

## Game Facilitation Tips



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### Preparation and Setup

- Always practice facilitating a game with a 'safe' audience (family, friends, college students, etc.) to discover what can go wrong, what may be common misunderstandings, etc. before deploying the game with an audience where it's not OK to make mistakes.
- Recruit and train facilitation assistants as needed

### SET UP

- Check materials: do you have enough of everything before departure?
- Prepare the tables, chairs and materials. Ensure all is in place.
- Sitting arrangement - Consider gender balance.
- Ensure all can hear you – even when it gets very loud and noisy.
- Anticipate potential disruptors (e.g. people with authority, pre-existing tensions within group, problems with sensitive topics, potential issues due to layout of the venue, timing of session, etc.).
- Be prepared for unexpected number of people: if needed, some people may assist the facilitators or serve as 'advisors' to players.
- Stay calm

### Welcome and introductions

- Be warm. Enhance lively, bonding atmosphere when introducing yourself, co-facilitators & players.
- Be confident. Convey trust in yourself and in the process.
- Listen well and observe if any of the participants are feeling unsafe/ uncomfortable - and give them to become of observers if they are not keen to participate.
- Ensure you are having the participants trust (and treat this with respect)
- Establish authority. Be authoritative but not authoritarian.

### Explaining Ground Rules

- Game is not reality: Deliberately simpler than reality. Tell players: 'Please do not question the rules.'

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- Explain rules in the right sequence and with clear narrative, display materials.
  - Use facilitator's script as a guide, not as a document to read from.
  - Tell people: Like in the real world, you may not have enough time to think, decide and do your best. Be prepared for time pressure.
  - Establish atmosphere of serious but fun gameplay. Confusion is part of the fun of discovery. Tell players: "Confusion is natural. Don't worry: as you play the game, it will become clearer".
  - Respond to questions on game rules only. Do not give away strategy.

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### **Facilitating a game**

- Explain objectives clearly and briefly; start the game as soon as possible.
- Trust the process and don't give away the learning moments.
- Do manage time: let people learn, but maintain the pace
- Be prepared to find people so engaged that they don't listen to the facilitator: Be assertive if needed.
- Remember the 'crucial moments' of gameplay and highlight instances of gameplay where key learning and dialogue opportunities emerge.
- Have a plan on how to shorten the game if time runs out (e.g. shorter rounds, eliminate complexity, etc.).
- If something unexpected happens, be flexible; try to think of alternative solutions! The show must go on. Keep the 'end game' (objective) in focus. Keep the game flowing, using humor to deal with surprises.

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### **Debriefing & Reflection**

- Winners: Ensure swift & correct math to calculate winner, award prizes if this is part of the game.
- Ask key questions about gameplay experience: lessons about the theme of the game?
- Share key aspects of particular theme not covered in gameplay and encourage questions. Remind players that the game is not real the world (if time allows, ask for important differences between gameplay and reality).
- Give players opportunity to discuss how they would modify the game to enhance the learning and dialogue experience.
- Keep it agile. End on time.

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### **General atmosphere**

- Keep it interactive, lively, with good humor.
  - Always be fair and respectful to participants.
  - Emphasize learning between neighbors, and shared experiences.
  - Be mindful of language and cultural barriers.
  - Don't give players the answers.
  - Encourage sharing of experiences and thoughts in a safe environment.
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