



# Bounce the Ball



## what

Use a ball, either a tennis ball or a larger, bouncy ball. The leader begins with a question about the session and asks participants to answer it when the ball is bounced to them.

---

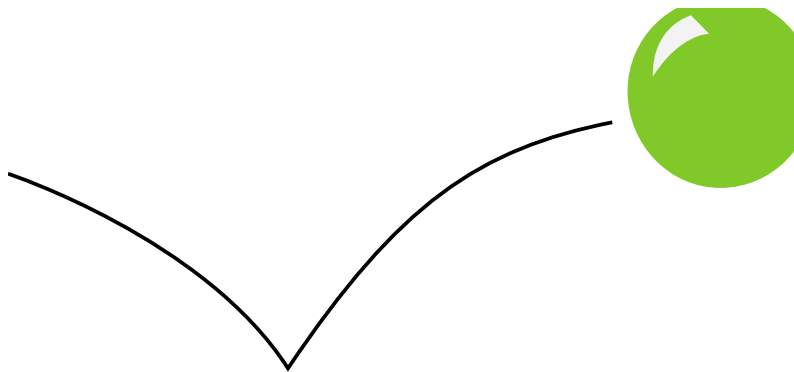
## how to do it

1. Clear a space so that no one is injured and nothing broken.
2. Participants stand in a circle.
3. Leader begins with a question, such as, "What is something you liked about the session today?" and bounces the ball to a youth who then answers. The catcher then bounces the ball to someone else who answers. It is important to use a large-sized bouncing ball so that everyone can easily catch it. A smaller ball is more difficult and the "misses" can be a distraction to the process as well as leave the individual with a sense of failure.
4. Participants continue bouncing the ball around the circle to each other and answering the question. Participants can answer more than once. After folks run out of things to say, you can add a new question.

---

## examples

First have participants say something they liked about the session. Once they run out of things to say, ask, "what will you do differently next time?" or "What's something you are looking forward to?", "How will I use this outside of the group?", "What will this mean for me in the future?".



## time

5 -15 minutes

## materials

large size bouncing ball

## adaptations

Have youth create the questions.

Change the tone of the activity by having each youth say something positive about the person they are about to pass the ball to.



# Cross the Line



## what

The adult reads a series of statements and youth choose to stand on the side of the line that represents their viewpoint. The sides of the line can represent yes/no, agree/disagree, or another pair of extremes. This activity provides an opportunity to assess the group prior to or following an activity. This exercise can be used as a simple icebreaker, or as a way to inform the group about minority viewpoints and power dynamics.

## how to do it

1. Ask all participants to stand on one side of the room. Tell them you will read a series of statements. Once you read a statement, everyone for whom that statement is personally true walks to the other side of the line. Both sides are to look each other in the eyes.
2. After the first statement, you may wish to use a reflective prompt such as, "Notice who is on one side of the room and notice who is not." Participants silently acknowledge the configuration of the room's participants. If only one or a few people are on one side, either during the activity or following you may ask participants how it felt to be in the majority/minority and if this possibility influenced where they stood.
3. Ask participants to rejoin the individuals who did not move. You can repeat the exercise with additional statements. This can be done without verbal discussion by participants about their stance or can include having a couple of people from each side of the line share.

## examples

As an opening activity:

"Cross the line if you feel safe sharing your feelings in this group."

"Cross the line if you would like to get to know people in this group better."

As an opening activity for a group on diversity:

"Cross the line if you have ever felt like you were treated differently because of your gender(race/religion/sexual orientation/age/ability...)."

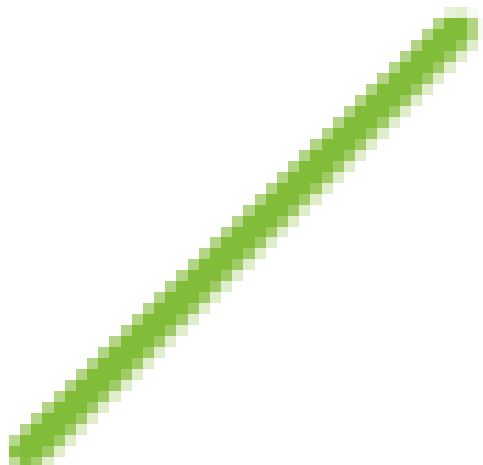
"Cross the line if you have ever treated someone differently because of their gender (race/religion/sexual orientation/age/ability...)."

As a reflection activity:

"Cross the line if you learned something from this activity."

"Cross the line if you enjoyed this activity."

"How prepared do you feel for the upcoming open house?"



## time

10-20 minutes

## materials

statements

## adaptations

This can be a very powerful activity for exploring minority/majority dynamics and raising awareness of individual struggles. In exploring these, it's essential to create an environment where each youth feels safe and there is additional discussion time as it becomes necessary.

For older students, if you have done this once and modeled appropriate reflection statements, you may ask them each to write a reflection statement on what they would like to know about other people's response in the group.

# Nails to hang your thoughts on



## what

Participants respond to prompts that aid them in planning or reflecting on an aspect of the project or experience. This exercise is very similar to Rotation Brainstorm, but participants move and respond individually rather than in groups.

---

## how to do it

1. Post large sheets of paper around the room. On each one, write a planning or reflection statement to complete, such as, “During today’s session I learned to...”
2. Have participants move around individually and complete each phrase. They can go in any order they wish, but have them try to write something on every sheet.

---

## examples

“The first step I should take in the project is...”  
“The outcome of my project should be...”  
“Today I would have liked to learn more about...”  
“Something I would do differently next time is ....”



## time

10-15 minutes

## materials

large size paper and pens/marker, statements/ topics

## adaptations

You will want to modify the number of statements posted based on the group size (i.e. larger group, more statements). This will insure they spend more time writing than waiting to write. Too much standing around time can lead to a lack of engagement.

# Post-it® Planning



## what

Young people, by themselves or as a group, write on self-stick notes all the tasks that are necessary to undertake a particular project or activity. As a group, they place these notes in order on a wall or on butcher paper to create a time line of the steps they will need to take.

## how to do it

1. Decide on a theme, project, or idea.
2. Distribute sticky notes and ask youth to take turns writing tasks.
3. When the list of tasks is exhausted, have volunteers, with the help of the group, rearrange the notes to put them in order (chronological, priority, etc.).
4. Make any additions or changes to the tasks.
5. Document the final list.

## examples

“Open House” was written at the top of a piece of easel paper. Cathy writes “choose a date” and sticks her note on the easel. Danielle writes “Buy ice cream” and puts that up. Henry writes “reserve the conference room” and sticks his up. Pretty soon there are dozens of notes on the easel. Alex then volunteers to put them in order. He comes up to the easel, and, with the help of the group, reorders the sticky notes.



## time

10-15 minutes

## materials

Sticky notes

## adaptations

Use sticky notes for general brainstorming, and then rearrange the ideas into subtopics.



# A rose, a bud and a thorn



## what

Using symbolism, the adult supporter asks youth to identify three areas of leaning. What the rose, the bud and the thorn represent can be modified to meet the designs of the adult supporter. It can refer specifically to an activity done in the group or to time away from the group.

## time

5 -15 minutes

## materials

None

## how to do it

1. Have participants write or say one of each of these in regard to the activity:
  - a. Thorn: One thing that was challenging, that they would have liked to be different, or something they did not enjoy.
  - b. Bud: A new idea they hope to develop
  - c. Rose: Something that was positive, something they are proud of, something they liked
2. They can share these with the adult supporter, a partner, in small or the whole group. Depending on the time available, the adult supporter can have them share in more than one way.

## adaptations

The symbolism of the rose, bud and thorn works well for younger as well as older ages. For younger ages, make sure to keep the time for large group sharing shorter. Also, for the younger elementary ages, the choices for what each represents should be limited to one thing and language can be kept brief to match their attention and comprehension.

For example:

- Thorn: something that was hard for you
- Bud: something that you hope to learn more about
- Rose: something you liked about the activity

## example

At the end of the session, the adult asked young people to say a rose, a bud and a thorn that occurred for them during the activity. One youth said, "My rose is getting to know the other kids in the group, my bud is thinking about why teens use drugs and my thorn is when we did the soda pop game." Another youth said, "my rose was hearing the guest speaker, my bud is the same as Diego's, and my thorn is that the group is over. I really liked this group."





# Round robin



## what

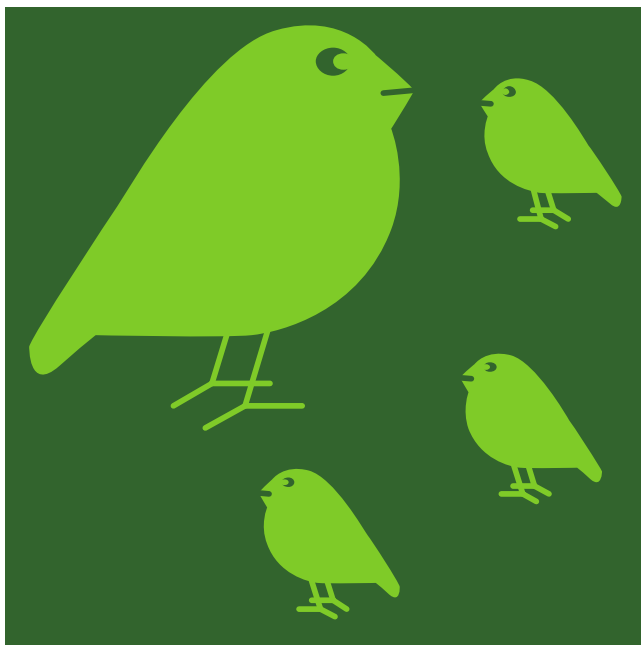
Round robin is simply the name for taking turns—having one person talk, then the next, and so on around the circle or room. This is often an effective technique to use because it gives everyone a turn. With a volunteer technique like popcorn style, louder or more confident youth may speak a lot and eclipse quieter youth.

## how to do it

1. Have youth sit in a circle or other configuration where they can see and be seen by everyone else.
2. Ask the group a question.
3. Go around the circle and have each youth respond to the question. When one person finishes, the person next to them can begin.
4. Continue until everyone has been heard.
5. Summarize or ask follow-up questions at the end.

## example

The adult leader says, “We’re going to go around the room and answer a simple question: what is your goal for this week? Who would like to answer first?” Kate raises her hand. “Ok, we’ll start with Kate, then continue to her left.” Each youth takes a turn answering the question.



## time

5 - 15 minutes

## materials

none

## Adaptations

Youth may have an object such as a “talking stick,” ball or other small item that gets passed between them. The person with the object is the one who can talk while others listen.

You may want to manage the time each person has to speak, perhaps by giving each person a set amount of time or by limiting the scope of the question.

You can tell young people they have the option to “pass” when it’s their turn. You can define pass as being able to simply not answer or as a “come back to me at the end” option.

# Think-Pair-Share



## what

Youth work individually, in pairs and finally in the larger group in response to a prompt. This simple exercise can really help get a conversation going, especially when young people don't feel comfortable sharing in a large full group. Sharing with a partner also helps build connections between youth.

## time

10-20 minutes

## materials

none

## how to do it

1. Young people review or consider a question, a video clip, article, or other prompt. You might have youth write down their initial responses. It's a good idea to let them know that they will be sharing their responses with others.
2. Using a grouping strategy, have youth form pairs.
3. Youth discuss their thoughts with their partner.
4. Have volunteers share a summary of their discussion with the whole group.

## adaptations

The sharing can end with the partner and does not have to include the full group.

## example

The leader tells the full group, "I want you to consider this question: What is the most important message to take away from that movie? Think about it yourself first, and jot down an answer. Afterward we'll be sharing with a partner and the larger group."

