

## **Games for Trainers!**

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Training in general and safety, health, and environmental (SHE) training in particular is often thought of as boring by the students. Furthermore, most trainers are constantly looking for ways to improve their training. Training is best when the trainees are actively engaged in the training. Consequently many trainers choose structured “training games” as a method or approach to facilitate trainee participation and to increase the perception of training as fun.

This paper (and the original conference presentation) is designed to provide trainers with a variety of “training games” for their use in their training courses. Each “training game” is listed and discussed including design hints, “how to play”, usage suggestions, pros and cons, and both high and low-tech options are given (where applicable). So, without further ado – on to the games!

### **Jeopardy!**

Jeopardy! is perhaps the most common training game used by trainers. Perhaps this is because it seems to be naturally well-suited to be adapted for training purposes. Think about it – there are categories with five “answers” in each, most (but not all) persons know the basic rules, it is easily adaptable, and it lends itself to quick, spirited play.

It works well as a review especially at the end of the course prior to a post-test. Take key points and divide them into categories (categories can be broad or encompass more than one area to make it easy to do). Develop an “answer” (e.g., “This is the most frequently used training game”) and its respective question (e.g., “What is Jeopardy!?”). For high-tech versions, use Excel to make the “game board”. Make large cells with the category names at the top and the “answers” below. Type each in and then highlight it in black – no one can read it. When it needs to be revealed, just block it and “de-highlight” it! Be sure to type and print out a summary sheet of answers and questions for the game “host”. For a low tech version, use Post-It notes. Write the categories on them as well as the point amounts. Then write your answers and questions on the *back* side of each Post-It. There are also several commercially available Jeopardy! games that can be adapted.

Some general tips for ease of use and play are as follows (some of these apply to many training games):

- Create “teams” of multiple players so as to get everyone involved.
- Give them (or have them choose) creative team names.

- Use kids' "squeaky" toys instead of "lock out" buzzers.
- Call yourself "Alex Tyvek" for fun.
- Decide ahead if they have to say "What is...?" or not.
- Give everyone a prize (not just the "winners").

## Family Feud!

Family Feud is another "spirited" and fun game. Obviously it is better suited for "teams" rather than single players. Again, one can use (large) kid's pop-up (or other) toys as the buzzers. For high-tech versions use overhead transparencies or Word, PowerPoint, or Excel for the "board". For low-tech versions use an easel and pad as the board. Either way, the answers must be covered somehow. With the computer version, do the highlighting in black (as discussed above). For the low-tech versions, paper will need to be secured over the answers – either by using Post-Its on the overhead transparencies or large pieces taped over answers written ahead on the easel pad. It should go without saying that it's best *not* to try to embody former host Richard Dawson by greeting each female "contestant" with a kiss!

Teams are definitely necessary for Family Feud – usually four or five persons on each of two teams. Develop key points and use a "survey type" question that will lend itself to a list of "common answers". Decide which are the top answers and assign point values accordingly. An example might be, "We surveyed 100 trainers and asked them to name a type of test question". Multiple choice would likely be number one with the most points assigned, followed by true-false, matching, fill-in-the-blank, and short answer in that order. The team or "family" heads meet in front, shake hands, and try to be first to answer. If they get the number one answer, the team chooses to play or pass. Otherwise the other team gets a guess to see if they get a higher answer and the right to choose to play or pass. Continue with several rounds.

Family Feud is better for easier concepts and for lists of multiple possibilities. Each round can take a while so it can be a longer game.

## Hollywood Squares

Hollywood Squares is a great game that involves the whole group – no matter how big it is! Just like as with the game show it basically is tic-tac-toe. Get two contestants from the group – one is "O" and one is "X". Make a page with a big, bold "O" on one side and an "X" on the other side. Make copies and distribute to all in the group. Take a couple of rolls of crepe paper (or flagging tape, colored rope, etc.) and divide them into the requisite 9-squared tic-tac-toe board with approximately equal numbers of trainees in each "square". The two contestants take turns choosing a "square" which will be a group of trainees usually. Ask the "square" to answer a question and decide as a group, then ask the competitor if s/he agrees or disagrees with the square's answer. If correct they get the square, if not their competitor does – except for the win which the competitor must get for themselves. Remind the trainees in the "squares" that they can "bluff" and should try to have some fun with it.

## Who Wants to Be a Millionaire?

Obviously this game needs some adapting. One can make the “player” into a team (or keep as just one trainee) and the others in the course and classroom can be the “life lines”, etc. It’s important to directly involve as many of the students as possible for it to be a useful learning experience for all.

As usual develop the key points from the training. Next arrange them from easiest to hardest concepts. Come up with four possible answers (as with a multiple-choice question – one correct and three incorrect ones). For a high-tech version, put them into a Word document with the answers typed out and highlighted in black (to be revealed). Keep a list of all questions and answers to use and refer to during play. For a low-tech version, use overheads (that are covered by a sheet of paper, or put it on an easel pad (again, covered with paper for the reveal).

The game takes a while and typically there is only one player, so it cuts down on active participation. To this end encourage a “team” rather than a single player and allow for more than three uses of help (i.e., “phone a friend”, “poll the group”, and “eliminate two answers”).

## **Wheel of Fortune**

Another obvious game well suited to adapting in training, although obviously Wheel of Fortune is the kids’ game “Hangman” with better props and prizes. One can choose a “letter-turner” (Vanna) to help (choosing a man can make it very funny). Have it spell out a key point which can be a phrase (as opposed to just one word). This will make it more of a challenge.

The high-tech version can be easily done in Word as described above and the low-tech version with large, single-sheet letters covered with colored pages. As far as “spinning the wheel”, one can use a board game wheel or make one if desired. Otherwise a simpler way is to make up points, prizes, “bankrupt, etc. (like in the game show), put them on folded pieces of paper, and throw them into a (hard) hat for drawing out by the players.

## **Training Charades**

Training charades can be lots of fun and some just plain silliness (a nice ice breaker and/or stress reliever). What’s really nice is that it gets students up and physically active (and so is especially great for the afternoon). Similarly to the “parlor-game” version of charades, two (or more) teams are chosen. Instead of each team coming up with the charades, the trainer should do so. Various training lesson key points are written down on slips of paper that can be drawn out of a hat by a trainee/team member. The trainee has to pantomime (or silently act out) this key part of the lesson (e.g., fit-testing a respirator). Their team has to guess the answer. The two (or more) teams can also give each other the clues to demonstrate if the trainer has confidence in their ability to do so.

## **Pictionary or “Win, Lose or Draw!”**

The basic premise of this game is to draw a concept or thing – sort of charades on paper. The trainer writes out a bunch of key points on lips of paper for each side to have to draw. Teams are made up and one player/trainee has to try to draw the hazard, personal protective equipment, emergency response, etc. The team has a finite time period during which to guess the answer. It can be done on a dry erase board, but if done on an easel/paper pad then the trainer can post the drawings for all to enjoy the “artistic renditions”. It can be lots of fun, as most folks are not really artistic especially under pressure. This one is also physical and gets people up, so it is nice for afternoon, as a break from “brain-work”, as an ice-breaker”, and/or as reinforcement of the lesson of course.

## **Blind Man’s Bluff**

The training version is not exactly like the kid’s game. In this version one person is blindfolded and their team tries to help them perform something physical (e.g., disassembling and reassembling a respirator) but only with verbal help. It’s an effective training tool for communication and team work. The advantage is it can be as short or long as the trainer (and trainees’) wishes.

## **Clue or Who Done It?**

This game is played like a murder mystery, only in this game they’re investigating an accident scene. It can be done in at least two different ways. One way is to play it like in the board game Clue in which the trainer creates a “board” (on paper, a dry erase board, on a computer program) and create a “facility”, with rooms, persons, tools, etc. Cards representing these things are also made (and dealt out to all players/trainees). They take turns guessing who done it like in the board game.

The second option is to create a scenario that is an “accident”. The trainer creates characters and the situations and hands out roles to trainees as appropriate. With a bit of guidance, the trainees in their roles are directed to try to solve the accident. This option obviously allows for much greater group interaction and active learning. There are lots of ways to go with this one – be creative in the “set-up”.

## **Baseball**

Teams are chosen and either a physical diamond in the room or a “virtual” one on a board can be used. The trainer will need to have quite a few questions at the ready for this game. Players get on base by answering the questions correctly. Each question can indicate how many bases it is worth. Three strikes (wrong answers) make an out. Close answers are balls. Correct answers are hits, but the other team can get the player out by answering a related question. Three outs of course per side of the inning and the other team is up.

There are so many ways of both having fun with this game and making it more like a real game of baseball. For instance play the national anthem, have uniforms, wear ball caps, take a 7<sup>th</sup> inning stretch, serve ballpark hotdogs, peanuts, and Cracker Jacks, sing “Take Me Out to the Ball Game,” take the game outside in good weather, etc. Play ball!

## **Football**

Similar to Baseball with a set up and basic construct similar to the actual game. Again, the trainer will need lots of questions. The questions can indicate how many yards each is worth. The trainer will need special questions for kick-offs and punts with yards depending on answers. This can be a multi-part question or one with many answers. The more the team gets right, the further the run back is worth in yards. Teams progress with yards by answering questions correctly and get stopped with incorrect ones. Interceptions and fumbles happen when the other team answers the question correctly. Four in a row is a first down and that team continues, otherwise play turns to the opposing team. It's best to set up a "virtual field", so everyone can see where the teams are, etc.

There are so many ways of both having fun with this game and making it more like a real game of football. For instance do a coin toss, have a half-time "show" (as a good break), take the game outside in good weather, have a two-minute warning, etc.

## **20 Questions**

This is the game that always starts "Animal, mineral, or vegetable?". Although that query isn't used, teams (or "panels" like in the game shows of old – think of "What's My Line?") ask yes or no questions. They have to guess the "course aspect" (perhaps "safety don'ts") in 20 questions (or fewer). The trainer can be the host and can have a trainee play the contestant with several others being panel members. One can also try it less formally with the class taking turns asking the questions. For a little high-tech addition, type in the questions (and answers) as they are asked so all can see what has been asked thus far and keep track better.

To make it more like the old game shows, have the numbers 1-20 on paper or in Word, etc. If the group is mostly Baby Boomers, put the numbers on large cards (8-inches square or so) punched through two wires, and "flip" them over as each question is asked. They'll get a kick out of it.

## **Concentration**

This is the one where one has to find pairs of matching items (under cards usually). Many people have likely played this with their kids, but there was a game show based on it. The matched pairs can be such things as a regulation and a requirement of it, a hazard and control, PPE and its limitation, etc. The nice thing about this one is you can give the same decks of cards to several pairs of students or they can be divided into (small) teams (of a few students in each) as a low-tech version. For a high-tech version put the grid of squares into Excel. Type each one in and highlight it in black (as discussed above). Do the reveal by blocking it and undoing the highlighting. It can be lots of fun, albeit frustrating at times so beware of trainees who don't do well with memorization and special relationships. The obvious way around this is to make it a team event so no one trainee stands out and all get involved.

## **Whose Line Is It Anyway?**

Whose Line Is It Anyway? is pretty much a role playing challenge. I know what you're thinking – it's not a "game". Well role playing can be a game if presented that way (also, it does have the word "playing" in its name). Make the contest into which team or group can

do the funniest role play. As the trainer, develop some scenarios that lend themselves to comedy – less serious is generally easier for people to do – drama is more of a challenge. Write out the scenario, roles, or whatever and let them go for it!

## **Telephone**

This is the kid's game where one person whispers to the next who whispers to the next, and so on to the last one. Then what was said first is compared to what was heard last. Obviously this is most useful for training on communication and similar issues. As the trainer, be sure to instruct the players to repeat what they *heard* not necessarily what they *know* it to have been. Two teams can "compete" to see which one gets the final safety message the closest to the original one said.

## **Hot Potato**

This is the kid's game where you pass around an object like it's a hot potato (really quickly) trying not to be the one caught or stuck with it. Use a soft or squishy ball or bean bag. Have the trainees throw it back and forth and when caught they have to give an example of whatever the lesson is about. If they cannot think of one, they drop out and play continues until just the winner is left. It's good for reinforcing a list of key points that was just reviewed or discussed. It's especially fun and great to incorporate some physicality to the class.

## **Musical Hot Potato**

This time the trainees get in a circle and begin to toss the hot potato to each other while music is playing (use an MP3 or CD player). When the music stops, whoever has the hot potato has to answer a question. If they get it wrong, review the correct answer and they leave the circle. This continues with harder and harder (more obscure questions) until the last person remains and wins the game. The music adds another sense and dimension and can actually help with the learning.

## **Brain Teasers/Riddles**

These are often pictograms with words and/or symbols that make up a well known word or phrase. Great for reinvigorating folks and getting their creative, brain juices cooking (what an awful metaphor!). It can be done as individual players or as teams. Be sure to include the answers on the back (for them and for you!). Riddles are more typically a word puzzle or "poser" (one that makes you think or scratch your head). These can be especially useful to reinforce group process (i.e., team play) and working things out together.

## **Crossword Puzzles**

These are pretty much self-explanatory. You can create your own or there are software programs that will create the actual puzzle grid for you (and are very easy to use). Crosswords are great when you want individual games or as a "take away" for after class.

For a high-tech version use Excel and create a grid of squares (hint – use the “W” to set the width, then “eyeball” the height). Start to put in the words that link. Blacken the non-letter squares and add the little numbers as superscript. Next use either Excel or Word for the “Across” and “Down” clues.

## **Jumbles**

This is yet another word puzzle type game. Jumbles are the puzzle where the letters are there but are in the wrong order – basically an anagram – they’re mixed up. It too can be done with single players or as teams. It is great for term recognition. Either just the mixed up letters can be written or a clue can also be used. The high-tech version is to use Word and to blacken out the answers with black highlighting. The low-tech version is to use large pieces of paper of course and then to rearrange them accordingly. This can be especially helpful for introducing new terms that may be a bit foreign – it really emphasizes them.

## **Word Searches**

Word Searches are those grids with all of the letters and you have to find the hidden words. It’s an obvious inclusion after the previous two entries. It is very much like Crosswords above in the puzzle construction. Use Excel or graph paper to design it. An easier version is to just list the hidden words whereas a more challenging version is instead of listing a hidden word, one can list the hidden word’s meaning. It gives it more of a Crossword “feel” to it but with many more terms.

## **Create Your Own Game!**

One of the best games I’ve played was a board game we created in grad-school for “Group Process” class. It was fun to design and to play. We got an “A” on it, too. It can be done as a group in class – especially if the course goes more than one day or they have a break with time to work on it. Provide supplies such as 3x5 note cards, large easel paper, markers/crayons, small toys for “players”, etc. Tell them that above all to have fun!

Well, good playing and good training! Now go have some fun!