Online team building activities: three cooperative exercises with debrief

Team building activities work online when every person holds information the group needs and the debrief links the game to how the team works. This pack has three original cooperative exercises: a line-up puzzle with hidden clues, a trip plan with hidden constraints and a skills swap. It includes printable cards, answer keys, debrief questions and a 60-minute plan that needs only a video call and a chat.

60 minutes | 4–20 participants | Online and adaptable in person

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The outcome

By the end of 60 minutes the team has solved two cooperative puzzles in which every person's information was needed, has named at least two ways of working that helped, and has a shared list of who can help with what, with at least one agreed skills swap.

Before the session

- For facilitators, team leads and trainers who run team building activities for remote or hybrid teams of 4–20 people. It needs a video call with a chat that allows private messages. Breakout rooms help for more than eight people but are optional.
- Before the session, send each person their clue card for activity 1 and their constraint card for activity 2 by private message, or send them at the start of each activity. With fewer people than cards, give some people two cards. With more, run parallel groups.
- Prepare the trip options table and the skills swap sheet in a shared document, or paste them into the chat. Keep the answer keys for yourself.
- Say in the invitation that the activities need no personal stories, no video and no physical movement, and that everything works by voice or chat. Turn on captions. Nobody has to share anything private.

Included in this kit

A facilitator run of show, participant worksheets with real tables, reference tables, debrief questions, adaptation notes and a follow-up plan. Use the editable Word copy to tailor examples and prompts before delivery.

Original material by Superglue. Timings are suggestions; adjust them to your participants. This resource has not been independently evaluated.

What is inside

- Activity 1: clue cards
- Activity 2: trip options
- Activity 2: constraint cards
- Activity 3: skills swap sheet
- Activity 3: the six challenges
- Facilitator section: run of show, reference tables, debrief and adaptations

Activity 1: clue cards

Cut along the table lines and give each person one card, or two when the group has fewer than eight people. People describe their card in words; nobody shows it. The answer key is in the facilitator section.

Card	Your step	Your clue
Card 1	Carry the boxes to the hall	The boxes are carried once, after all the work that can be done at home.
Card 2	Count the books that found a new home	This is the last thing we do.
Card 3	Ask neighbours to donate books	This happens straight after the place is confirmed.
Card 4	Open the doors to visitors	This is the second-to-last step.
Card 5	Book the community hall	Nothing else can happen until we know where the library will be.
Card 6	Make shelf labels for each age group	The labels must match the groups the books were sorted into.
Card 7	Set out the shelves and labels	This happens at the hall, before anyone comes in.
Card 8	Sort the donated books by age group	You cannot sort what you have not collected.

Activity 2: trip options

Share this table with everyone. The team of ten must choose one option that meets every private constraint. Prices are per person.

Option	Time	Cost per person	Step-free	Indoors or outdoors	Lunch with a vegetarian choice
A. Boat tour with lunch	11:00–15:00	45	No	Outdoors	Yes
B. Cooking class	14:00–17:30	55	Yes	Indoors	Yes
C. Museum tour and lunch	10:00–14:00	35	Yes	Indoors	Yes
D. Forest walk and picnic	10:00–15:00	20	No	Outdoors	Yes
E. Pottery workshop	13:00–16:00	40	Yes	Indoors	No food
F. Bowling and pizza dinner	16:00–19:00	30	Yes	Indoors	No, dinner

Activity 2: constraint cards

Cut along the table lines and give each person one card, or two when the group has fewer than six people. Read your constraint out when it helps; do not paste it.

Card	Your constraint
Card 1	The budget is 400 in total for the 10 of us.
Card 2	Two people must leave by 16:30 to collect children.
Card 3	One colleague uses a wheelchair, so the activity must be step-free.
Card 4	The forecast says heavy rain, so the activity must be indoors.
Card 5	Lunch must be included, with a vegetarian choice.
Card 6	The team did the boat tour last year and wants something new.

Activity 3: skills swap sheet

Write your name and two things you could help with, from work or outside it. Then match at least one person to each challenge. Use each person at least once.

Name	I could help with…	…and with…

Activity 3: the six challenges

Match at least one person to each challenge. Agree one real swap before the session ends.

#	Challenge	Who could help
1	A new colleague needs a tour of the shared files and tools.	
2	A client wants a one-page summary of a long report by Friday.	
3	The team’s slide template looks out of date.	
4	Two people want to learn to use spreadsheet formulas.	
5	A team event needs someone to plan a simple budget.	
6	A workshop needs a friendly, clear invitation email.	

Facilitator run of show

1 Open and explain the rules | 5 minutes

Explain the purpose: “Three short activities. In each one, every person holds something the group needs, so nobody can solve it alone.” Agree two rules: describe your card in words but do not paste it, and anyone can talk by voice or chat. Say how the debriefs will work.

2 Activity 1: the library line-up | 15 minutes

Each person has one or two clue cards with a step for opening a pop-up library and a clue about its position. Two minutes: explain the task. The group must agree the order of the eight steps without showing their cards; people describe their card aloud or in their own words in the chat. Eight minutes to solve. Five minutes: reveal the answer and debrief.

3 Activity 2: the hidden constraints | 20 minutes

Share the six trip options with everyone. Each person holds one or two private constraints. Three minutes: explain that the team must choose the one option that meets every constraint, and that constraints may be read out but not pasted. Ten minutes to solve. Seven minutes: reveal the answer and debrief.

4 Activity 3: the skills swap | 15 minutes

Show the six challenges. Two minutes: explain. Four minutes: each person writes two things they could help with, from work or outside it, on the shared sheet. Six minutes: the group matches at least one person to each challenge, using each person at least once. Three minutes: debrief and agree one real swap.

5 Close: what helped us | 5 minutes

Ask each person for one thing the team did in the activities that helped, such as checking who had not spoken or reading back the clues. Write them down. Ask the team which one to keep in its normal meetings, and send the list and the skills sheet after the call.

Reference tables

The three cooperative activities

Every activity works by voice or chat alone. No paid software, no video and no physical movement is needed.

Activity	Minutes	What each person holds	What the team must do
1. The library line-up	15	One or two steps with a clue about their position	Agree the order of eight steps without showing any card
2. The hidden constraints	20	One or two private constraints	Find the one trip option that meets all six constraints
3. The skills swap	15	Two things they could help with	Match people to six challenges and agree one real swap

Debrief questions for each activity

Use the debrief to link the game to how the team works. Five minutes of debrief is worth more than a fourth game.

Activity	Ask the team
1. The library line-up	How did you find out what the others held? Who had not spoken yet, and how did you notice?
2. The hidden constraints	When did a constraint change the discussion? What would have happened if one person had stayed silent?
3. The skills swap	What did you learn about someone's skills that you did not know? Which swap will actually happen, and when?
All three	Which of the things that helped today would help in our normal meetings?

Answer key: the library line-up

Only one order meets all eight clues. Deal the cards in the numbered order so that nobody holds the answer by position.

Position	Step	The clue that fixes it	Card number when dealt
1	Book the community hall	Nothing else can happen until we know where the library will be.	5
2	Ask neighbours to donate books	This happens straight after the place is confirmed.	3
3	Sort the donated books by age group	You cannot sort what you have not collected.	8
4	Make shelf labels for each age group	The labels must match the groups the books were sorted into.	6
5	Carry the boxes to the hall	The boxes are carried once, after all the work that can be done at home.	1
6	Set out the shelves and labels	This happens at the hall, before anyone comes in.	7
7	Open the doors to visitors	This is the second-to-last step.	4
8	Count the books that found a new home	This is the last thing we do.	2

Answer key: the hidden constraints

Only option C, the museum tour and lunch, meets all six constraints. Every other option fails at least one.

Constraint	Card text	Effect
1	The budget is 400 in total for the 10 of us.	Removes A and B: more than 40 per person.
2	Two people must leave by 16:30 to collect children.	Removes B and F: they end after 16:30.

Constraint	Card text	Effect
3	One colleague uses a wheelchair, so the activity must be step-free.	Removes A and D.
4	The forecast says heavy rain, so the activity must be indoors.	Removes A and D.
5	Lunch must be included, with a vegetarian choice.	Removes E and F.
6	The team did the boat tour last year and wants something new.	Removes A.

Debrief and next steps

Questions for reflection

- How did you find out what each person held, and who noticed when someone had not spoken?
- When did one person’s private information change the group’s answer?
- What did the team do that helped, such as reading back or checking, and which of those should we use in real meetings?
- Which skills swap from activity 3 will happen, who will arrange it and by when?

Adapt the session

- For 4 to 7 people, give some people two clue cards and two constraint cards. For 9 to 20, run activities 1 and 2 in parallel groups of four to eight with one full card set each, and share the answers in the main room.
- For a 30-minute version, run activity 2 and activity 3 with shorter debriefs.
- For people who use screen readers or prefer text, send cards as plain text by private message and let people describe their card in the chat. Nothing in the pack depends on images or colour.
- For people who prefer not to speak, the chat counts as a full contribution. Cameras stay optional, and nobody has to share anything personal: the skills can come from work or outside it.
- In person, print and cut the cards and ask people to read them aloud without showing them. Seat people so that nobody can see another card.

After the session

Send the team the list of what helped and the completed skills swap sheet on the same day. Check at the next team meeting whether the agreed swap happened. After a month, ask whether the team still uses one of the habits it chose, such as a round of names before a decision, and drop it or keep it.

Questions people ask

What are good online team building activities that are not cheesy?

Cooperative tasks in which every person holds information the group needs. They give quieter people a reason to speak and give the team something to talk about in the debrief. This pack has three: a line-up puzzle, a trip plan with hidden constraints and a skills swap.

Do I need paid software or a special platform?

No. A video call with a chat that allows private messages is enough. Breakout rooms help for groups larger than eight, and a shared document helps for the skills swap, but you can paste everything into the chat.

How many people can take part?

Four to twenty. With fewer than eight, give some people two cards. With more, run activities 1 and 2 in parallel groups with a full card set each.

How long do the activities take?

The full plan takes 60 minutes: 15 for the line-up, 20 for the hidden constraints, 15 for the skills swap, plus a five-minute opening and a five-minute close. Each activity also works on its own at the start of a meeting.

Are these activities accessible?

They work by voice or chat alone, with no images, colour, video or movement. Cards can go out as plain text for screen readers, and nobody has to share personal stories.

What is included in the free and editable files?

The open PDF has the clue cards, the trip options, the constraint cards, the skills swap sheet, the answer keys, debrief questions and the 60-minute plan. Subscribers also receive the editable Word file, an Excel workbook with a constraint checker and the card sets, and a CSV of the plan.

Use and sharing

Free to use and adapt in your own training sessions, including paid client work. Do not resell or redistribute the unmodified download as a standalone product. Share the resource page instead.