

ROLE PLAY

Learning about roles and responses

Role Play is a method that allows participants to simulate characters and situations and to prepare for and practice real decisions and actions, typically in a predefined scenario or starting situation. Participants perform, observe, interact, reflect, provide and receive feedback, and analyze the scenario. The method can be applied in different variations depending on the purpose, time available, number of participants, and their characteristics.

Purpose: Knowledge construction

Group size: < 20

Duration: 1 - 2 hours

Multilanguage fit: no

Level of interaction: high

USE THIS METHOD:

- Explore and experience situations from a different perspective.
 - Encourage critical thinking about complex and controversial topics or situations.
 - Make theoretical concepts more graspable.
 - Stimulate interest in certain topics
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STEPS TO APPLY THE METHOD: _____

Preparation

1. Define the purpose of the learning activity and determine the number of participants for your session and the available time.
2. Select a real scenario that highlights the key concepts of the training session. Adapt the scenario to suit the participants' needs.
3. Prepare the scenario defining the key roles and design your role-play session using any of the following variations:
 - *Spontaneous role play*: Participants are asked examples of actual problems they have experienced. The main issues are selected for a role play.
 - *Wrong Way, Right Way Role-Play*: A first role play demonstrates an improper procedure and asks participants to provide a constructive critique. The second role-play illustrates an ideal approach based on best practices and participants' contributions. The learning activity concludes with an in-depth debrief.
 - *Tag-Out Technique*: This variation helps minimize awkward or undesirable scenarios for participants and helps to include more participants. Participants are divided into two or more groups. During the role-play, replacements from each group can be requested when a set time has elapsed or when the volunteers reach an impasse.
 - *Multiple Role Playing*: Multiple small groups enact the scenarios simultaneously. This approach can reduce anxiety among uneasy participants speaking in front of large groups.
 - *Total Group Role Playing*: It resembles a debate. Two groups are assigned either a pro or con position. They develop an argument defending their case and prepare rebuttals to possible positions of the opposing group. A representative from each group is then sent to the opposite camp to present and defend their position. After some time, the role reversal phase is initiated by switching the groups of participants one by one .

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This will strengthen arguments and balance conflicting perspectives. Continue to rotate until each person in both groups has participated.

4. Plan and prepare your material for all four stages of role-play (for any variation):
 - 1. Briefing: Participants require details of the scenario to be played.
 - Prepare resources such as background information, an outline of key actors' perspectives, and an overview of relevant relationships. Include additional resources such as policy documents, stakeholder characteristics, existing levels of interaction, stakeholders' agenda, and other key indicators.
 - 2. Interaction: Participants require a space to act their roles during the session, network, and lobby the stakeholders to accomplish their agendas.
 - 3. Forum: Participants require a space to discuss the situation and negotiate solutions for the scenario.
 - For stages 2 and 3 (mainly):
 - Define the technological tool you will use and familiarize yourself with its functionalities.
 - Design and prepare the online space for participants to work, depending on the selected variation and the role play stage. Breakout rooms may be required.
 - 4. Debriefing: As the most crucial element of the method, it requires enough time to discuss what happened in the scenario, identify the most prominent issues and concepts, and reflect on what was learned.
 5. Plan and prepare a feedback round.
 - Follow the SMART principles (Specific, Measurable, Agreed, Realistic, Time-bound). Feedback should describe specific things that the observer saw and heard, relevant to the learning activity and the participants
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Delivery

1. Brief participants on the purpose of the learning activity..
 2. Explain the procedure of the learning activity based on the chosen variation of role-play. Present the four elements of role play:
 - 1. Briefing: Facilitator explains the purpose and process and presents the scenario. Participants are assigned roles and responsibilities, clarifying what needs to be done, what needs to be played, and what needs to be achieved.
 - 2. Interaction: Participants play specific roles in the scenario, while other participants may only observe.
 - 3. Forum: Participants discuss the situation and negotiate solutions for the scenario.
 - 4. Debriefing: Facilitator declares the role-play as officially over. All participants gather to debrief the session.
 3. Carry out each stage of the role-play.
 - 1. Briefing: Explain the purpose, process, roles, and the scenario itself. Give participants time to read and digest the resources.
 - 2. Interaction: Distribute participants as previously planned, using the technological tool of your choice. Some variations may require disabling cameras and microphones for some participants.
 - 3. Forum: Bring all participants to the main room. This stage can take place in conference style or other set-ups appropriate for discussion.
 - Debriefing: Allow sufficient time for participants to share feedback, reflect on objectives, and ask any questions.
 4. Conclude the learning activity with a feedback round on the method.
 - Follow the SMART principles (Specific, Measurable, Agreed, Realistic, Time-bound). Feedback needs to be achievable and given immediately. Let the protagonists comment on their performance themselves.
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Recommendations

- Depending on the type of role-play you design, getting to know participants' personalities in an earlier training phase can be useful.
- An alternative to role-play, is the method Improv Prototyping. Participants focus on role-playing solutions to smaller parts of the bigger issue being explored and then build the parts into an overall solution to the problem or a 'prototype'.

TOOL TIPS:

Zoom virtual backgrounds <https://explore.zoom.us/en/virtual-backgrounds/>

Zoom filters <https://blog.zoom.us/filters-reactions-lighting-features-zoom-meetings-2/>

Spotlighting participants on Zoom <https://support.zoom.us/hc/en-us/articles/201362653-Spotlighting-participants-videos>
