

# The Rules of the Game

*All organisations have to have rules and members should stick to them. But, are they always fair to everyone? Are they fair to minorities?*



## Issues addressed

- Majority - minority relations.
- Power and authority.
- The exclusion of minorities from access to resources and opportunities.

## Aims

- To start discussion about rules in society and majority and minority situations.
- To experience discrimination.
- To experience power and powerlessness.

**Time:** You need to decide e.g. 2 hours, one session. Set the limit.

**Group size:** Any

## Preparation

- Coloured sticky paper labels of two different colours, e.g. green and yellow.
- Tape or pins
- Write a list of 6 - 8 special rules appropriate to your group on a large sheet of paper, for example:

### People with green labels:

- may not sit on chairs
- may not be together in one place with more than one other person
- may not talk to a 'yellow' unless spoken to
- may not have access to equipment without special permission

### People with yellow labels:

- have priority at the table footy and other games tables
- have priority choosing the music
- may have free access to any equipment they need
- are entitled to a free drink/chocolate bar at the end of the session if they keep strictly to the rules

## Instructions

1. Give the labels out at random and ask people to wear them at all times. Everyone in the group should have one.
2. Pin the rules up in a prominent place and explain that they should be observed with no exceptions.

In all other respects this session should be as normal as possible.

## Debriefing and evaluation

Make sure that you allow plenty of time for the debriefing. Start by asking how people felt about the game and what they learned. Ask:

- How did it feel to be a 'yellow' or a 'green'?
- What was the best/worst thing about being a 'green' or a 'yellow'?
- Did anyone try to swap their label?
- What sorts of discrimination happen in real life?
- Who has the power to make the rules?
- How democratic is your organisation?
- What can you do to promote democracy in your organisation, in your community locally and in your society regionally and nationally?

## Tips for the facilitator

Prepare the rules carefully in advance to keep control of the game.

Be aware of who is in which group. You may wish to manipulate the membership of each group, but don't let the players realise you have done this. Also be aware that this activity can bring out strong emotions.

This activity fits very well into residential courses or seminars. It is important that it is given a defined limit e.g. 2 hours or one session and that before the evaluation the participants step out of their roles. If you want to go deeper into minority-majority issues you may also arrange it so that there is a majority of people with yellow labels and a minority with green ones.

## Suggestions for follow up

Review the rules of your group or organisation. Are they fair for all members? Are they suitable for everybody who would be interested in joining? Look at who makes the rules and who has the power and see if it could be shared more widely. You might then go on to ask what a fairer society would be like or even what your ideal society would be like and then to think about what is stopping us achieving it. A fun way to do this is with 'Balloons' (page 65).