

Team Building Poker

Here's a very simple and effective game for team-building, team-working, building co-operation, problem solving, leadership, and decision-making skills.

Also great for an ice-breaker and warm-up activity. The game can be used with a group of 10 or more, and requires only a deck of cards. Explain these simple rules of the exercise: One card will be handed out face down to each delegate. Players must not look at their cards until the game starts.

The aim of the exercise is for each person to put together the best three-card hand by joining with two other delegates.

Where total group size is not exactly divisible by three, players need not be exclusive to one group of three, ie. any player is permitted to be part of more than one three-card hand. This rule is optional, to be decided by the facilitator, when the total group is exactly divisible by three. A requirement for exclusive sets of three will tend to increase the competitive aspect of the exercise.

Card hands are best ranked according to poker rules, which are open to different interpretation so it's essential to agree the ranked order of possible hands before the game starts, to avoid any doubt as to the winners. Example ranking to be circulated or written on a flip-chart, lowest to highest: highest card, a pair, three of a kind, flush (three cards same suit), straight or run (eg., 8,9,10), top hand being a straight or running flush. Also clarify highest suits, (eg., lowest to highest: diamonds, clubs, hearts, spades).

The best hand possible would therefore be king, queen, ace of spades.

Set a time limit, by which all delegates must be grouped in threes, each group representing a three-card hand. A minute creates a pressurised activity; three minutes less so - generally the larger the total group size the longer the exercise needs, subject to a five minute maximum for very large groups.

Variations can be used, which makes it more interesting if you want to repeat the exercise later with the same group, eg:

- Each delegate receives two cards, requiring three players to create a six card hand (clarify rules accordingly).
- Instruct the group to find three or four other players, making four- or five-card hands.
- Allow each player to change their card once with a card from the top of the remainder of the deck, face down of course (exchanged cards go to the bottom of the deck).
- Upturn the card at the top of the remainder of the deck and stipulate that each hand must include that card (in which case three players will create four-card hands).
- For very large groups use two decks, and stipulate teams of five, (this is a great conference warm-up - you could stick a card underneath each delegate's seat, before delegates arrive.)
- Plus any other variations of your own you wish to try.

Facilitator and delegates can review various behaviours after the activity - eg., leadership, teamwork, negotiating, and decision making under pressure. This

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simple game will break the ice, and get people out of their seats with minimal input from the facilitator.

Follow up with a group discussion about aspects of the exercise relevant to the main session or purpose.