

Magic Turtle

Supplies:

- Four to six paper plates or rubber bases (the magic turtles)
- Two lengths of string to mark the river boundaries

Participants:

This is recommended for a group size from 5-20. If you have a larger group, consider splitting the group. You can have the groups take turns performing the challenge (adding a variation for additional groups) or work on it at the same time. If you have them do it at the same time, be careful that it does not become competitive.

Area:

This can be done indoors or outdoors. It requires a space where you can mark off a river that is 20'-25' wide with space on both sides for the portion of the group that still needs to cross or has already crossed.

Challenge:

The objective for the group is to get from one side of the river to the other using the magic turtles.

Set-up:

Lay down the two lengths of rope about 20'-25' apart to mark off the river. The entire group should start on one side of the river. Depending on river and group size, you should select the number of turtles. 1 turtle for every 6' the river is. If your group is more than 10 people, you may want to give the group an extra turtle for each 5 additional people.

Story:

You have come upon a "rushing river" that you need to cross to get home. There are no stones in the river or logs to walk across and the current is too fast to swim across. Fortunately you have found some "magic turtles" who are willing to help you across by allowing you to step on their backs to cross.

Each turtle is happy to help as long as the turtle feels needed. The turtles judge this by physical contact. As long as they are in physical contact with someone, they will stay and allow their backs to be stepped on, but if that physical contact stops, the turtle will swim away.

You will have a few minutes to develop a plan and then execute it. Remember:

1. You have "x" magic turtles.
2. The magic turtle will allow you to step on its back to cross the river as long as it feels needed..
3. The turtle feels needed as long as it has physical contact with a person (for example it is being held in a hand or stepped on by a foot).
4. As soon as the turtle feels no contact, the turtle will swim away.

When you have developed your plan, let me know and I will be asking you three questions:

1. Do you have a plan?
2. Does everybody understand the plan?
3. (Participant), what is the plan?

When selecting a participant to explain the plan, it is recommended that you select one of the quieter and less engaged members of the group. This is to ensure that assertive and extroverted group members do not take over the group and exclude individuals.

Participants develop their plan and complete the activity with the facilitator making sure all participants are safe and included. If participants have no physical contact with the turtle, remove the turtle from the activity.

Debrief:

When the group is finished you will want to debrief with questions such as the following:

- How did your plan work?
- What unexpected challenges did you run into?
- What “hero” moments occurred during the activity? (times when a particular person said or did something that was crucial to your success)
- Who contributed as a leader? As an idea generator? As a motivator? As a problem solver?

Variations:

- A time limit can be used to modify the activity.
- The river size can vary. Every several minutes make the river a foot narrower or wider. Try to keep the average close to the original width. *This job can be performed by a participant that has chosen not to participate with the group as a way of keeping them engaged in the activity. During debrief, invite this person to share their observations.*
- Handicaps can be used to add challenge to the team. For instance, a person could have to perform one handed/footed, not be allowed to speak, or blindfolded.