

# BROKEN SQUARES

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## GAME FACILITATOR PACKET

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### INTRODUCE BROKEN SQUARES GAME:

“ To illustrate some of the principles involved in teamwork, you’ll be divided into small groups to work on a challenging task. Each group will be assigned a non-verbal group problem-solving task and given specific instructions to follow for the exercise. When all groups have completed the task, we’ll discuss the exercise.”

*[Facilitator’s Note: This activity is designed for groups of 5. Rearrange table groups as needed to make groups of 5. If some groups must have 6 each, have one person play the role of observer/judge. Make sure tables are spaced far enough apart so that no group can see the puzzle solving results of the other groups.]*

### PROVIDE AN OVERVIEW OF THE GAME:

“ This exercise is a game. Each team player will be given an envelope containing some puzzle pieces. The purpose of the game is to ‘win’ by assembling 5 equal-sized squares – one in front of each team member. The game will be over after all teams have ‘won’.”  
“Has anyone played this game before?”

[If so, ask them to play the role of observer, unless their participation is needed to make an even group of 5.]

### GO OVER RULES OF THE GAME:

[Give a copy of **Broken Squares Rules** to each person and review rules of game]

“ Are there any questions?”

... [Answer any questions that come up]

## CONDUCT GAME:

“ I’m going to hand out the envelopes. Don’t open them until I give you the signal to start.”

[Give each team a set of Broken Squares (5 envelopes). Make sure each team member receives one envelope.]

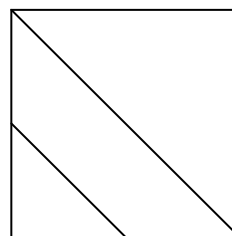
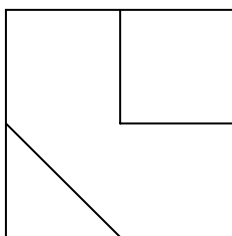
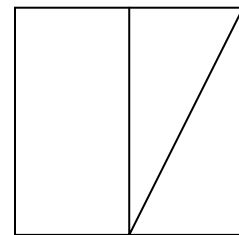
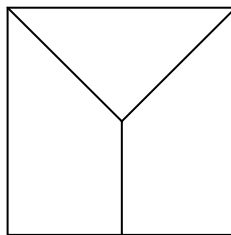
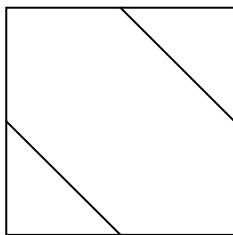
*[Facilitator’s Note: Give each observer a copy of **Broken Squares Observer/Judge Instruction Sheet**. If observer(s) have any questions, take them aside to answer them so that team players do not hear you.]*

“ Go ahead and start.”

[Monitor each group to be sure the rules are being followed and to check group progress. Use the information on the next page to verify correct solutions to the puzzle and to offer hints to any team that is having trouble finishing the game.]

## FOR TEAMS THAT HAVE FINISHED THE GAME:

[After each team finishes, verify that the squares look like this ...]



[As teams finish, applaud and instruct them to put the squares away correctly. (Each piece is numbered and should be placed in the envelope with the corresponding number.) Then advise them that they may **silently** observe the other teams.]

## FOR TEAMS HAVING TROUBLE FINISHING THE GAME:

[If the last group playing still needs assistance, you may direct the observers to applaud when a correct move is made. (No feedback will mean that nothing positive was done.)]

[Once all groups have finished the game and all pieces have been put away and collected, call the group to attention to debrief the activity as directed on the next page.]

[If, after 7-10 minutes, any team is having trouble finishing the game, stand behind them and read selected hints from the list below, based on the problem(s) they appear to be experiencing. Remind them they need 5 equal-sized squares.]

### HINTS:

- Rather than looking at what someone else can do, I should look at what I can do.
- Sometimes when I think I have my act together, I really don't.
- If I think the hints do not apply to me, they probably do.
- Sometimes I have to totally give the game away in order to win it.
- Sometimes I have to risk taking action even when I am not sure what I am doing.
- Sometimes it seems like I must give and give and continue to give.
- Sometimes I need to stop and look at the bigger picture in order to see the obvious.

### “ What behaviors did it take to win?”

[Allow participants to respond. POSSIBLE RESPONSES include:

- 100% cooperation
- Unselfishness
- Determining the needs of others
- Give and take]

### “ What behaviors got in the way?”

[Allow participants to respond. POSSIBLE RESPONSES include:

- Unwillingness to give up pieces
- Not looking at other people's pieces
- Trying to take over
- Getting frustrated and giving up]

SUMMARIZE  
KEY POINTS  
ABOUT  
SUCCESSFUL  
TEAMWORK:

“ This activity has shown us a number of key points about successful teamwork.”

“ First, each individual should:

- Understand the total problem
- Understand how he or she can contribute toward solving the problem
- Be aware of the potential contributions of other individuals.”

“ Secondly, you need to recognize the problems of other individuals in order to help them maximize their contribution.”

“ And finally, teams that pay attention to their own problem-solving processes are likely to be more effective than teams that do not.”

COMPLETE  
SELF-  
ASSESSMENT:

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[Give each participant a copy of the **Broken Squares Self-Assessment**]

“ Please take about 5 minutes to silently reflect on the self-assessment questions listed on this handout.”

*[Facilitator's Note: Tell observers to review the questions as they think they would have played the game, except for the last question, which is specifically for them.]*

“ At the very bottom of the page, it asks about the nature of teams and how you personally operate. Please share your response to this item with your table group. And if your group included an observer, ask them to share their observations.”

[Allow participants 10 minutes to reflect and then discuss the final item.]

“ How is achieving success in this exercise similar to achieving success on the job?”

[Allow participants to respond. POSSIBLE RESPONSES include:

- Having a clear goal helps a team pull together
- The same elements are essential for cooperation on the job
- *Everyone had the opportunity to contribute to the effort]*

**BROKEN  
SQUARES  
OBSERVER/  
JUDGE  
INSTRUCTION  
SHEET**

**Your job is part observer and part judge. As an observer, look for the following:**

1. Who is willing to give any pieces of the puzzle?
2. Does anyone finish “his/her” puzzle and then withdraw from problem solving?
3. Is there anyone who continually struggles with his/her pieces, yet is unwilling to give any or all of them away?
4. How many people are actively engaged in putting the pieces together?
5. What is the level of frustration and anxiety?
6. Is there any turning point at which the team begins to cooperate?
7. Does anyone try to violate the rules by talking or pointing as a means of helping fellow members solve the problem?

**As a judge, you should make sure each participant observes the following rules:**

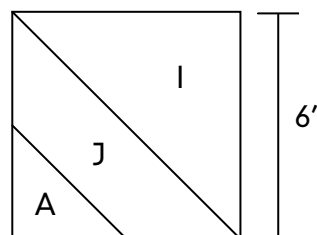
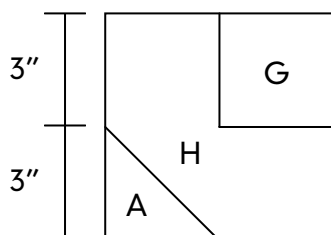
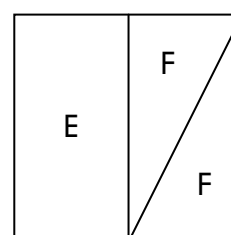
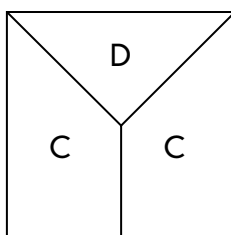
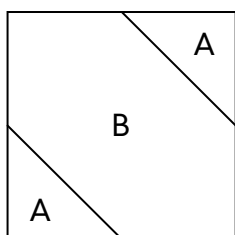
## **RULES**

- 1 NO TALKING.**
- 2 DO NOT POINT AT OR ASK FOR A SPECIFIC PIECE.**
- 3 WORK ONLY ON THE PIECES IN FRONT OF YOU.**
- 4 DO NOT TAKE A PIECE FROM SOMEONE ELSE UNLESS IT IS FIRST OFFERED TO YOU.**
- 5 OFFER ONLY ONE PIECE AT A TIME TO ANOTHER TEAM MEMBER.**
- 6 A PIECE CHANGES HANDS ONLY IF OFFERED TO AND ACCEPTED BY THE RECEIVER.**

## DIRECTIONS FOR MAKING A SET OF BROKEN SQUARES

You will need a set of five envelopes containing pieces of cardboard (or foam board) cut into different patterns which, when properly arranged, will form five squares of equal size. One set should be provided for each team of five persons.

To prepare a set, cut out five cardboard squares, each exactly 6" x 6". Place the squares in a row and mark them as below, penciling the letters lightly so they can be erased.



The lines should be drawn so that, when the pieces are cut out, those marked A will be exactly the same size, all pieces marked C will be the same size, etc. Several combinations are possible that will form one or two squares, by only one combination will form all five squares, each 6" x 6". After drawing the lines on the squares and labeling the sections with letters, cut each square along the lines into smaller pieces to make the parts of the puzzle.

Label the five envelopes 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5. Distribute the pieces into the five envelopes as follows:

- Envelope 1 – pieces I, H, E
- Envelope 2 – pieces A, A, A, C
- Envelope 3 – pieces A, J
- Envelope 4 – pieces D, F
- Envelope 5 – pieces C, B, F, G

Erase the penciled letter from each piece and write, instead, the number of the envelope it is in. This makes it easy to return the pieces to the proper envelope, for subsequent use, after a team has completed the task. Each set may be made from a different color cardboard (or foam board).

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## BROKEN SQUARES GAME SELF-ASSESSMENT

**INSTRUCTIONS** – Take a few minutes to reflect on how this game was a mirror of how you play the game at work.

**1** Did I sit back when I finished a square and assume I was done? Do I do the same thing at work? \_\_\_\_\_

**2** Did I assume I wasn't as good at this kind of game as others and only half-heartedly play, letting others guide me? Do I ever do this at work? \_\_\_\_\_

**3** Did I have an overwhelming urge to take over, to do it for others? What price do I and others pay for doing that? Am I willing to ask for assistance when it's clear I need it? \_\_\_\_\_

**4** Did I do whatever it took to win at the expense of the rules or other players? Do I have a tendency to compete with others and cause the "game" to be lost? \_\_\_\_\_

**5** Did I keep too many pieces? How do I tend to do that in my work? \_\_\_\_\_

**6** The game rules said the game is won only when all teams are finished. When my team was finished, did I care about others? Did I feel smug about finishing before others and laugh at them? How am I like that at work? \_\_\_\_\_

**7** If I volunteered to be an observer, why did I choose that role? Did I feel safe or special? Did I want to please other people by volunteering not to play? How am I like that at work? \_\_\_\_\_

**8** **Personal Notes/Implications** – What did I learn about the nature of teams and how I operate in teams in this exercise? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_