

Week 2: Communications

Ball Track Exercise

What is it?

The ball track exercise involves the students being split into three teams, with each team given a set of instructions describing something they have to build. Once all three structures have been completed (independently of each other) they should then fit together to enable a ping-pong ball to fall into a cup.

Why do it?

The ball track exercise is a group task designed to develop verbal communication skills in students by limiting the range of communication techniques available to them.

Time Needed

1 hour 30 minutes

Number of Participants

This can be done in a small group or a large group that will break up into smaller groups of 3 to 4.

Supplies Needed

- A4 + A3 paper/card
- Tape measure
- Sticky tape
- Three Ping pong balls
- Straws
- String
- Cotton reels
- Cup
- Scissors
- Screens for students to work behind when building their part of the track
- Stopwatch or countdown timer
- Team instruction sheet (see below)

Process Steps

Team 1

- Starting point is 1.5 metres from the ground.
- Ball must be loaded and released.
- Ball must travel a minimum of 1 metre laterally.
- End point is 1 metre from the ground.

Communicating with the other teams

Only 2 people can enter the comms zone at any time.

To enter the comms zone, you must request to speak to a certain team via your tutor, e.g. "I would like to speak with a representative from team 2". Your tutor will then set this up.

No writing materials are allowed in the comms zone, verbal communication only.

You may only enquire about the present team's work, the team who is not in the zone must not be discussed.

Team 2

- Starting point is 0.5 metres from the ground
- Ball must be caught from the previous team with a minimum fall of 100mm.
- Ball must travel a minimum of 1 metre laterally.
- Ball must end up in a cup.

Communicating with the other teams.

Only 2 people can enter the comms zone at any time.

To enter the comms zone, you must request to speak to a certain team via your tutor, e.g. "I would like to speak with a representative from team 2". Your tutor will then set this up.

No writing materials are allowed in the comms zone, verbal communication only.

You may only enquire about the present team's work, the team who is not in the zone must not be discussed.

Team 3

- Ball must be received fluidly from the previous team.
- Ball must travel a minimum of 1 metre laterally.
- Track must include 2 "drops" of at least 100mm.

Communicating with the other teams.

Only 2 people can enter the comms zone at any time.

To enter the comms zone, you must request to speak to a certain team via your tutor, e.g. "I would like to speak with a representative from team 2". Your tutor will then set this up.

No writing materials are allowed in the comms zone, verbal communication only.

You may only enquire about the present team's work, the team who is not in the zone must not be discussed.

The Scenario

The task involves the students being split into three teams, with each team given a set of instructions describing something they must build. Once all three structures have been completed (independently of each other) then they should fit together to allow a ping-pong ball to traverse into a cup.

The teams should not be able to view each other's build until the end of the task and can only communicate verbally with one member of one other team at a time in a designated communication zone, which is monitored by the tutor.

Debrief

Once the task has been completed (hopefully with a successful outcome) the debrief will include possible solutions to the task which would enable it to be carried out in a more efficient way. Students should be encouraged to highlight their thoughts on this initially, with exemplar solutions being relayed by the tutor to wrap up.