

Ankle Walk

Goal

- to deepen skills in team work and communication.
- to learn about leadership and cooperation;
- to build the group's capacity for problem-solving.

Time 45-60 minutes

How it's done

Here's a challenging exercise for practicing making decisions and communication.

In this adventure-based learning activity the challenge is fairly simple: to walk as a group from one place to another. The twist: the group must walk all in one line together with their feet touching their neighbors' feet the whole time.

Like many adventure-based activities, it can be more fun with a scenario: You are imprisoned in a stockade together. Your ankles have electronic shackles. If you move with your feet together the computer will not set off the alarm. If someone's foot breaks contact, the alarm goes off and you will have to rush back to start over again. You have 20 minutes before the guard comes.

Explain the set-up for participants, where people need to start and where people need to end up. Also tell them that if their feet do not stay together the whole time, they need to return to the start – then have them go for it! (Because they're in prison they don't have any props, including shoe laces to tie ankles together.)

During the running of the exercise, you may choose to be very strict in implementing the rule about returning to the beginning or you may be very relaxed: it depends on the state of the group and how much challenge it can handle.

You can debrief this activity for problem-solving, communication and group decision-making. (For example, there is no rule that participants cannot get in a circle to discuss strategy, but participants may instead stay in a line. How did participants handle that challenge?)

Debrief by asking: "What worked?" Build a list of what creates an effective group. Ask for other stories or additions to the list. Invite stories or perhaps tell a story.

Tool description written by Daniel Hunter, Training for Change. This tool comes out of the field of adventure-based learning activities. For more, see Project Adventure's material in Quicksilver: Adventure Games, Initiative Problems, Trust Activities and a Guide to Effective Leadership, by Karl Rohnke and Steve Butter (Kendall/Hunt Publishing Company, reprint 1996).