

Lost at Sea Activity Instructions

Exercise 1: Lost at Sea (from MindTools.com)

In this activity participants must pretend that they've been shipwrecked and are stranded in a lifeboat. Each team has a box of matches, and several items that they've salvaged from the sinking ship. Members must agree which items are most important for their survival.

Advice for the Facilitator

The ideal is for teams to arrive at a consensus decision where everyone's opinion is heard. However, that doesn't always happen naturally: assertive people tend to get the most attention. Less forthright team members can often feel intimidated and don't always speak up, particularly when their ideas are different from those around them. If you see this happening use the **Step Ladder** approach to include all, but explain why you're doing this, so that people learn from it.

Step Ladder to gain group consensus

Step 1: Give everyone enough time to think about what needs to be done and to form their own opinions on how to best accomplish the task or solve the problem.

Step 2: Form a core group of two members. Have them discuss the problem.

Step 3: Add a third group member to the core group. The third member presents ideas to the first two members BEFORE hearing the ideas that have already been discussed. After all, three members have presented their solutions and ideas, they discuss their options together.

Step 4: Repeat the same process by adding a fourth member, and so on, to the group. Allow time for discussion after each additional member has presented his or her ideas.

Step 5: Reach a final decision only after all members have been brought in and presented their ideas.

After everyone has finished the exercise, each group discusses their process. Example questions: what the differences between individual, team and official rankings was, and why. This will help them think about how teams arrive at decisions, which will make people think about the skills they must use in future, such as listening, discussing, and decision-making skills, as well as creativity skills for thinking "outside the box."

What You'll Need

- Up to five people in each group.
- A "lost at sea" ranking chart for each team member. Use the Mind Tools worksheet.
- The items to be ranked are: a mosquito net, a can of petrol, a water container, a shaving mirror, a sextant, emergency rations, a sea chart, a floating seat or cushion, a rope, some chocolate bars, a waterproof sheet, a fishing rod, shark repellent, a bottle of rum, and a VHF radio.

Instructions

1. Divide participants into their teams and provide everyone with a ranking sheet.
2. Ask team members to take 10 minutes on their own to rank the items in order of importance. They should do this in the second column of their sheet.
3. Give the teams a further 10 minutes to confer and decide on their group rankings. Once agreed, they should list them in the third column of their sheets.
4. Ask each group to compare their individual rankings with their collective ones and consider why any scores differ. Did anyone change their mind about their own rankings during the team discussions and why?
5. Now read out the "correct" order, classified by the experts at the US Coast Guard (from most to least important):
 - a) **Shaving mirror.** (One of your most powerful tools, because you can use it to signal your location by reflecting the sun.)
 - b) **Can of petrol.** (Again, potentially vital for signaling as petrol floats on water and can be lit by your matches.)
 - c) **Water container.** (Essential for collecting water to restore your lost fluids.)
 - d) **Emergency rations.** (Valuable for basic food intake.)
 - e) **Plastic sheet.** (Could be used for shelter, or to collect rainwater.)
 - f) **Chocolate bars.** (A handy food supplies.)
 - g) **Fishing rod.** (Potentially useful, but there is no guarantee that you're able to catch fish. Could also feasibly double as a tent pole.)
 - h) **Rope.** (Handy for tying equipment together, but not necessarily vital for survival.)
 - i) **Floating seat or cushion.** (Useful as a life preserver.)
 - j) **Shark repellent.** (Potentially important when in the water.)
 - k) **Bottle of rum.** (Could be useful as an antiseptic for treating injuries but will only dehydrate you if you drink it.)
 - l) **Radio.** (Chances are that you're out of range of any signal, anyway.)
 - m) **Sea chart.** (Worthless without navigational equipment.)
 - n) **Mosquito net.** (Assuming that you've been shipwrecked in the Atlantic, where there are no mosquitoes, this is pretty much useless.)
 - o) **Sextant.** (Impractical without relevant tables or a chronometer.)

Lost at Sea Ranking Chart

| | Your ranking | Team ranking | Coast Guard ranking |
|-----------------------|--------------|--------------|---------------------|
| Bottle of rum | | | |
| Can of petrol | | | |
| Chocolate bars | | | |
| Emergency rations | | | |
| Fishing rod | | | |
| Floating seat/cushion | | | |
| Mosquito net | | | |
| Plastic sheet | | | |
| Radio | | | |
| Rope | | | |
| Sea chart | | | |
| Sextant | | | |
| Shark repellent | | | |
| Shaving mirror | | | |
| Water container | | | |

Team Debriefing Questions

1. What did you learn through this activity about the functioning of a team?

2. Did team members have specific roles? If so, how were these roles determined?

3. In general terms, how was communication used (e.g., positive, negative, neutral)? Give examples of words, phrases, or expressions used and/or heard.

4. Given the team experience, what were your team's strengths and possible areas for improvement? How could you contribute better to your team's effectiveness?
