



Back-To-Back Learning Exercise

Learning & Skills: Listening Skills
Body Language
Communication Skills
Communication Barriers

Time & Tools

Total Time: 25 minutes
Necessary Tools: None
Optional Tools: Flip chart or writing board

Note: The room needs to be large enough so that sets of partners or groups are not sitting directly beside each other. A classroom setting is ideal.

Step 1

1. Tell everyone they will be performing a communication exercise.
2. Tell each person to select a partner to work with (they will work in pairs of 2). Have the partners move throughout the room so they are not too close to each other.
3. After the partners are in their location, have them **turn their backs to each other**.
4. After the partners have turned their backs to each other, tell them they will have a two-way conversation where they discuss *any of their experiences over the last two weeks*. The **partners cannot look at each other**.
5. Tell everyone they will have **10 minutes** to discuss this topic.

Step 2

Note: For this Step, if a flip chart or writing board is available, capture this information for viewing by everyone.

1. After 10 minutes, have everyone stop talking and face the person leading the exercise. Can have everyone return to their original location, if the room is large and it would be difficult to hear the exercise leader or others.

2. Ask the following general “take away” question:

How did talking back-to-back impact your ability to communicate effectively?

Take Away Examples

Note: Below are some “take away” examples from the exercise. If the attendees do not mention these, the exercise leader could mention them.

1. When communication is limited, you have to find a way to overcome this problem.
2. Body language plays an important role in effective communication.
3. It is important to really “listen” when someone is talking.
4. Sometimes you have to make adjustments in “what you say” and “how you say it” to communicate effectively.
5. Sometimes you have to make adjustments in your communications based on your environment.
6. You cannot always control your surroundings when communicating with others.

Optional Additional Question:

How could you use the ideas from this exercise in your personal life or your work life?

Adjustments to Back-To-Back Exercise:

1. Change the Topic discussed to something different (e.g., something the committee is working on).
2. Change the Time: The time for this exercise is based on 6 – 10 people. If the number of attendees is larger or smaller, you will need to adjust the time.