a chance to reflect on how one reacts to making mistakes.



≥ 2



5'



No materials needed

Step by Step

- 1 Everyone finds a partner.
- 2 Now count together to three, alternating on each number and repeating. Go faster.
- 3 Next, instead of saying "2," you clap. Continue and repeat the count/clap rhythm.
- 4 Then, instead of saying "1," you snap your fingers. Continue and repeat the snap/clap/count rhythm.

Variations

You can reflect after every step on how everybody reacts to making a mistake and how it feels. Then, after step four, you can instruct everybody to celebrate each mistake in order to make room for a failure-open culture.

Notes

SOUNDBALL

Learning goals

This warm-up will get your voice ready for whatever's waiting next.



>3



5'



No materials needed

Step by Step

- 1** Everyone stands in a circle.
- 2** One person throws an imaginary ball to a random person in the circle. In addition to the throwing gesture, s/he makes a long, freely chosen noise.
- 3** The “recipient” of the ball makes the same noise and a gesture of receiving the ball, and then throws it to someone else with a new noise and gesture. Repeat.

Variations

Notes

I'M A TREE

Learning goals

This warm-up builds team spirit and is an entertaining way to get the group's creativity flowing.



≥ 4



5'



No materials needed

Step by Step

- 1** Everyone stands in a circle.
- 2** One person starts and steps in the middle of the circle. S/he starts telling a story with "I am a tree..." (... e.g., "swaying in the wind").
- 3** The next person steps inside and adds something to tell the story further, building on a detail already mentioned. Each new entrant starts with "I am ..." (... e.g., "the wind swooshing around") and acts out this part.
- 4** Every time there are three people in the circle, the next time someone steps in, the person who has been inside longest steps out again.

Variations

You also can start the story differently of course.

Notes

ROCK, PAPER, SCISSORS TOURNAMENT

Learning goals

This group warm-up creates an energetic atmosphere where everyone is a winner.



>10



8'



No materials needed

Step by Step

- 1** Everyone walks around at their leisure.
- 2** The moment you meet another person, you play one round of "Rock, Paper, Scissors" against each other.
- 3** There are three gestures you can perform with one hand. For "rock" you make a fist, for "paper" you flatten your hand and for "scissors" you stretch out your forefinger and your middle finger.
- 4** Start at the same time, swing your action hand twice while saying "one, two" and then make your gesture on "three."
- 5** Rock beats scissors, scissors beat paper and paper beats rock. If you make the same gesture, repeat until there is a winner.
- 6** The loser becomes the winner's biggest fan. S/he follows the winner and cheers loudly as the winner proceeds to the next opponent.

- 7** "Snakes" will evolve and get longer. By the end, two people will play for the title each with a massive cheering section.

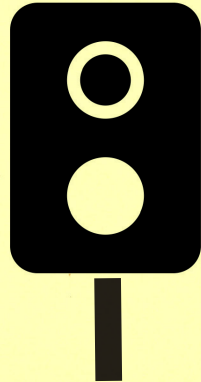
Variations

Notes

STOP AND GO

Learning goals

A fun warm-up for the whole group that requires concentration.



>6



8'



One moderator through the whole game

Step by Step

- 1** Everyone walks around at their leisure.
- 2** On the moderator's command "Stop" everyone stops and on "Go," they start walking around again.
- 3** Now we swap the meaning of the two commands: "Stop"="Go" & "Go"="Stop".
- 4** We add two more actions: "Name" (say your name) and "Clap" (clap your hands).
- 5** Now we also swap the meaning of these two actions.
- 6** We add two more: "Jump" (jump up) & "Dance" (dance on the spot). The other four actions remain as they were.
- 7** Now we also swap the meaning of these two actions.
- 8** "Name", "Name", "Name". Everyone claps.

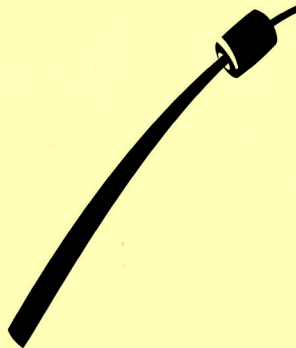
Variations

Notes

MARSHMALLOW CHALLENGE

Learning goals

This warm-up is about radical collaboration, thinking with your hands, failing, testing and iterating.



5/10/
15 ...



20'



Per team: 1 marshmallow, 20 pieces of spaghetti, 1m of crepe tape, 1m of string

Step by Step

- 1** The challenge is to build the highest free-standing structure in groups of five people.
- 2** Groups may only use the provided materials.
- 3** The marshmallow must be located at the top of the structure and marks the measuring point.
- 4** The structure can be affixed to the surface of the table but may not be connected to any other object (e.g., the ceiling).
- 5** Either when time's up or sooner, the structure must stand freely without breaking for at least ten seconds.
- 6** Groups have 15 minutes to build the structure. If they finish early, they notify the moderator, who goes ahead and measures.

- 7** Learnings to reflect afterwards:
 - Bias toward action
 - Build to think
 - Fail early and often
 - Test and iterate
 - Team work

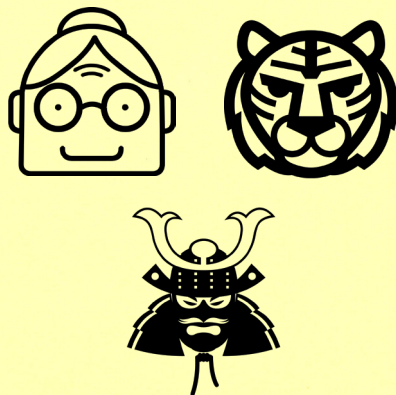
Variations

Notes

GRANDMA, TIGER, SAMURAI

Learning goals

This group activity is a lot of fun and literally warms you up. It's a great outdoor warm-up.



≥ 10



10'



A lot of free running space

Step by Step

- 1 Two groups stand face-to-face on the half-way line of a defined playing field.
- 2 Both groups play several rounds against each other. The goal is either to catch people from the other team or to escape from getting caught.
- 3 There are three moves:
The grandma: raise a scolding finger and say "na na na".
The tiger: do a clawing gesture and sound of a tiger roaring.
The samurai: do a sword fight movement and a loud battlecry.
- 4 After both teams agree secretly on a move, they perform the same move all together on the count of three.
- 5 Samurai beats tiger, tiger beats grandma and grandma beats samurai.

- 6 In case of both teams doing the same move, repeat. If one team wins, they try to catch their opponent, who themselves try to run to a predefined safe zone. If one gets caught, you join your catcher's side.
- 7 The game ends when there is only one person left on one side.

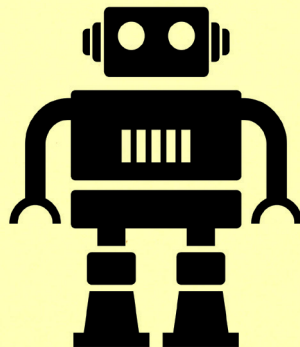
Variations

Notes

ROBOT

Learning goals

This group warm-up is both fun and strategic thinking while enabling players to move around a lot.



≥ 10



10'



One chair/sitting cube for each person

Step by Step

- 1** Chairs are distributed randomly across the room. Everyone sits on a chair. One chair remains empty.
- 2** One person remains standing, a good distance away from the empty chair. S/he takes on the role of the robot and is only allowed to move forward in slow, robot-like steps.
- 3** The goal of the robot is to take a seat on the empty chair.
- 4** The goal of the others is to prevent the robot from sitting down in the empty chair by constantly relocating their seat. They may move around as they want.

Variations

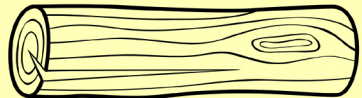
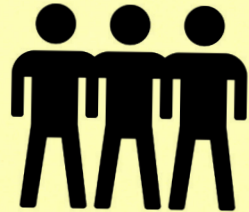
You can also run the game twice: First you choose one sitting person to instruct the other to relocate by saying their names each time. In the second round, the group organizes itself. The first version will probably fail sooner, demonstrating the power of self-organization in groups.

Notes

TEAM BEAM

Learning goals

This warm-up is a fun team activity that depends on collaboration and supporting one's teammates.



6/12/
18 ...



10'



One beam-like surface for each team to stand upon

Step by Step

- 1** Each member of a team stands on a narrow beam, so that they are in a raised position and their feet don't touch the ground (e.g., a row of chairs).
- 2** Now the challenge for the teams is to sort themselves as per a defined criterion without touching the ground.
- 3** Either you finish when one team is done or you play until all teams are sorted.
- 4** For example, you could ask the groups to sort themselves in alphabetical order following the first letter of each team member's surname, or in calendar order following their birthdays.

Variations

Notes

Note that this exercise is rather for teams that already know each other a bit and where there is an existing basic trust.

YES, AND...

Learning goals

This warm-up is about focusing on a positive mindset and building on the ideas of others.



>2



5'



No materials needed

Step by Step

- 1** Have people form small groups (3-4 people) and tell them they are going to plan an activity (a trip, a party).
- 2** In the first round, each time someone proposes an idea, someone else should answer with "Yes, BUT... (reason why that is not going to work)."
- 3** In the second round, the response should be "Yes, AND... (add something that builds on the first idea)."
- 4** Debrief about the group energy and what kind of ideas came out in each round.

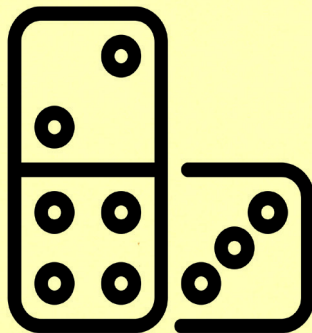
Variations

Notes

FORM NUMBERS

Learning goals

This group activity is great as an outdoor activity and fosters teamwork.



≥ 10



10'



Space for everyone to move freely

Step by Step

- 1** Have people form two groups and provide them with some space.
- 2** Both teams start at the same time. The challenge is to form every number from 20 down to zero as a whole team without speaking. Every person has to be part of each number.
- 3** Whenever one number is formed, the team says the number out loud and proceeds to the next one.
- 4** The goal is to form the “zero” before the other team does.

Variations

Notes

EVOLUTION

Learning goals

This group warm-up creates an energetic atmosphere with the added benefit of everyone being rather silly too.



≥ 10



10'



No materials needed

Step by Step

- 1** This game follows the rock, paper, scissors tournament framework. Everyone starts at the lowest level (an amoeba), but if they win a duel of rock, paper, scissors, they get to evolve to the next level.
- 2** After each duel, there is a winner who evolves up a level and a loser who devolves down a level (as far as possible - an amoeba just stays an amoeba).
- 3** Participants can only play against people at the same evolutionary level as them. There is a pose/action & noise to indicate which level they're at, and they have to find other people doing the same thing.
- 4** The levels and poses are:
amoeba (swimming gesture) ->
insect (hum and flap wings) -> frog (croak and hop) -> gorilla (knock your hands on your chest) -> human (stand upright and proud).

Variations

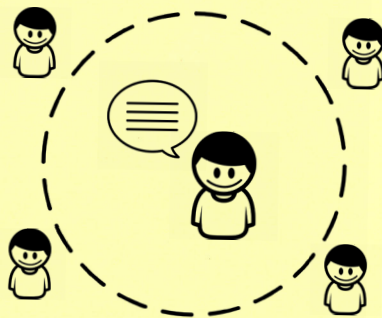
You can adjust the evolution levels and poses.

Notes

IN THE MIDDLE

Learning goals

This warm-up is a quick and fun way to get to know everyone a bit better.



≥ 8



5'



No materials needed

Step by Step

- 1** Everyone stands in a tight circle.
- 2** One person starts and walks in the middle of the circle. S/he says one thing about themselves, e.g., "Hi, I'm Samuel, and I was born in Berlin" or "Hi, I'm Samuel, and I enjoy playing the piano."
- 3** Now, every person in the circle to which this statement also applies (e.g. who also was born in Berlin or also likes playing piano) steps inside the circle for a moment and then back out again to a new place in the circle.
- 4** The person who remains last in the middle goes next with a new statement.

Variations

Notes

NINJA

Learning goals

This warm-up requires quick thinking and body control and is a lot of fun.



>5



10'



Space for everyone to move freely

Step by Step

- 1** Have people form small groups (5-6) and tell them to stand in a close circle (hands are able to touch their neighbors' shoulders).
- 2** One person calls "ninja!" (elongating the word for effect), and everyone jumps back and stands in a ninja pose of their choice.
- 3** One designated person in the group starts by trying to slap another person's hand with just one move and only one step. S/he must freeze in that move! The attacked person is allowed to pull away his/her hand.
- 4** If your hand is hit, you are „out“ and must leave the game.
- 5** As soon as the move is complete, the turn moves clockwise, based on the original order in the circle. Continue until one person is left.
- 6** Whoever is out can start their own game of ninja.

Variations

Notes

PANTOMIMIC INTRODUCTION

Learning goals

This group activity is a fun, quick and simple way to let everyone introduce themselves.



≥ 5



7'



Space for everyone to move freely

Step by Step

- 1 Everyone stands in a circle.
- 2 One person starts and steps in the middle of the circle. S/he mimes something about her/himself, e.g., being a pianist.
- 3 The onlookers have to guess what the mime means.
- 4 When the players guess correctly, the actor/actress reveals the story behind it and tells one or two more sentences about themselves.

Variations

You can define two or three items for the person to talk about after the mime, e.g., name, job and favorite travel destination.

Notes

ONE WORD AT A TIME

Learning goals

This warm-up fosters a team feeling as well as creativity.



Space for everyone to move freely

Step by Step

- 1** Have people form small groups (5-6).
- 2** The setting is a talkshow. One person (e.g., facilitator) is the “talk show host”, the others are collectively playing one character, who is the guest on the talk show (let the team agree on one, e.g., astronaut, mother of 12 children, etc. ...).
- 3** The facilitator asks questions and the “guest” has to answer. Each person of the group adds a word, one after the other, creating word by word an answer to the question.

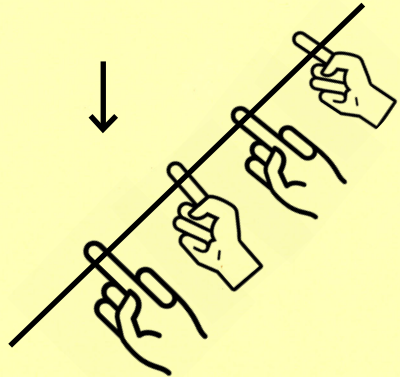
Variations

Notes

BRING IT DOWN

Learning goals

This warm-up is a fun group exercise to highlight the importance of working as a unit while being a team.



≥ 6



>10'



One long stick (e.g., measuring stick) per team

Step by Step

- 1** Have people form groups (at least four people per group).
- 2** Within the groups, stand in one line side by side. Everyone stretches out one index finger pointing in the same direction.
- 3** Rest the stick over all of the extended index fingers.
- 4** The goal is to lower the stick to the ground without anyone losing contact.

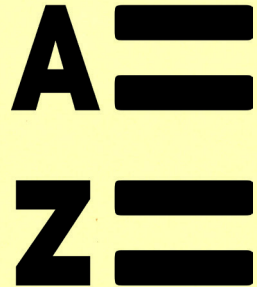
Variations

Notes

ALPHABET

Learning goals

This group warm-up requires high concentration and makes raises the awareness of others in the group.



>5



>5'



No materials needed

Step by Step

- 1 Everyone stands in a circle.
- 2 The goal is to recite the alphabet one person at a time, in no particular order. The catch is that if two (or more) people say the same letter at the same time, you have to start over from „A.“

Variations

You can adjust the goal in order to make it easier. e.g., let them count to ten as a group.

Notes

TOUCH SOMETHING BLUE

Learning goals

This group activity is a good energiser to get people moving around and laughing.



≥ 5



5'



Space for everyone to move freely

Step by Step

- 1** Ask everyone to stand up. Then explain that you will call out to everyone to touch something that has a certain quality.
- 2** Start with calling easy things like “Touch something blue!” Now everyone should run to touch a blue object. Other examples are “Touch your toes!” or “Touch something shiny!” etc.
- 3** Now increase the complexity, e.g. “Touch something inspiring” or “Touch something that makes you laugh,” and so on.

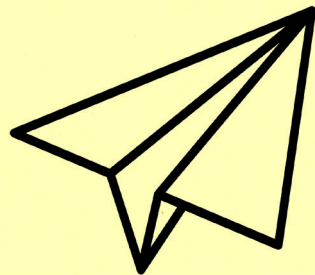
Variations

Notes

PAPER PLANE

Learning goals

This warm-up is about radical collaboration while thinking with your hands.



≥ 4



10'



Blank sheets of paper

Step by Step

- 1** Have people form pairs. Every pair gets one piece of blank A4 paper.
- 2** Everyone then raises their dominant hand (the hand with which they write). Now, everyone puts that hand behind their back and are forbidden to use it for the activity.
- 3** The second rule is that talking is not allowed during the exercise.
- 4** Each pair has five minutes to work together silently without their dominant hands to build a paper airplane. The goal is that it can fly as far as possible.
- 5** When time is up, mark a line on the ground and gather everyone there. Now let them throw the paper plane one after the other and see which one gets furthest.
- 6** The debrief can focus on communication and/or testing (or lack thereof).

Variations

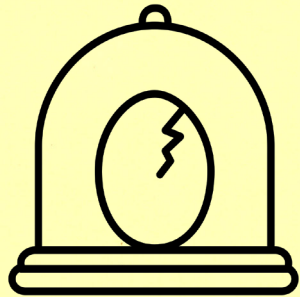
You can also run this exercise in groups of 3-4 people.

Notes

EGG DROP

Learning goals

This warm-up fosters team chemistry, collaboration and creative thinking.



≥ 6



15-30'



Raw eggs, various prototyping materials, location that allows for a high drop

Step by Step

- 1** Have people form groups (3-4) and either give them the same materials each (e.g., one raw egg, cardboard, duct tape and several thin straws) or give them access to a materials pool.
- 2** With the equipment provided, the groups have 10 minutes to build a package for a single egg that can sustain a fall from a pre-defined height without breaking the egg.
- 3** At the end of the time limit, bring everyone back together. Drop each structure in a consistent way. After dropping all structures, open them up to see which eggs have remained intact.
- 4** Debrief about the different approaches.

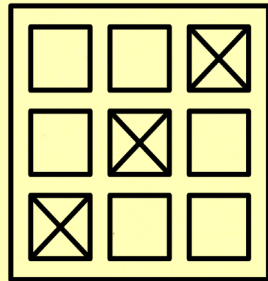
Variations

Notes

BINGO

Learning goals

This warm-up is an entertaining and quick way to get to know other players a bit better.



≥ 16



7-15'



One pen and one pre-prepared Bingo card for each person

Step by Step

- 1** Hand out a pre-prepared Bingo card (see "Notes" for preparation details) and a pen to each participant.
- 2** Now tell them that the task is to find someone who can answer "yes" to each statement and to write their name in the corresponding box.
- 3** There are two rules: they may not use one name several times (unless there are too few players) and they should first guess which fields might fit their partner rather than asking them which field they can offer.
- 4** If one person manages to complete all names, s/he shouts „Bingo" and the game is over. Otherwise end the game after the allotted time expires and the person with the most boxes filled wins. Reflect on some statements, especially unusual ones or ones particularly relevant to your workshop.

Variations

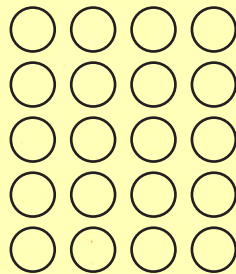
Notes

Prepare a card in a grid-layout that includes one statement per box plus space beneath for writing. Include both fun statements as well as informative ones (eg., "Has a whiteboard in their office," "Has read all the Harry Potter books," "Leads a team," "Has worked with Design Thinking before," etc. ...)

30 CIRCLES

Learning goals

Use this short warm-up to boost creativity and highlight important aspects of ideation.



≥ 1



5'



One pen and one prepared sheet with 30 circles for each person

Step by Step

- 1** Give each person a pen and a sheet of paper with 30 circles printed on it.
- 2** Now tell them that they have 2 minutes to create recognizable objects by filling in as many of the circles as possible. The goal is quantity, not quality.
- 3** For a short moment, show them one sheet where the exercise has been done already as an example.
- 4** After the two minutes, compare the results: how many circles were filled in and how diverse are the solutions? Did anyone use the spaces outside the circles or combine two circles to make a picture?
- 5** Reflect on whether players used some of the figures you showed them. Underline that this is allowed and that it's all about building on the ideas of others.

Variations

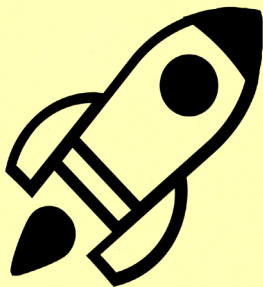
Notes

Prepare sheets of paper with 30 blank equally big circles printed on them. Fill out one before the exercise as a sample to show the group.

GOODBYE ROCKET

Learning goals

This game is actually a cool down - use it to say goodbye to the group.



No materials needed

Step by Step

- 1** Everyone stands in a circle.
- 2** Stretch out your hands in front of you. One person starts and ignites the rocket through making flame movements with their hands and a "sschhhhhh"-noise.
- 3** The next person in the circle also "catches fire," then the next, and so on. Every person who has caught fire already keeps flapping their hands and "sch"-ing.
- 4** When everyone has caught fire, squat down and move together to the middle of the circle while raising your arms and saying simultaneously: "Gooooood bye!"

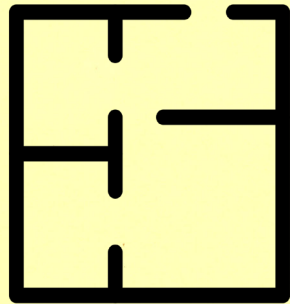
Variations

Notes

FLOOR PLAN

Learning goals

This warm-up underlines how hard it is to get a message across through words alone, and is therefore well-suited as an exercise before prototyping.



One sheet of paper with a pre-printed floor plan, one blank sheet of paper and one pen per pair

Step by Step

- 1** Have people form pairs. Hand out one blank sheet with a pen to person A and the paper with a floor plan pre-printed on it to person B. Person B may not show their paper to person A.
- 2** The pairs sit back to back. The task is for person B to explain the floor plan to person A so that s/he can reproduce it on a blank paper. Looking and turning are not allowed!
- 3** After time runs out, reflect on the results.

Variations

Person A is not allowed to ask questions. S/he is only allowed to answer "yes" or "no".

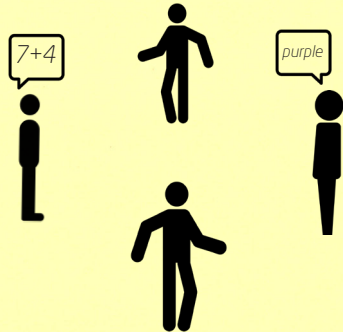
Notes

The structure of the floor plan should be a balanced mixture of a clear form (e.g., make it look like the letter "L") as well as some details (e.g., doors).

STAY FOCUSED

Learning goals

This warm-up helps players to focus within a fun environment and is well-suited as a short distraction and mental challenge.



4 / 8 / ...



10'



No materials needed

Step by Step

- 1** Build groups of four; each group forms a circle. Choose one person who starts (player A).
- 2** The person opposite player A makes various body movements which person A has to mirror.
- 3** Simultaneously, the person to A's right says a random color and player A has to name one association with that color (e.g., blue - sky). The person to A's left asks a simple arithmetic question which person A has to answer correctly (e.g., What is $3+7$? 11!).
- 4** Rotate roles, so that everyone can try the challenge.

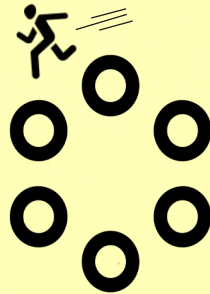
Variations

Notes

1 TO 7

Learning goals

This fun group warm-up can be used as an energizer combined with delivering the message of a failure-open culture.



No materials needed

Step by Step

- 1** Form a circle. One person starts counting aloud with "one." While saying the number, s/he simultaneously taps his/her hand either on his/her right or left shoulder and thereby indicates who has to count next.
- 2** For example, if s/he taps left, the person standing directly to the left proceeds with saying "two" while tapping with the hand to indicate the next direction. And so on.
- 3** The numbers "three" and "seven" are jokers and have the opposite rule! Here "hand to the right shoulder" indicates that "the person to the left continues counting."
- 4** Whenever one person messes up, s/he has to run around the circle one time.
- 5** Count to seven, then restart with one.

Variations

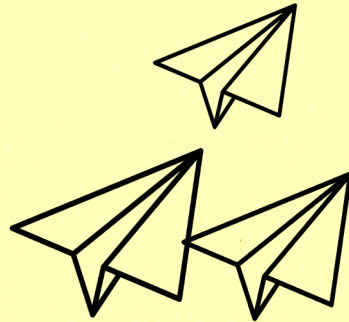
To highlight a failure-open culture, let the person who messed up say or sing „fail early and often" while running around the circle.

Notes

PAPER PLANE RACE

Learning goals

This warm-up is a fun activity to literally warm you up and support the team building process.



≥ 6



7'



One piece of blank paper per team (3 people), a lot of space

Step by Step

- 1** Have people form teams of three.
- 2** Give each team one piece of paper. They have one minute to build a paper airplane.
- 3** Now, in each team the members stand back-to-back and link their elbows together.
- 4** Predefine a start and a finish line. Now the race starts! The goal is to let the paper plane fly over the finish line. In doing so, the groups stay arm-linked the whole time.
- 5** The groups are of course allowed to throw the paper plane several times, as long as they stay connected.

Variations

Notes