

ACTIVITY GUID FOR YOUTH EXCHANGES

T O L B O X

Soft Skills



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ABOUT THIS BROCHURE

This toolbox was created as part of the Erasmus+ youth exchange “Smart Tools: Essential Life Skills You Won’t Learn at School”, a project designed to help young people strengthen the personal and interpersonal skills that shape their everyday lives, academic journeys, and future careers. The exchange responded to a growing reality: while young people are increasingly well-prepared in their professional fields, they often enter the job market without the soft skills that employers consider essential such as communication, teamwork, conflict resolution, self-awareness, and stress management.

This toolbox gathers the workshops and exercises created by participants during the exchange. Each activity reflects their own insights, creativity, and lived experiences, offering practical tools that youth workers, educators, and facilitators can use to support the development of soft skills in diverse groups of young people. The activities are adaptable, accessible, and suitable for a wide range of contexts whether supporting a future doctor, bartender, teacher, or even a young person aiming to lead their community. At its core, the project emphasises that soft skills are not optional: they are essential building blocks for personal growth, meaningful relationships, and long-term success in any field.

This collection stands as a resource for anyone committed to empowering young people to thrive not only in their professions, but in life.



ACTIVE LISTENING

1 Back to Back

Group: even number of participants



AIM

Participants practice careful listening, memory retention, and clear verbal expression by retelling a short story to their partner from memory.

MATERIALS

Printed short stories in English (Czech and Turkish folk tales or simple historical anecdotes)



INSTRUCTIONS

- Form pairs.
- One participant has 7 minutes to read the printed story.
- After the time limit has passed, they retell the story from memory to their partner (within 3 minute time limit).
- Short reflection follows.
- *Optionally, swap roles for a second round.*



REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- *How did it feel to listen and then retell?*
- *What was challenging about retelling in your own words?*
- *Did you remember the key points accurately or miss details?*

2 Kulaktor Kulaga (Silent Message)



Group: no specifications (whole group)



AIM

A whisper game to practice focused listening and demonstrate how messages can distort when passed along a chain.

MATERIALS

Prepared short messages (related to familiar stories or fables in English)



INSTRUCTIONS

- Participants stand in a line or circle.
- The facilitator whispers a short message to the first participant.
- Each participant quietly whispers it to the next until the last person says it aloud.
- Compare the final message to the original.



REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- *How did the message change?*
- *Why is careful listening important?*
- *How could you make the message clearer or more accurate next time?*

3 Audio Quiz



Group: no specifications (whole group)



AIM

Participants improve attentive listening and memory through a comprehension quiz based on an audio or spoken story.

MATERIALS

Audio or printed story (read aloud by facilitator),
question sheets (comprehension questions)



INSTRUCTIONS

- Play or read a short story aloud (10 minutes).
- Distribute question sheets.
- Participants answer individually or in pairs (8 minutes).
- Facilitator reviews answers and key points (2 minutes).



REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- *Which details were hardest to remember?*
- *Did listening closely help you answer correctly?*
- *How could you improve your listening focus next time?*

4 English Taboo



Group: small teams (4–6 participants per team)



AIM

A word-guessing game that develops vocabulary, descriptive skills, and teamwork by explaining concepts without using “forbidden” words.

MATERIALS

Prepared Taboo cards (keywords with forbidden words listed underneath)



INSTRUCTIONS

- Form small teams.
- One player draws a card and describes the word without using forbidden words.
- The team guesses within the time limit.
- Rotate turns and continue for 20 minutes.
- Briefly discuss strategies at the end.



REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- *What strategies helped describe words effectively?*
- *Was it harder to explain or to guess? Why?*
- *How did teamwork help your group succeed?*

5 What Did You Really Hear?

Group: no specifications (whole group)



AIM

Raise awareness of selective listening and common misunderstandings by identifying random sounds and discussing perception differences.

MATERIALS

Audio clips of random sounds (animals, machines, nature, etc.).



INSTRUCTIONS

- Play short audio clips of different sounds (animal noises, machines, etc.).
- Participants write down or call out what they think they heard.
- Reveal correct answers and discuss surprising or misunderstood sounds.



REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- *Which sounds were easiest or hardest to identify?*
- *Why do people hear things differently?*
- *How does selective listening affect communication in real life?*

ADAPTABILITY

1 Rules Changed! – Pass the Ball, Adapt Fast



Group: no specifications (whole group)



AIM

A dynamic game that helps participants develop adaptability, quick thinking, teamwork, and communication skills by responding to unexpected rule changes in real time.

INSTRUCTIONS

- Form a circle or line.
- Participants need to pass the ball (or object) around without dropping it.
- Begin with simple rules: two hands, slow and steady passing.
- Every 2-3 minutes, shout “RULES CHANGED!” and announce a new challenge e.g. pass with one hand only, no eye contact allowed, use your feet to move the ball, no talking, gestures only, pretend the ball is heavy (10kg), pair up: pass alternates between partners, jump before passing, reverse direction of passing

MATERIALS

A ball or similar sized object



REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- Which rule was hardest for you to adapt to?
- Did anyone in the group help you adapt faster?
- How did you feel when the rules suddenly changed?
- How does this relate to how you deal with unexpected changes in life?

2 Capture the Flag

Group: two teams of 5–20 players each



AIM

A high-energy outdoor game that builds teamwork, strategy, and communication skills while encouraging physical activity and friendly competition.

MATERIALS

Two visible flags (e.g., bandanas, cones, or markers), open outdoor field with marked boundaries



INSTRUCTIONS

- Split players into two equal teams and define the playfield, divided by a center line.
- Each team hides its flag in plain sight within its territory.
- Basic gameplay:
 - Players invade enemy territory to capture the opposing flag.
 - If tagged in enemy territory, players go to “jail” (or sit out until next round).
 - Jailed players can be freed if tagged by a teammate.
- Flags cannot be moved once placed, except when taken by the opposing team.
- A team wins by successfully capturing and returning the enemy’s flag to their own territory.



REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- *What strategies did your team use to defend or attack?*
- *How did teamwork influence your success?*
- *How did you feel when tagged or jailed?*
- *How did you adapt your approach between rounds?*

TEAM WORK

1 Shipwreck Game

Group: 5–6 groups with 4–6 participants each



AIM

A survival decision-making simulation designed to improve teamwork and communication. Participants must individually rank 15 survival items, then negotiate with their group to agree on a shared list.

MATERIALS

Printed "Shipwreck" activity sheets (with 15 survival items listed), pens



INSTRUCTIONS

- Divide participants into small groups (4–6 members each).
- Each participant individually ranks 15 survival items based on importance.
- As a group, participants discuss and agree on one shared ranking.
- Compare group rankings and facilitate a brief discussion about differences in opinions and how decisions were made.



REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- *How did your team handle moments of disagreement or confusion?*
- *Did you learn anything new about teamwork during this activity?*
- *How did your team balance listening to all ideas while making decisions?*
- *If you faced a similar challenge again, what would you do differently?*

2 Bucket Game



Group: 3 teams of 5–6 participants each



AIM

A physical and strategic game to develop teamwork and problem-solving under pressure. Teams must carry water from the sea using only their bodies to fill their buckets.

MATERIALS

Three buckets, beach or water-access area



INSTRUCTIONS

- Divide participants into 3 teams.
- Explain the rules: teams must carry water from the sea using only their bodies—no clothes, tools, or external materials allowed.
- Give teams 5 minutes to develop a strategy.
- Begin the challenge; the first team to fill their bucket wins.



REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- *How did pressure and competition affect your teamwork?*
- *What strategies worked best for your team?*
- *If you repeated the challenge, what would you change?*

3 **Volleyball in Water**



Group: no specifications (whole group)



AIM

A cooperative large-group game that encourages communication, coordination, and teamwork while having fun.

MATERIALS

Volleyball, shallow water area (beach or pool)



INSTRUCTIONS

- Have all participants form a large circle in shallow water.
- The objective: keep the volleyball in the air as long as possible without letting it touch the water.
- Encourage collaboration and communication to sustain the rally.



REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- *How did it feel to collaborate in a big group?*
- *Were you able to participate actively?*
- *Did your team develop any strategy to keep the ball up longer?*

PROBLEM SOLVING

1 Riddle Solving Path & Mission Impossible Game



Group: 4 teams of 5 participants each



AIM

A two-part problem-solving and teamwork challenge designed to enhance collaboration, decision-making under pressure, and creative thinking. The first part involves solving riddles and following clues across locations, while the second part tests teamwork and time management through a series of timed tasks in one classroom.

MATERIALS

Printed puzzles, riddles, crosswords, and sudoku, blank paper and pencils, blindfolds, prepared clue cards for pathfinding, materials for classroom challenges (jigsaw pieces, word cards, phrase sheets), small prizes for each team



INSTRUCTIONS

Part 1: Riddle Solving Path

- Divide participants into 4 teams of 5 members.
- Present the first riddle; once solved, it leads to the next clue and location.
- Include diverse challenges (riddles, crosswords, Hangman game, squats) that must be completed to advance.
- The final clue leads to the prize location.

Part 2: Mission Impossible Game

- Teams gather in separate classrooms.
- Under time pressure, they complete 5 prepared challenges:
 - Jigsaw puzzle
 - Word guessing game (1 guesser leaves, others give single-word clues)
 - What would you take to a deserted island? (team decision-making task)
 - Sudoku puzzle
 - Fill-in-the-blanks of well-known phrases
- Each classroom has a facilitator to support if needed, track time, and ensure safety.



REFLECTION QUESTIONS

After each activity, facilitate a reflection circle using energizers to keep energy levels high. Example reflection questions:

- *Which part of the activity challenged your team the most, and why?*
- *How did you manage teamwork and decision-making under time pressure?*
- *What strategies helped you solve problems efficiently?*
- *Was there a moment of chaos, and how did you overcome it?*
- *What role did you naturally take in your team? Would you choose differently next time?*
- *What skills from today can you use in real-life situations?*

LEADERSHIP

1 Sand-Castles with Challenges

Group: 4 teams of 4-5 participants each



AIM

A leadership and teamwork game where participants build a sandcastle following a blueprint, while adapting to random challenges and rotating roles. The activity develops communication, trust, adaptive thinking, and creative problem-solving under constraints.

MATERIALS

Blindfolds (1 per participant except Leader), buckets and shovels, small natural items: seashells, stones, sticks, pre-made Blueprint Cards (castle design), event/Challenge Cards (twists and surprise rules), timer



INSTRUCTIONS

- Divide the participants into 4–5 teams.
- Present the blueprint: read it aloud once to all teams. They must remember it (no visual reference afterwards).
- Each team selects one Leader, who is the only person allowed to speak and give instructions.
- The rest of the team builds the sandcastle silently, guided by the Leader.
- Introduce challenges: every few minutes, draw a Challenge Card (e.g., blindfold builders, enforce silence, add time pressure). After each new challenge:
 - Rotate the Leader within the team.
 - The team must adapt to the new condition immediately.

- Continue for several rounds, introducing new challenges and rotating roles.
- When time is up, teams present their castles and share their building process.



REFLECTION QUESTIONS

Facilitate a group reflection circle. Invite participants to observe each other's castles first, then discuss:

- *How did the Leaders communicate effectively—or not?*
- *What was it like to trust your team while blindfolded?*
- *Which challenge was the hardest for your team, and how did you respond?*
- *Which role did you feel most comfortable in? Why?*
- *How did your team handle changing roles and responsibilities?*
- *If you could do it again, what would you change in your approach?*

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