

## **Blackboard Sentences**

This exercise asks the participants, working in teams, to race against one another to formulate a sentence to which each team member has added a word. This icebreaker is effective at any time during the learning program.

### Time Reference

Approximately 7 to 10 minutes.

### Group Size

Best suited for a group of 25 or fewer participants. If the group contains more than 25 participants, three teams may be formed.

### Space Required

A room that is large enough to permit the unrestricted movement of the learners.

### Materials Needed

For each team, a blackboard and a piece of chalk or a sheet of newsprint (taped to the wall) and a marker.

1. The trainer begins by explaining that, working in teams, the participants will be competing to see which team is the first to complete a group sentence.
2. Next the participants are asked to divide into two teams. If the group contains an uneven number' one participant may compete twice.
3. The group leader sets up blackboards for each team or tapes two pieces of newsprint to the wall.
4. The teams are then to line up 10 feet from their blackboards or sheets of newsprint.
5. After giving the first person in each team's line a piece of chalk or a black marker, the trainer explains the rules of the game.
  - a) Each of the team members is responsible for adding one word to his or her team's sentence. (If the teams are uneven, one participant will be competing twice.)
  - b) The first person in each line is to come forward and write the first word of his or her team's sentence. After doing so, he or she returns to his or her team, gives the chalk or marker to the next player, and then goes to the end of the team's line. (No preplanning of sentences is allowed.)
  - c) The next player then comes forward, adds a word, returns to the line, and so on until the last team member completes the sentence. (The sentence must contain the same number of words as there are members on the team.)
  - d) A player may not add a word between words that have already been written.
  - e) The final result must be a full sentence-nor a fragment.
  - f) The winner is the team that is the first to build a full sentence using words contributed by all of its members.

6. After explaining the rules, the trainer gives a signal, and the race begins.
7. The exercise continues until both teams have finished their sentences. The trainer then reads the sentences out loud.
8. The group leader may wish to process the activity with a discussion on the more-serious aspects of the exercise, i.e., the value of anticipatory thinking, the individual cooperating in a group task, etc.

#### Variations

- The trainer may tell the teams that all of the words in each team's sentence must begin with some specific letter, such as "B" or "S".
- The group leader may have the two teams compete against the clock. This will allow the teams to watch each other attempt to build a group sentence. The winner is the team to build a complete sentence in the lesser amount of time.