



The Marshmallow Challenge

PURPOSE: Use teamwork, collaboration, communication, creative problem solving and trust to work together to build the tallest structure.

OBJECTIVE: To build the tallest freestanding structure measured from the table top surface to the top of the marshmallow.

COMPETENCIES: Communication, Trust

SPACE/RESOURCES:

- Table for each team
- Copy of instructions below
- One kit for each group (20 sticks of spaghetti, 1 yard of string, 1 marshmallow, 1 yard of masking tape, paper lunch bags, scissors)
- Measuring tape
- Stopwatch
- Music to play in the background, if desired
- Prize, if desired

TIME: 45 minutes (can be shortened if desired)

GROUP SIZE: No more than 6 per team

Preparation:

1. Create a marshmallow challenge kit for each team. Each kit should contain:

- Twenty sticks of spaghetti, uncooked (not fettucini or spaghetti)
- 1 yard of masking tape
- 1 yard of string
- 1 marshmallow (name brand, standard size, not stale)
- Scissors
- Paper lunch bag to place all materials inside

Step 1: Deliver Clear Instructions

1. **Introduction:** Your goal is to build the tallest freestanding structure using the materials provided. The winning team is the one that has the tallest structure measured from the table top surface to the top of the marshmallow. That means the structure cannot be suspended from a higher structure, like a chair, ceiling, or chandelier. The winning team may win a prize.

2. Repeat the rules at least 3 times.
 - a. The entire marshmallow must be on top.
 - b. Use as much or as little of the kit as you want. The team may not use the paper bag.
 - c. You can break up or cut the spaghetti, string, or tape.
 - d. The structure must be freestanding.
 - e. Ask if anyone has questions.
 - f. No cheating or bending the rules.
 - g. You have 18 minutes to complete the challenge.

Step 2: Start the Challenge

1. Start the countdown clock (18 minutes) and background music.
2. Walk around the room and monitor the building of the structures.
3. Remind teams of the time. Call out when there are 12 minutes, 9 minutes (half-way), 6 minutes, 3 minutes, 1 minute, and 30 seconds left.
4. Call out when a team builds a standing structure.
5. Remind the teams that the structure must be freestanding and they cannot use their hands to hold it up.

Step 3: Finish the Challenge

1. After the clock runs out, ask everyone in the room to sit down so everyone can see the structures.
2. Measure the height of each structure using your measuring tape.
3. Identify the winning team and present them with a prize.

Step 4: Debrief

1. What strategy did your team use to build the structure? Was it effective?
2. How did your team work well together?
3. In what areas could your team have improved?
4. What roles did the various team members play during the activity?
5. How did your team use communication and trust during the activity?
6. What aspects of teamwork did you use during this activity that you can apply to your current work group or team?

References:

Wujec, Tom. (2010, April 22). Marshmallow Challenge. Retrieved from <https://tomwujec.com/marshmallowchallenge>.