

Facilitation Tips

Facilitating games

Games are a great way to help people learn. Games can be fun, rewarding, motivating and sometimes surprising. The emotions people feel when they are learning through games cannot be matched by a long lecture or PowerPoint presentation. Games are engaging.

Playing games can increase learning. Players learn by doing and benefit from immediate observations and feedback. Games can enable people to experience feelings, explore attitudes and challenge behaviours. Games help to reinforce key messages and the often physical nature of a game improves retention. People remember more – and the more they remember, the more they can apply. Games are effective.

All the games here have been designed with to support staff and volunteers in the humanitarian sector to work more inclusively and leave no one behind. The games cover a range of topics, some linking directly to the Humanitarian Inclusion Standards, and they use a variety of methods. They can be played at team meetings, workshops, conferences – in fact, at any event where there is the need or opportunity for people to learn.

A game might be played on its own, to achieve a specific learning objective. Or several games could form part of a training programme, alongside presentations, group discussions, a field visit or other ways of learning.

Different games require different levels of facilitation and these are indicated in the notes. However, none of these games requires a professional trainer or facilitator to lead it. With preparation, practice and a bit of confidence, anyone can do it. The five tips below will help.

1. Be prepared. Carefully read through the notes and resources, at least twice. Print handouts and resources. Gather any other materials you need and check the space in which you will play the game. If you can, practise with your team, some volunteers or even your own friends or family. If you don't have the opportunity to practise, at least have a run through in your head.

2. Context is everything. Think about the context in which the players are working. Adapt case studies, scenarios, role-plays etc to suit the context. Use examples to which players can relate. And think about the players themselves and the knowledge, skills and experience that they bring with them. Utilise and build on what they already have.

3. Create a learning environment. Space is important, not only the physical space in which to play the game, but also people's mental space. Create a comfortable, safe, open learning environment that is free of distractions and full of potential. It is important that everyone feels able to challenge themselves, take risks and not be judged.

4. Beginning, middle and end. In most cases, start by telling people what they will be learning and why. Sometimes the learning point will come later as an 'a-ha!' moment during or even after playing the game. Give clear instructions so players know what to do and tell them how much time they have to do it in. Be ready to step in to clarify instructions, give hints or offer encouragement, but always give players freedom to explore and problem solve for themselves. Do not jump in with answers. Always debrief a game to draw out and reinforce the learning. Use open questions that cannot be answered 'yes' or 'no' to stimulate reflection, prompt discussion and draw conclusions.

5. Be inclusive. Most of these games have a practical element and many of them involve the use of different senses. Be mindful of who is in the room and adapt the game to their needs. Never force anyone to take part in a game that if they do not feel comfortable doing so. Ensure that everyone can participate and help everyone to learn. Leave no one behind.

Adapting games for players' needs

Before playing a game, consider the needs of the players. With a better understanding of the players' needs, you can adapt the game and remove any potential barriers to participation.

If you can, find out the players' needs in advance. This will help you make any necessary changes and prepare to facilitate the game. Otherwise, be ready to adapt to players' needs as you play the game. Of course, it is always best to ask the players concerned what you can do to help them participate fully.

Here are a few tips on what to consider before and during the games.

Before playing a game:

- Consider access to the venue and room. For example, ask players if they need any support with mobility or require wheelchair access for the venue.
- Think about the printed or audio materials that you will be using. For example, ask players what size print would be most suitable or whether coloured paper will help with reading. Find out whether they will be working through Readers on their laptops or phones.
- If there are players who are hard of hearing or deaf, consider providing the scenarios in written format for them to read.
- Find out whether players have any other needs that they would like considered. For example, prayer time and, if you are providing any food or drinks, their dietary needs.
- Invite personal assistants, carers or translators to support individual players during the game.

While you are playing a game:

- If mobility issues limit movement, consider using markers or place holders which can represent the players places within games rather than have everyone move around the room.
- Play games in pairs or teams so that one person can explain the cards or scenarios to their buddy.
- Provide extra time for players who need translation or may take longer to read.
- Always observe what is happening in the room, and ensure that everyone can participate fully and safely.

For more information on inclusive training and facilitation see Chapter 4: Inclusive training and facilitation in the Disability Inclusive Development Toolkit, CBM, 2017 available here:

https://www.cbm.org/fileadmin/user_upload/Publications/CBM-DID-TOOLKIT-accessible.pdf