

Problem Solving as a Team

Tower to the Sky!

Alphabet Game IceBreaker - 6 Minutes

Students stand in a large circle. The goal is to shout out words in alphabetical order. If a player takes longer than five seconds to think of a word, they are out. The last player remaining wins the game. Give the students one of the following categories (or choose your own).

- Animals
 - Foods
 - Fictional Characters
 - Countries, Cities, and States
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Direct Instruction 5 Minutes: People achieve more when they solve problems and make decisions together. Our problem-solving activities teach participants how to work out a solution, a talent useful in many different environments. (Write following on the board.)

Problem solving:

- Improves teamwork
 - Helps participants address complex situations
 - Utilizes different thinking styles
 - Increases creativity
 - Collectively leads to decision making
 - Teaches both negotiation and cooperation
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Main Activity: Tower to the Sky! - 15 minutes

Using dry spaghetti or toothpicks and marshmallows, which team can build the highest tower?

Divide groups into equal teams. Provide each team with the same amount of spaghetti and marshmallows. The goal is to see which team can build the highest tower within a set amount of time. (Variation: teams may not open their supplies for 60-seconds, first talk as a team.)

When the timer sounds have students step away, use a measuring tape to call a winner.

Discussion Download - 15 Minutes

After completing a problem solving activity, lead participants to discuss what process(es) they used in the exercise. Have students use their personal whiteboards to reflect then write. Even young kids are able to participate in such discussions. After they've completed, share out as a whole group.

1. What went well in your group?
2. If you did this activity again what would you change?
3. Did the marshmallows work the way you thought they would?

4. What “roles” or skill sets surfaced in your teammates? (Was there a clear leader?)