

Time

30 minutes minimum

Goal or purpose

- To analyse situations and consider theories and tactics anticipate new situations, reveal fears, anxieties and other feelings people have about an action;
- To understand people and their roles, including insight into the thoughts and feelings of our adversaries;
- To develop individual and group competence and confidence and develop group morale.

How it's done/facilitator's notes

Although role plays can be very complicated and involve many participants, they often are designed to look at a limited situation, not an entire action. Consider what the group needs to practice in order to prepare for a particular action. See [roles before, during and after an action](#) to determine roles that may be needed.

Set the scene and run the role play

The facilitator sets the scene, sometimes using simple props to prepare the role play and characterise the roles, so that all participants understand the physical scene. The participants are given a description of their role describing the motives and interests of the role. People are given a few minutes to get into their role, and if they are in a group they might map out tactics. The trainer indicates when the role play begins and when it ends. The role players act their given role as they see it.

Evaluation and debriefing

After the role play is stopped, the participants are given a brief pause to come out of their roles for the evaluation. Encourage participants to share their emotions that came up during the role play, as well as reflecting on the practical elements. If not everyone could see the entire role play it helps to have a very brief overview of the events. Participants can share what they learned during the exercise, and what they would want to do differently next time. Observers are asked to share their views about what happened, what went well, what needs improvement, what seemed to increase or decrease tension.

Re-run the role play to consolidate learning (optional)

The evaluation should only go on as long as new issues are raised and participants are exploring problems and alternatives. Make sure that attention is given both to the practical elements of the action within the role play, and on how the participants felt in different situations. It can be helpful to start the role play again, allowing the group to try alternatives that came up in the evaluation, rather than just continuing the discussion. One way to do this is to repeat the same basic plot with different people in the roles, or change the situation by bringing in new roles, such as police, press, or members of the public.

- Role plays are a good opportunity for people to test their comfort zones and try something they have never done before, but it is important for facilitators to prevent physical or emotional injury to the participants, quickly stopping the role play if dangerous situations emerge.

- It is important to be clear about the difference between reality and role play. Role plays can give an exaggerated sense of confidence; counter this by talking through the limitations, drawing on the experience of those taking part in the exercise.
- Be creative! For example, practice disrupting shareholder meetings by having a facilitator give a ten minute presentation (perhaps on methods for disrupting a meeting!); all of the participants have to do something to disrupt the presentation.

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