

Classroom Activity: Communication Skills Game

Materials and Preparation

Two matching sets of LEGO building blocks with ten blocks and one base board in each set; using one set of blocks, build a random object using the ten blocks onto the base board

Time

45 mins

Group Size

Minimum of four people, up to seven

There are four roles in this communication skills game:

- Person A – director
- Person B – runner
- Person C – builder
- Person(s) D – observer(s)

Person A is given the built-up set of blocks, and is the only person who can see the object. It is the director's job to give clear instructions to person B, the runner, so that person C can build an exact replica of the model.

Person B listens to the director's instructions and runs to a different part of the room to where person C is sitting. The runner then passes on the building instructions, without seeing the building blocks, to Person C, the builder. The runner can make as many trips as required within the time allowed for the exercise.

Person C listens to the runner's instructions and builds the object from the set of building blocks. The builder is the only person who can see the object under construction, and building materials.

Person(s) D observe the communication game, and make notes about what works, what doesn't work, and how people behaved under pressure, etc. to pass onto the group later.

Set a time limit for the exercise of ten minutes.

When the time is up, allow the group to compare the model and the replica, and see how closely it matches. Generally, the replica will bear little resemblance to the original, which usually causes heated discussion!

Allow the group to reflect on how the exercise went, and agree on one thing they did well, one thing that didn't work, and one thing they would do better next time.

Run the exercise again, either switching or keeping original roles, and see if any improvements have been made. Make sure you deconstruct the "original" model and create a new design!

This simple communication skills game can be run many times without losing learning potential. Teams can add layers of sophistication to their communication by making use of aids such as diagrams, codes, and standard procedures, and by using active listening techniques.