

# Limit 20

*Limit 20 is an activity to help participants explore discrimination and exclusion. It is fun and exciting to play, but requires good preparation. Three teams go through different rounds of competitive games.*



## Issues addressed

- Inequality of life chances, power, discrimination and exclusion.
- Solidarity, competition, injustice.
- Majority-minority relations.

## Aims

- To experience injustice and discrimination.
- To reveal the participants' tolerance and solidarity.
- To reflect about exclusion, minority-majority relations, social handicaps and competition.

**Time:** 2 1/2 - 3 hours

**Group size:** A minimum of 15 and a maximum of 35

## Preparation

This activity needs very careful preparation. Study the instructions and the description of the jury's role so you know exactly how to play.

## You will need to get ready:

- A pack of playing cards to use to get people into equal groups. Prepare the pack so you have one card per player, use only hearts, diamonds and spades (remove all the clubs). If you have an odd number of players then the hearts should be the biggest group.
- Flip chart with a grid drawn on for recording the scores after each round.
- Prepared flip charts with the rules of the game.
- 3 copies of the 'Instructions for the jury' - one for each member
- Adhesive labels with signs for each team member (spades, hearts and diamonds).
- Three handkerchiefs or similar for the dragons' tails.
- 2 sets of keys for the rattlesnake rounds.
- 2 handkerchiefs or something similar to blindfold the participants in rattlesnake rounds.
- Red face paint (otherwise lipstick will do).
- Lengths of string for tying the right arms of those to be handicapped.
- 5 inflated balloons.
- 3 sheets of paper and pencils (for Chinese whispers).
- A drawing of a shape for the Chinese whispers to be given to the jury.
- A bell for the jury.
- A clock or timer.
- You also need a large space so the teams can spread out.

## Overview of the game

The players are divided into three teams to compete through rounds of short games. The jury judges the teams' performances and keep the scores. The aim is for each team to get 20 points - the Limit 20 - by the end of round 8 or they will be out of the game.

The players do not realise it, but there are in fact only 8 rounds (plus one handicapping round) and the competition is rigged. However, they only find out at the end that the rules were not fair and that one team always had the best chances and were favoured by the jury.

Rounds 1, 2 and 3 are designed to give the impression of equal opportunities and fair competition while building group identity and team spirit.

After round 3 there is a handicapping round during which participants experience injustice for the first time

Round 4 again gives the impression of being fair

Round 5 appears to offer the teams a chance to improve their scores, but this is an illusion. In fact the losers will fall further behind and the winners will get further ahead.

Rounds 6, 7 and 8 are played so that at the end of round 8 there will be quite a big difference between the groups' total scores. One or two groups will not have reached the score limit of 20, which means they will be out of the game!

To foster the process of the game, the players must not be told that the game will finish after round 8, otherwise they might withdraw.

Rounds 2,4,6 and 8 are games of 'Rattlesnake'. These 'Rattlesnake' rounds give players the feeling of equal opportunities because they are the only rounds where the scores are objective and fair. Nonetheless, they are not entirely fair because the losing group will be at a disadvantage because it will never have the opportunity to hunt, and if it does manage to score, it will lose one player.

Afterwards, during the evaluation there should be plenty of time to discuss the emotions and behaviour of the players during the game and the links with reality.



## Instructions

DO NOT announce that Limit 20 is a game about discrimination and exclusion, that the game is manipulated and that it will only last 8 rounds.

- Explain that this is a competitive game, and groups must get at least 20 points by the end of round 8 or they will be out of the competition.
- Choose three people to be on the jury. (Pick people who are good actors and respected by the other members of the group). Give them their instruction sheets and send them to read them in another room.
- Split the remaining participants into 3 groups by asking each person in turn to pick a playing card.
- Tell the players to take a sticky label with their group logo and to put it on their shirts so it can easily be seen.
- Ask each group to claim a corner of the room as their base. Give them a few minutes to find a name for their team and come up with a slogan or motto.





Fig 1.

You could also ask them to make up a team song. (The main purpose here is to create a team spirit and raise enthusiasm for the game.)

- Explain the rules with the flip chart.
- Brief the jury and make sure they understand exactly what they have to do, then invite them back into the room.
- Start the competition.

## PLAYING THE GAME

### ***Round 1: Hunting the dragon's tail***

Tell the players in each team to stand in a line with each person holding round the waist of the person in front. The last player in the line tucks the dragon's tail (handkerchief or similar) into their trousers or skirt.

Tell each group has to try to catch as many dragontails as possible. Only the person at the head of the dragon may catch the tails.

When the groups are ready, give order loudly and clearly to start - "GO!". After one minute shout - "STOP!"

Ask the jury to distribute the scores and to explain the scoring. Give them sufficient time to write the scores on the score chart.

#### ***Tips***

The jury will distribute the scores: spades 3, hearts 2, diamonds 1.

### ***Round 2: Rattlesnake***

1. Ask all players, including the jury, to stand in a circle.
2. Explain that each group will play against one other group. Someone from the leading group (the one with the highest score so far) hunts someone from the group with the second best score. Then someone from second best group hunts someone from the last group and finally, someone from the first group hunts someone from the last group.
3. Blindfold both the hunter and victim and give each a set of keys in their hands.
4. Explain that when the hunter rattles the keys, the victim has to answer by rattling theirs.
5. Each hunt lasts exactly 45 seconds, and both participants may only rattle their keys three times.
6. As soon as the two participants are ready give the starting signal. Stop the action after 45 seconds.
7. After each hunt announce the winner loudly. Make sure the jury writes up the scores. If the victim is touched by the hunter, then the hunter's group scores 1 point. If the victim escapes after 45 seconds, their group scores 1 point and the player leaves their group to join the hunter's.
8. It is important that the participants remain quiet during the game.

### **Tips**

Note: During the round

- One player from the spades hunts one player from the hearts.
- One player from the hearts hunts a player from the diamonds.
- One player from the spades hunts a player from the diamonds.

The diamonds are at a disadvantage because they don't get a chance to hunt.

It is important to turn the blindfolded participants round before the game starts to disorientate them so as to make the task more difficult.

If the group is small, make sure that the circle is wide enough to allow space for the players to move.



Fig 2.

### **Round 3: Balloon blowing**

1. Tell the players in each team to lie down on their tummies side by side in a line close together with shoulders touching. The groups should be positioned so that each group forms one side of a triangle, with the head of each participant lying on the imagined side of the triangle.
2. Explain that the task is for each team to keep the balloons in the centre of the triangle and away from themselves by blowing.
3. When the groups are ready, put the balloons in the middle (from 3 to 5 balloons) and give the starting signal loudly and clearly.
4. Let the game last exactly one minute.
5. Ask the jury to justify its decision and distribute the scores. Make sure the scores are registered on the score chart.
6. Now ask the jury to add up the total scores of each team and announce them loudly to everybody.

### **Tips**

The scoring for this round will be: spades 5, hearts 1, diamonds 0

### **Handicapping round**

1. Explain that the group with the highest score (Spades!) has to distribute handicaps to the other groups. One group is to have their noses painted red, the other group is to have their right hands tied behind their backs.
2. Tell the Spades to decide which group is to get which handicap, then ask them to announce their decision and to give their reasons.
3. Then give them the paint and strings and ask them carry out the handicapping.
4. Explain that the handicaps will remain for the rest of the game and that the spades have to ensure that this is so.

#### **Round 4: Rattlesnake**

1. Give the instructions as above except that this round the winner of each hunt scores 2 points
2. After the round ask the jury to announce the scores loudly

#### **Round 5: Chance**

1. Explain that the team which wins this round will get its current score tripled, the second team will get its current score doubled and the third teams score will be multiplied by 1, i.e. it will remain with the same.
2. The task is for each group to give reasons why it deserves to have its score doubled or tripled.
3. Give each group two minutes to prepare their argument.
4. Allow each team one minute to state it's case. Spades start, then hearts, then diamonds.
5. Give the jury time to justify its decision and announce the scores.

#### **Tips**

The scores for this round will be - spades: x3; hearts: x2; diamonds: x1.



#### **Round 6: Rattlesnake**

1. Give the instructions as above except that this round the winner of each hunt scores 3 points.
2. After the round ask the jury to announce the scores loudly.



Fig 3.

#### **Round 7: Chinese whispers**

1. Tell the players to sit in their teams one behind the other on the floor.
2. Brief the jury in private. Tell them they are going to show a simple drawing to one member of the spades and hearts but to describe the drawing in words to one member of the diamonds.
3. One at a time, invite the last player in each row to get their instructions from the jury and then to return to their place in their team.
4. Tell them to use a finger to trace the drawing on the back of the player sitting in front of them. This player then in turn traces what they felt onto the back of the person in front of them, and so on up the line until it has reached the player at the top of the row who draws it on a piece of paper which they then hand to the jury.
5. It is important that players keep quiet during this round.
6. Ask the jury to give their judgements and to announce the score.

## **Tips**

Scores for this round: spades 3; hearts 2, diamonds 1.

all different  
all equal

### **Round 8: Rattlesnake**

Give the instructions as above except that this round the winner of each hunt scores 4 points.

Also tell the participants that this is the last opportunity for individuals to change teams and move into a better group if they want to keep playing and are in a group, which has not yet reached the Limit 20.

After the round ask the jury to announce the scores. They will also announce that those groups which have not reached the limit of 20 points have to leave the game. Give the jury time to congratulate the best groups.

### **The game ends**

Allow a few minutes to see the reaction of the participants and then announce that this is in fact the end of the game.

### **Debriefing and evaluation**

The evaluation is a vital part of “Limit 20” (page 110). It is absolutely essential to reflect on the emotions aroused during the game and to draw attention to the comparisons which can be made with discrimination and injustice which occur in real life.

Big groups make the evaluation more difficult. If more than one facilitator is present the evaluation should be done in small working groups and then at the end bring everybody together for final comments.

**GLOBAL  
GENERATION**

### **Stages of the evaluation**

1. Emotional aspects
2. Transparency of the game
3. Aspects of group dynamics
4. Links with reality.

#### **I. The emotional aspects**

Recall the main steps of the game and then put the following questions to the participants:

- How did you feel playing the game? How did your emotions change?
- Did anyone have negative feelings? What caused them?
- How did the spades feel when distributing the handicaps?
- How did the diamonds and hearts feel when they were handicapped?
- How did the jury feel in possession of such a lot of power?

## 2. Transparency

Now explain the hidden rules of the game.

## 3. The group dynamics

Talk about what happened.

- Did you feel solidarity with other players?
- Anyone who changed group during the rattlesnake rounds: What does it mean to be an outsider in a new group? And to have to leave your original group?
- As an individual, how much did you have to adapt to the group and to the rules of the game?
- What does it mean to you when you have to join in something you do not like?
- In which situations did you find it easy or difficult to defend yourself, your feelings or actions?
- Did you question or oppose the framework of the game? How? If not, why not?

## 4. Links with reality

Do you see aspects of the game which link with reality?

- For example, aspects of power, competition, transparency, equal opportunities, handicaps, minorities, injustice, adaptation to the situation?
- Which groups, in your town or country, are in a position that could be compared with that of the diamonds or the hearts?
- In which situations are the victims blamed for their situation?
- What should be done to change the rules of the game?
- What can be done to improve or support the minorities in our societies?

## INSTRUCTIONS FOR THE JURY (to be copied for jury members)

### Do not tell anybody about these instructions!

- Limit 20 is a manipulated game, so it is clear from the beginning who will be the winner and who will be the loser (spades will win, hearts will be second and diamonds will be the last).
- Your main task is to give the impression to the groups that they are in a real competition with a real chance of winning, and that you distribute the scores according to objective and fair criteria.
- The players think that the competition will go on until there is a winner, and in order not to be disqualified they have to have scored 20 points by the end of round 8. The participants do not know it, but the game will end in any case after round 8. Your job is to motivate the groups to keep going and to aim for high scores.
- Use a bell to get the necessary attention when you need to make announcements and give justifications for your decisions.

## **Round 1: Hunting the dragon's tail**

- Observe the groups during the game.
- At the end of this round announce loudly the scores:
- Spades 3 points, hearts 2, diamonds 1.
- Register the scores on a flip chart.

You can justify the reasons for your decision according to the way the game went, such as: “spades played the hardest, diamonds did not take the game seriously, spades were more elegant, one group was too loud, there was more or less group spirit”, etc. Generally, and this will be the case for all odd rounds, you will tend to blame the “diamonds” for their poor scores for example, they are lazy, they don't play fair or respect the rules, they are not polite or that they have a smaller group.

## **Round 2: Rattlesnake**

The distribution of the scores in the rattlesnake rounds is not manipulated. Your task is to register the points announced by the facilitator. The winner of a hunt scores one point.

## **Round 3: Balloon blowing**

Take your time to deliberate and justify your scoring arguing with similar reasons as you did in round 1. You can pretend that your judgement is based on objective criteria e.g. spades blew the balloons over more times; no one will have counted and so won't be able to argue!

Give the following scores: Spades 5, hearts 1, diamonds 0.

## **Handicapping round**

Help the facilitator if you feel they need it.

## **Round 4: Rattlesnake**

This round the winner of each hunt scores 2 points.

Register the scores announced by the facilitator on the flip-chart.

## **Round 5: Chance**

Each team will be given a minute to convince you, the jury, that they should have their score doubled or tripled.

First listen to all the appeals and afterwards announce the scores. In order to keep the suspense going it will be better in your summing up if you first comment on all the speeches and then announce the scores. The type of arguments may be the same as for the other rounds, but including also references to the presentation skills e.g. not convincing, not properly dressed, speech was not structured, made grammatical mistakes, etc.

Triple the spades score, double that of the hearts and multiply that of the diamonds by one, that is they keep the same score.

## **Round 6: Rattlesnake**

This round the winner of each hunt scores 3 points.

### Round 7: Chinese whispers

- The facilitator will give you a sheet of paper with a simple drawing on it.
- Show it to the member from the spades and hearts but do not show it to the person from the diamonds, describe it to them in words. Do this discretely so that players don't notice that they are being treated differently. Make sure no other players see the drawing.
- Observe the groups during the game.
- At the end of the round announce the scores loudly and clearly: spades get 3 points, hearts get 2 points and diamonds get 1 point.
- Mark the scores on the chart.

Again, you have to give the reasons that lead to your scores. For example, spades portrayed the drawing most accurately, diamonds took the longest, one group was not quiet, etc...

### Round 8: Rattlesnake

This time the winner of each hunt scores 4 points.

Don't forget to add the totals. Very important: Remember that the participants do not know that the game finishes at the end of round 8! Now make a short speech to review the progress in the competition:

- It is the end of round 8, the one or two groups who have not reached the limit score of 20 will be disqualified.
- Congratulate the spades for their big effort and excellent score and the others on their energy and big effort - "but with a long way to go....".

The facilitator will now announce that Limit 20 has come to an end.

## RULES TO BE TOLD TO THE PARTICIPANTS

*Copy the following rules onto a flip-chart and read them to the participants before the beginning of the game.*

"Limit 20: a game about competition, fun and fair-play!

Odd rounds: the jury will distribute a total of 6 points.

Even rounds (rattlesnake).

2nd round the winning team gets 1 point

4th round the winning team gets 2 points

6th round the winning team gets 3 points

8th round the winning team gets 4 points

Round 5 is a Chance round! You can double or triple your scores!

By round 8 those groups, which have not got 20 points will be disqualified

Play fair, with team spirit, fun and competitiveness! May the best group win!"

## Tips for the facilitator

Encourage the jury at all times and support their decisions especially if the players start to question their judgement. It is possible that one or more groups, will want to stop the game after a few rounds because they notice it is unfair. You should encourage them to play but do not force them. If the game is interrupted that is itself a very good element for the evaluation. You can focus on questions like ‘why did you stop the game? Who wanted to continue?’

You may also change some rules if a group insists on it, just make sure it is a collective concern and not an individual request. Always consult with the jury about these things. The game functions well if the rules are changed slightly, like sometimes giving the diamonds the possibility to hunt in rattlesnake rounds here and there. It does not change the structural injustice but the teams may have the feeling that things are getting better. This is also a very good point for the debriefing.

The tasks to be performed by the teams may be changed if you find other suitable ones. But bear in mind that rattlesnake rounds are made to be fair (they are only unfair in the sense that diamonds never hunt, but even this can be changed). The odd rounds usually play on the speed, confusion and excitement involved in the game to prevent a clear result being ostensibly visible and the results can always be presented ambiguously. Note it is the odd rounds which really matter.

Some of the activities proposed for the competition rounds are not suitable for some people with disabilities. You should adapt the tasks as appropriate.

## Suggestions for follow up

Life isn't fair, but there are things you can do to make it a little fairer. For example, you can buy products which are traded fairly and for which the producers get a fair wage. Fair traded tea and coffee are now widely available as well as clothes, crafts and paper products.

In the ‘rattlesnake round’ some people could move from their original group into a winning group. So too in real life some people move from their country of origin to try to make a better life in another country where there are more opportunities. There are many reasons why immigrants and refugees have to leave home and often life in the host country is very difficult. But what do you know about what it is like to be a refugee? If you want to find out, try the activity, ‘The refugee’ (page 151).

*Limit 20 is adapted and translated from a German original created by Annamaria Fridli for “Brot für alles”, Switzerland. It is used here with their kind permission. Brot für alles produces other useful educational games in French and German. ([www.bfa-ppp.ch](http://www.bfa-ppp.ch))*