

The Spaghetti Tower

By: Patrick Weber, Purdue University

Supplies Needed

- 1 box of spaghetti per group
- 1 bag of marshmallows per group (the larger, the better)
- Newspaper (to cover the floor)
- Some kind of prize (optional)

Create teams of students. The size of the groups depends on how you plan to process the activity (see below). Give each group some marshmallows and spaghetti. The goal of the exercise is to build the tallest tower possible out of the spaghetti and marshmallows. Allow the students 15-20 minutes to accomplish this. The team that has the highest tower wins a prize.

This activity can be processed in at least three ways.

Self-Awareness

Groups should be comprised of 9-12 students. Because of the large number of students in each group, the crowdedness tends to activate students' unconscious scripts. Thus, this activity makes for a great self-awareness activity, helping students learn about ingrained patterns that support or sabotage their success.

Team-Building

The Spaghetti Tower could also be used as a team-building exercise; in this case, you will probably want to make the groups smaller, perhaps 4-8 students per group. Afterwards, you could have students explore questions such as 1) how well did your team work together, 2) who most helped the group pursue its goal, 3) what role did you play in the group, and 4) what would you do differently if given a second chance at this activity?

Icebreaker

As an icebreaker, the directions are revised to read: "Each group is to build a model representing what it takes to be successful in college (or in this course)." After building, each group has 3-5 minutes to explain its model, expressing what the group members believe leads to success in college (or in this course). Record qualities on the blackboard and discuss patterns afterwards. Group size should be 4-6 students, taking into considering the number of groups and the resulting time it will take for them to report on their models.

Submitted by: Carmen Etienne