

Group Game Activity to Build Open Communication and Team Building Skills

Props/Prep: Yes

Time: 25-30 min.

Audience: Groups

Physical: Yes

Building Straw Towers: This is an activity where students build towers out of drinking straws as a group. The object is to build the tallest tower within the timeframe. Towers must be free standing. They can't be taped to the floor, ceiling, or anything else. All towers need to be brought to the front of the class for judging.

Time Requirements: Allow 25-30 minutes for the entire process. Groups should be given 15 minutes to build the towers.

Materials needed per group: Approximately 30 straws & one roll of masking tape. A piece of cardboard to put under the tower for easier transport and a small prize for the winning group (i.e. bag of Smarties or M&Ms) are optional

Special features: This activity is a 'safe' way to 'play' together and get to know each other a little bit. Some people take longer than others to 'warm up' to new people. Point this out to all the groups prior to the activity beginning. Members should be encouraged to pay attention to the task and to each other. Group members should ensure that everyone is included. Everyone should have the opportunity to have 'their say'.

Procedure: Have groups sit together. Give them the rules. Hand out materials. Start timer: 15 minutes to complete tower (this may include 5 minutes to plan, and 10 minutes to build). When the towers are built, have group members bring them to the front. The group with the tallest, free-standing tower wins.

Debrief: Note your observations of the good aspects of group cooperation. Affirm everyone. Ask what behaviours represented open communication, collaboration, etc. Ask the groups to discuss the strengths of their group and what they could have done to be more successful. You may ask them what aspects of the task they completed most successfully. You may also ask them to identify which expected or unexpected team attributes were demonstrated throughout the activity. It may be useful to write down your debriefing questions to keep on track.

Function in the class: This group activity helps to facilitate open communication and team building skills. It is a good activity to break the ice for a new group of people. It can also be a great activity to talk about being flexible in new situations, being creative, and critically thinking. Once this activity is done, most people should be smiling and talking to other group members.

Adapted from; Federman Stein, R., & Hurd, S. (2000). *Using student teams in the classroom: a faculty guide*. Anker: Boston, MA.