

↓ TYPE OF EXERCISE	↓ OVERVIEW	↓ AIM OF EXERCISE
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Ice-breaking.

> This is an exercise where groups construct a tower made from drinking straws.

> To help groups open communication channels and build team spirit. It is a good exercise to run straight after groups have been formed.

TOWER BUILDING EXERCISE

Procedure

- ① Have members of each group sitting together.
- ② Groups are briefed on the objective of the exercise (ie. competition to build the tallest tower) and the rules (ie. towers must be free standing).
- ③ Groups are issued with materials.
- ④ Groups are given 15 minutes to complete the task. Alternatively, groups can be given 5 minutes to plan their tower and 10 minutes build it.
- ⑤ When finished, towers are brought to the front of the classroom for judging.
- ⑥ The group with the tallest tower is judged the winner.
- ⑦ Debrief students.

* TIME REQUIRED

Allow 25-30 minutes for the complete exercise (including instructions, measuring towers debriefing etc). Groups are given 15 minutes to build their towers.

**OBJECTIVE**

- > Groups are required to construct a tower made from drinking straws. The objective is to build the tallest tower possible in the allotted time. Towers must be free standing. They cannot be taped to the floor, ceiling, or any other structures. All towers need to be brought to the front of the class for judging.

**MATERIALS REQUIRED**

- > Drinking straws: 30 per group.
- > Masking tape: 1 roll per group. Rolls can be shared between groups.
- > Small prize for winning group: For example, a small bag of M&M's to be shared among the group is a good prize.



25-30*
APPROX. MIN

De-briefing

- > By the end of the exercise, most group members will now be talking to each other (and hopefully laughing). It is important to point your observations out to the class. Discuss how the objective of the exercise was to open communication channels and this has been achieved. The aim for groups is to continue to keep the channels open.
- > It is also important to point out that this was an ice-breaking game and that all groups performed well. Some people don't like to lose at anything and may be quick to blame other members for not winning.
- > If time permits, it is good idea to allow groups to discuss the strengths of their effort. The aim here is to help students focus on the "good aspects" of their group and get into the habit of providing encouragement and continuous improvement. For example groups should discuss:
 - > What aspects of the task they completed most successfully?
 - > When was "teamwork" evident in the group (eg. when ideas were expanded by other members members helped each other, members provided encouragement or gave praise for a good idea)?
 - > Which aspects might the group change next time?

You might want to write these questions on the board and have a class discussion after 5-10 minutes.

Things to consider

- > Some people take longer than others to “warm up” to working with new people. It is important that this is pointed out to all groups before the exercise begins. Members should not only be paying attention to the task, but also to their fellow group members. Groups need to make sure that everyone is participating (that’s the goal of the exercise). If a member is sitting back, it is important that the other members encourage this person to “have a say” or play an active role (eg. dispense the masking tape).

- * The time allocated to this exercise can be made longer if required (eg. 10 minutes to plan and 10 minutes to build). The more time allocated to the planning phase will allow for greater discussion.

ADAPTED FROM:

Federman Stein, R., & Hurd, S. (2000). **Using Student Teams in the Classroom: A Faculty Guide**. Anker: Boston, MA.