

# Broken Squares

## **Team Instructions:**

Each of you has been given an envelope that contains pieces of a puzzle.

Your team will be successful when there is a perfect square, each of the same size, in front of each team member.

## **Important Rules:**

You may use only the pieces provided.

No member may speak or gesture in any way throughout the activity.

Members may not ask another member for a piece; take a piece from another member, or in signal in any way that another person is to give them a piece.

Members may give pieces to other members.

Members may not place their puzzle pieces in the center area for other team members to take.

# BROKEN SQUARES

**Activity:** Group/Team

**Time:** 30 minutes

**Participants:** 5 – 18 (but you'll need enough squares for each participant)

**Materials:** A set of broken squares, Team Instructions, Observer Instructions.

**Purpose:**

Get the group working as a team, break the ice.

Expose the participants to behaviors that may contribute toward or obstruct group problem solving.

**Learning Points:**

Participation and cooperation by all members of a team are essential to attain team and individual goals.

It is necessary to understand the objectives of the task at hand.

Problem solving requires that team members keep an open mind to a variety of potential solutions.

Lack of communication makes problem-solving very difficult.

You are never alone on a team.

As a team member you must be willing to help others and also be willing to accept help when it is offered.

**Preparation and Notes for Facilitator:**

Make the broken squares by using the template below. Cut the squares apart on the lines. Mix them up and then put pieces in the required number of envelopes. You can have an equal number in each envelope or make some envelopes more full than others. Make sure each group has the same number of complete squares as team members (or one set). If you use card stock 60 lb. or heavier you

should be able to use the same squares over and over again. (A good way to recycle old manila folders.)

Print Instructions for each team and a set of instructions for each judge/observer.

Hand out the set of broken square envelopes, and instruct the group to distribute one envelope to each of the participants. (Do not open the envelopes until instructed to do so.).

Give group its copy of the "Broken Squares Team Instruction." Read these instructions to the group. Ask for questions or ask the group questions to ensure understanding.

Instruct the group to begin the task. Monitor the group, along with the judge/observers, to ensure that the group follows the rules fairly closely.

When the group completes the task or time runs out, have a discussion of the experience. Ask, "What happened during the process?" Encourage the team to relate this experience to their work situation.

Have the entire team develop a set of learning points, which you record on a flipchart.

Team may take up to 20 minutes to meet the individual and team goals.

### **Observer/Judge Instructions:**

#### **Your job is part observer and part judge:**

As a Judge, make sure each participant observes the following rules:

There is no talking, pointing, or any other kind of communication.

Participants may give pieces directly to other participants but may not take pieces from other members.

Participants may not place their pieces into the center for others to take.

It is okay for a member to give away all the pieces to their puzzle, even if they have already formed a square.

**As an Observer, look for the following:**

How willing were members to give away pieces of the puzzle? Were participants more interested in getting than in giving?

Did anyone finish their puzzle, and then withdraw himself or herself from the group problem solving? If so, how did it affect the rest of the team?

Did dominant individuals emerge, or did everyone seem to participate equally?

Did you detect evidence of frustration? How did it affect the group?

What was the critical turning point(s) affecting the teams working together?

Other observations?



