GUIDE TO PORTABLE EDUCATIONAL ESCAPE ROOMS

A ROADMAP TO CREATING ENGAGING LEARNING EXPERIENCES



UNLOCK CROSS-SECTORAL COOPERATION

AWESOME PEOPLE

PROJEKTA MALTA



UNLOCK CROSS-SECTORAL
COOPERATION

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INTRODUCTION

Designing powerful learning experiences for young people comes with both opportunities and challenges. Whether you work in a school, youth centre, NGO or municipality, creating activities that are engaging, educational and inclusive requires creativity, structure, and the right tools. Portable Educational Escape Rooms (PEERs) offer a unique way to transform learning - turning complex topics into interactive adventures that young people want to explore.

This guide was developed through the Erasmus+ collaboration between Awesome People (Sweden) and Projekta Malta (Malta) to support organisations that want to use portable educational escape rooms (PEERs) as a method for formal & non-formal education.

Awesome People is a Swedish organisation that takes a creative and immersive approach to non-formal education, using educational escape rooms to engage young people in learning. By blending interactive storytelling, hands-on problem-solving, and gamified experiences, they transform education into an engaging journey that promotes leadership, entrepreneurship, and active citizenship. Their innovative methods help young people think critically, build confidence, and actively contribute to their communities.

Projekta, a Maltese social enterprise, is dedicated to providing youth with the skills, tools and knowledge needed to drive social change. Through innovative learning experiences, capacity-building initiatives, and community-driven projects, Projekta supports young people in becoming leaders of the future. Together, these organisations bring extensive expertise in youth development, financial sustainability, and community engagement to support NGOs like yours.

No matter if you are taking your first steps or looking to improve existing escape rooms, this guide will help you think creatively, design confidently, and deliver powerful learning experiences. Let it be your roadmap to turning learning into adventure!

Our Journey with Portable Educational Escape Rooms

Awesome People's adventure with educational escape rooms began in 2018 when we joined forces with Shokkin Group Estonia in the Erasmus+ Transnational Youth Initiative Critical Escape. It was here that we first saw the incredible potential of escape rooms as an educational tool, but we also realised that they needed some major adaptations to truly fit the needs of youth work.

From Rooms to Portability
Traditional escape rooms take place in a fixed location, often lasting an hour or more. But what if an escape room could fit inside a backpack?

That was the idea behind our very first portable educational escape room (PEER), "Can You Save the Person?", which focused on diabetes awareness. Instead of being locked in a physical room, players had to solve challenges using materials from a compact kit, proving that the concept of an escape room could exist anywhere.

We also made another key modification: time. While most commercial escape rooms run for 60 minutes, we adapted the format to fit a 30-minute gameplay experience, followed by 15 minutes of guided reflection - a total of 45 minutes, aligning perfectly with the typical length of a school lesson or a structured youth activity.

Why "Portable Educational Escape Room" and Not Escape Box or Escape Challenge?
With many organizations referring to similar activities as "escape boxes" or "escape challenges," you might wonder why we still call them rooms—especially when our setups often fit inside a backpack or a single desk rather than a physical, enclosed space.

The reason?
The word "room" defines the experience, not the physical setup.

Using terms like "Escape Box" makes it sound like the entire game revolves around a single container, limiting the way people perceive the experience. A box feels static, confined-like something that sits in front of you, rather than a world you step into.

We like to use Portable Educational Escape Room (PEER) because:

- It creates the illusion of a full room - even if it's just a desk, a backpack, or a suitcase.
- The story, artifacts, and puzzles shape the space, making players feel like they are inside an immersive environment.
- The term "room" captures the experience of presence, engagement, and movement, rather than just opening a series of locks on a single box.

Players don't just "solve a box" - they step into a narrative-driven world where every object, puzzle, and interaction builds an unfolding scenario, an imagined room.
By keeping the term room, we emphasize that this is not just a collection of puzzles, it's an immersive learning space that can be set up anywhere. The room is portable, but the experience is as powerful as ever.

What This Guide Will Give You

Over the last seven years, we have:

✓ Designed and implemented over 50 PEERs on various topics.
✓ Worked with thousands of players from different backgrounds.
✓ Trained over 250 teachers, youth workers, educators, and young people on how to create their own PEERs.
✓ Developed PEERs both for and with young people, each with its own unique challenges and rewards.

And during this Erasmus+ KA2 project Unlocking Cross-Sectoral Cooperation, we trained 12 teachers and youth workers in the PEER methodology. They created their own portable educational escape rooms, which were then showcased and tested during an open community event, giving local residents the chance to experience the games first-hand. This project demonstrated how PEERs can build bridges between schools, youth organisations, and the wider community - Cross sectoral cooperation.

Now, we want to share our knowledge with you.

This guide is your practical roadmap to creating immersive, engaging, and impactful portable educational escape rooms. We will break down our strategies, lessons learned, and real-life examples so that you can create PEERs tailored to your own setting.

Let's get started!

01

The secret code of Portable Educational Escape Rooms

01 The secret code of Portable Educational Escape rooms

Escaping the passive learning experience

Imagine you're running a workshop about democracy.

But instead of giving a normal presentation, you hand the participants (now turned into players) a locked briefcase, a mysterious USB stick, and, acting a bit nervously, you explain that you are the bodyguard of a dangerous dictator who wants to end democracy as we know it. Right now, he is on his way to meet other dictators to launch an evil protocol that will destroy democratic freedoms.

Luckily, you managed to take his briefcase with his computer inside, and you slipped something into his coffee... so he will definitely be stuck in the bathroom for the next 30 minutes. BUT nothing can be traced back to you, so now it's up to the players.

Their mission?

To work together, think critically, and uncover a series of hidden clues before time runs out. If they can open the briefcase, access the computer, and use the USB stick, they can upload a new "Democracy 2.0" protocol—and stop the dictator's plan.

(Curious to learn more about our Democracy Room? You can find the full manual at www.awesomepeople.se)

Welcome to the world of portable educational escape rooms - a powerful and interactive tool that transforms learning into an adventure.



What is a portable educational escape room?

Educational Escape Room

An educational escape room is a game-based learning experience where players solve a series of puzzles within a set time limit to achieve a specific goal.

Unlike traditional escape rooms designed purely for entertainment, educational escape rooms are built with clear learning objectives in mind. They are designed to engage players in active learning, collaboration, and problem-solving while making the learning process immersive and exciting.

In short: It's learning disguised as an adventure.

A **portable** educational escape room (PEER) takes this concept even further. Unlike traditional escape rooms that stay in one fixed location, a portable escape room can be set up anywhere: a youth center, a classroom, a park, a festival, or even right on the street.

With multiple sets of rooms you can reach many people at the same time and with the shorter playing duration of 30 minutes play +15 minutes reflection you can have playing events back to back.

Key Features:

✓ **Portable & Flexible** - No permanent setup needed. Everything fits into boxes or suitcases, ready to be used anywhere.

✓ **Educational Focus -** Built around themes like sustainability, human rights, mental health, inclusion... basically any topic you want to explore.

✓ **Team-Based & Interactive** - Encourages communication, problem-solving, and teamwork.

✓ **Reflection-based Learning -** Every portable educational escape room ends with a structured reflection session.

How do portable educational escape rooms work?

Every escape room follows a structure that ensures engagement and learning:

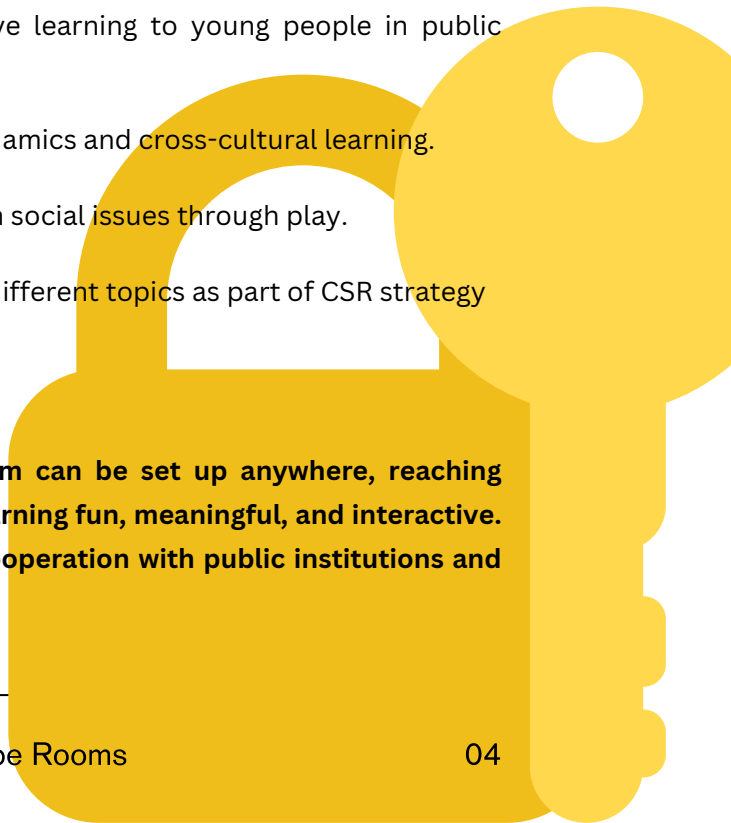
- **The Story & Mission**: Players receive a scenario that explains who they are, where they are, why they are there, and what they need to achieve.
- **The Puzzles**: A series of challenges that require critical thinking, collaboration, and creativity.
- **The Countdown**: A time limit adds urgency and excitement.
- **The Goal**: Participants must solve all puzzles to complete the mission before time runs out.

Unlike commercial escape rooms, portable educational escape rooms focus on learning, social engagement, and personal growth rather than simply escaping a room.

Where can portable educational escape rooms be used?

Because they require minimal setup, portable escape rooms can be used in a wide range of environments, including:

- **Classrooms** - Connecting escape rooms themes to school curriculum such as sustainability
- **Youth Centers & NGOs** - Exploring topics like diversity, mental health, or democracy.
- **Outdoor & Street Work** - Bringing interactive learning to young people in public spaces.
- **Camps & Exchanges** - Strengthening team dynamics and cross-cultural learning.
- **Festivals & Public Events** - Engaging visitors in social issues through play.
- **Business events** - Involving private actors in different topics as part of CSR strategy



With a little creativity, a portable escape room can be set up anywhere, reaching young people in diverse settings and making learning fun, meaningful, and interactive. It is also a great tool to foster cross sectoral cooperation with public institutions and private actors.

PRACTICAL EXAMPLE

Islamophobia room: “I am Mohammed and I am a terrorist”

- **Story:** A terror attack has struck the city, and you are part of the special forces assigned to go through various suspect files in the office to find out who the terrorist is.

- **Puzzles**: You need to solve four suspect files. Each file contains a puzzle that, when solved, gives you the number to a lock. Together, the four locks unlock the multilock to the final evidence box.

In one suspect file, you need to decipher a coded message.

In another, you must connect a QR code with excerpts from holy texts.

In a third, you need to identify different symbols and colors in an article to find the correct code.

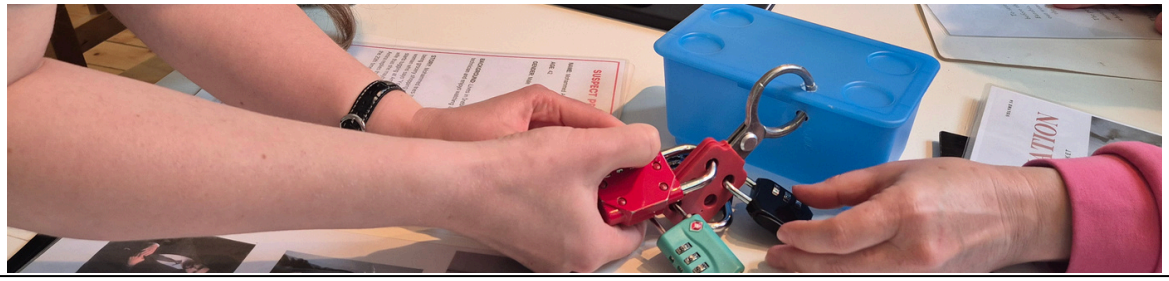
In the fourth, you must uncover a hidden clue by matching images to the artifacts in the room.

The Countdown: The room has a 30-minute time limit because you've received information that a new attack is expected at that time. You need to identify the terrorist before they strike again.

- **Goal**: Figure out who the terrorist is before the next attack occurs.

(Curious to learn more about our Islamophobia room? You can find the full manual at www.awesomepeople.se)

This room we have played in schools, at festivals & other public events, in parcs and in youth exchanges and training courses.



How are PEERs different from traditional learning activities?



Portable educational escape rooms transform learning from a passive activity into an experiential process where participants learn by doing, reflecting, and connecting the experience to real life.

Traditional	PEERs
Passive learningh	Active participation
Individual tasks	Team based challenges
Fixed structure	Interactive and immersive

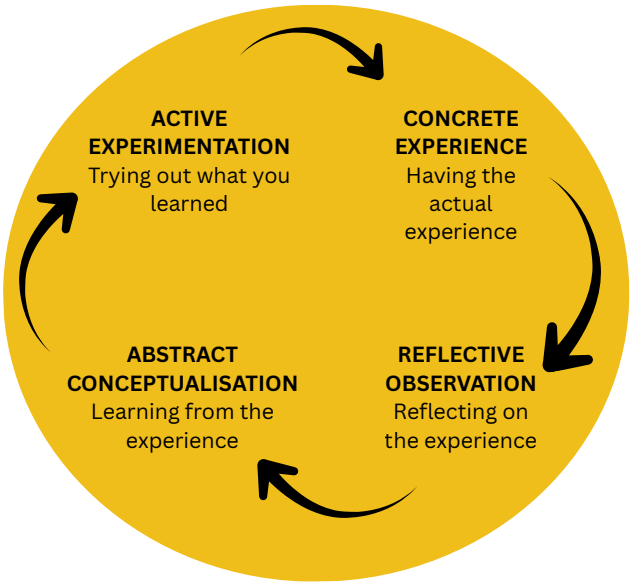
Portable educational escape rooms are highly effective because they combine:

- **Experiential Learning** - Young people learn by doing, making sessions more impactful.
- **Gamification** - Game elements like missions, challenges, and rewards boost motivation and engagement.
- **Collaboration & Social Skills** - Participants work together, enhancing teamwork, leadership, and communication.
- **Critical Thinking & Problem-Solving** - Players must analyze, strategize, and think creatively to succeed.

Studies have shown that game-based learning increases retention and motivation, particularly among young people. Portable educational escape rooms bring these benefits to formal and non-formal learning spaces, making complex topics accessible, engaging, and memorable.

Full experiential learning cycle

To understand why portable educational escape rooms are so powerful for learning, it helps to look at Kolb's Experiential Learning Cycle. We have adapted the model to show exactly how escape rooms turn action into understanding.



STEPS

Concrete Experience - The Escape Room Adventure
Players enter the story, solve puzzles, search for clues, unlock boxes, decode messages, and cooperate under time pressure.
They are fully in the experience-active, engaged, and hands-on.

01

In escape rooms:

- Solving puzzles
- Handling artefacts
- Following the story
- Making decisions as a team

This is the "doing" phase.

Reflective Observation - The Debrief & Reflection Circle
After the room, players step out of the action and look back at what happened. They discuss emotions, strategies, teamwork, confusion, surprises, and "aha!" moments.

02

In escape rooms:

- Going puzzle-by-puzzle
- Discussing what was easy, hard, confusing, or surprising
- Sharing what they felt during the game
- Observing group dynamics and communication patterns

This is where the experience begins to make sense.

Full experiential learning cycle

Abstract Conceptualisation - Connecting the Story to Real Life
Now the facilitator links the puzzles and story elements to the learning objectives: human rights, democracy, mental health, inclusion, sustainability-whatever the theme is.
Players begin to understand why the puzzles were designed the way they were.

03

In escape rooms:

- “This code represented how many people living in starvation.”
- “This artefact symbolised journalists who are murdered.”
- “This sound mirrored the feeling of anxiety.”
- “This puzzle broke down how you can save a person from low blood sugar level chock (hypoglycemia)”

This is where deeper understanding develops.

Active Experimentation - Applying What They Learned
Players are encouraged to apply their new understanding in real life:
in school, youth groups, relationships, activism, or future choices.

04

In escape rooms:

- “Next time I see discrimination, I will…”
- “If someone has hypoglycemia, I know what to do.”
- “Now I understand this topic better, I can take action.”

This phase turns learning into behaviour.

Why This Matters
Portable educational escape rooms complete the full learning cycle:

Do → Reflect → Understand → Apply

This is why they are not just games, but powerful tools for education, personal growth, and social change.

Practicing soft skills with PEERs

Portable Educational escape rooms are not just about solving puzzles; they are powerful tools that foster essential 21st-century skills. Here's how they cultivate critical thinking, cooperation, communication, and creativity.

1. Critical Thinking
Escape rooms challenge players to think beyond surface-level solutions.

- **Problem-Solving:** Players are presented with puzzles that require analysis, pattern recognition, and logical reasoning. For example, deciphering a cryptic code might involve applying mathematical concepts.
- **Decision-Making**: With limited time, players must prioritize tasks and decide the best strategy to progress.
- **Adaptability:** When one approach fails, players must quickly adapt and think of alternative methods.

2. Cooperation
Escape rooms inherently promote teamwork by requiring players to work together to achieve a common goal.

- **Team Roles:** Players naturally take on different roles, such as leader, researcher, or problem-solver, depending on their strengths.
- **Conflict Resolution**: When disagreements arise, players practice resolving them constructively to keep the team moving forward.
- **Interdependence:** The challenges often require multiple participants to contribute their skills or perspectives, reinforcing the idea that every team member is valuable.



3. Communication
If you think yelling, "I FOUND A CLUE!" is enough, think again. Escape rooms make players master the art of clear, concise communication.

- **Clarity**: Players learn to explain ideas so others understand-no more vague hand waving and mumbling, "It's...uh...like...over there."
- **Active Listening**: Listening is just as important as talking. (Looking at you, "I-know-everything" teammate.)
- **Feedback**: Whether it's, "That was genius!" or "Maybe let someone else hold the map next time," players practice giving and receiving feedback in real-time.



4. Creativity
Escape rooms don't just reward thinking outside the box—they encourage flipping the box over, checking under it, and turning it into a makeshift puzzle piece.

- **Innovative Solutions**: Some puzzles are so unconventional, they make players go, "Wait...can we do that?" (Answer: Yes. Yes, you can.)
- **Resourcefulness**: Who knew the random items in the room could be part of the solution? Suddenly, that empty coffee cup becomes a key piece of the puzzle.
- **Story Engagement**: Immersive storylines pull players in, making them feel like the heroes of their own adventure. Who doesn't want to be the protagonist for a change?

What's Next?

Portable educational escape rooms combine storytelling, hands-on puzzles, and teamwork into a learning experience that feels more like an adventure than a lesson. Because they can be set up anywhere-classrooms, youth centres, libraries, festivals, even outdoors-they remove the barriers of traditional learning spaces and meet young people where they are.

Their power lies in how they turn learners into active participants. Instead of receiving information, young people use it. Instead of listening, they explore. Instead of memorising, they collaborate, experiment, think, fail, try again, and ultimately learn by doing. This makes the experience memorable, emotionally engaging, and highly inclusive-beneficial for both confident learners and those who usually struggle in traditional classroom settings.

And beyond teaching about a specific topic, portable escape rooms strengthen essential soft skills like communication, critical thinking, creativity, and cooperation. When young people feel like protagonists in a story rather than spectators in a lesson, their motivation grows, their curiosity increases, and their learning becomes deeper and more meaningful.

Now that you understand what a portable educational escape room is-and why it works so well-you might be wondering: how do you actually create one?
Great news: that's exactly what we'll explore in the next chapter. Let's dive into the process of designing your own portable educational escape room step by step.

02

Keys to make your own Portable Educational Escape Room

02 Keys to make your own Portable Educational Escape Room

Designing a powerful portable educational escape room starts long before the first puzzle is created. It begins with understanding why the room exists and who it is for. To build an experience that truly supports learning, you first need to choose a meaningful topic and explore what your target group already knows, what misconceptions they may have, and what they want or need to learn.

Once the foundation is clear, the next step is to define concrete learning objectives that guide every design decision. These objectives then shape the story you create-because in an educational escape room, the story is not just decoration. It is the engine that connects challenges, emotions, and learning into one engaging experience.

When the story and puzzles work hand in hand, players feel immersed in the world you've created. And when the game ends, reflection ties everything together, helping participants understand what they discovered, what skills they used, and how the experience links back to real life.
This chapter will walk you through each of these essential steps-from identifying your topic to crafting meaningful reflection-so you can design escape rooms that are not only fun, but transformative.



Be sure to do this process step-by-step in the order we suggest. This will make sure that everyting align and learning & transformation will stay at the heart of the experience!



Identifying your topic

The first step in creating a meaningful portable educational escape room is choosing the right topic. A strong topic should be relevant, engaging, and connected to the real needs and interests of your target group. Instead of guessing what young people care about, involve them in the process. When the topic grows from their experiences, challenges, and questions, the whole escape room becomes more powerful and authentic.

1. Use Participatory Methods (e.g., World Café)
A simple and effective way to identify a topic is through a World Café session. This method helps you collect insights from many voices at once and turn them into clear learning themes.

How it works:

- Set up different tables, each with a large sheet of paper (flipchart) representing a theme such as School & Work, Society, Friends/Family/Health/Economy, Planet & Environment, and Local Community.
- Participants rotate between tables in small groups.
- At each table, they write ideas on post-it notes: issues they find important, challenges they see, questions they have, or topics they feel young people need to learn more about.
- After rotating through all tables, you look for patterns: Which topics repeat? What concerns stand out? What sparks excitement, frustration, or curiosity?

This method works especially well when young people are your target group-because then young people themselves define what matters.

2. Explore Current Realities and Trends

If you cannot do a live workshop, you can still identify relevant topics by reviewing youth reports, local community challenges, school feedback, or discussions on social media. Look for themes such as:

- Mental health and stress
- Online behaviour and digital safety
- Sustainability and climate anxiety
- Diversity, discrimination, and inclusion
- Career readiness and life skills
- These trends can help you select a topic that resonates deeply with the target audience.

3. Use Problem-Tree or "What's the real problem?" Mapping

Start with a broad idea (e.g., stress among young people) and map:

- Roots: Why does this happen? What are the causes?
- Branches: What consequences does it have and will have if we will not do anything about it?
- Fruits: What would positive change look like?
- This helps narrow down the focus into something concrete and teachable.

4. Ask Guiding Questions

Sometimes identifying a topic is as simple as asking the right questions:

- What are young people in our group struggling with right now?
- What knowledge or skills would make their life easier?
- What issues do they talk about, argue about, or feel strongly about?
- What are the misconceptions or stereotypes we want to challenge?

5. Look at Your Organization's Mission or Educational Goals

Choose a topic that aligns with your wider purpose-whether that is promoting inclusion, developing life skills, increasing sustainability awareness, or strengthening community engagement. If you will do it in cooperation with schools, what are the different topics in the curriculum? If you will do it in cooperation with a business, what topics are important for that business?

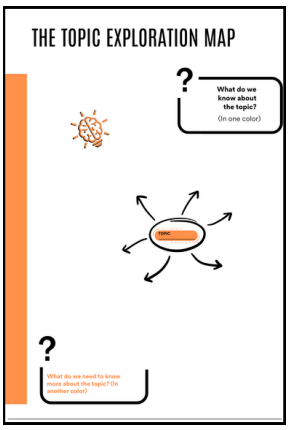
YOU should also be motivated to create an educational escape room about the topic you choose.

Start by asking yourself:



- What excites you about this topic? Passion is contagious-if you care about the subject, your players are more likely to care too.

For example, if the topic is climate change, you might say, "I want students to understand the impact of their choices on the environment and feel empowered to take action."



Topic Exploration Map

Once you have a potential topic, the next step is to explore what you already know about it-and what you need to know more about. The Topic Exploration Map is a simple mind-mapping activity that helps you visualize your current knowledge, identify gaps, and highlight areas that could become learning objectives in the escape room.

How to Do It

- **Write the topic in the centre**: Have a large sheet of paper (see the template on next page). Write the chosen topic in the middle and draw a circle around it.
- **Map what you already know (Colour 1)**: Using one colour of pen or marker, you write down everything you feel you know well about the topic.
- These can be facts, experiences, examples, vocabulary, events, or anything you feel confident about.
- Draw lines from the centre to create a mind map.

Example:
If the topic is Climate Change, you might write “greenhouse gases,” “global warming,” “renewable energy.”

- **Map what you recognise but don’t understand deeply (Colour 2):** Using a second colour, you add words or ideas you have heard about or know are related to the topic, but you don’t really understand.
- These are areas where your knowledge is unclear, incomplete, or superficial.

Example:
“Carbon footprint,” “climate justice,” “biodiversity loss.”

- **Look for patterns** After filling the map, step back and look at the whole picture:

Where do you have strong knowledge?
Where are the biggest knowledge gaps?
Which unclear areas feel important or interesting to explore?

- **Use the insights** The map becomes a tool for shaping your escape room:

Things you already know → can be used to build puzzles
Things you don’t understand → become potential learning objectives.

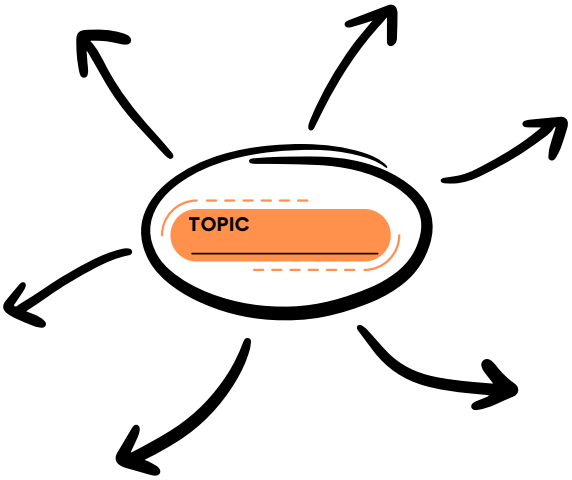
The Topic Exploration Map helps you understand your group’s baseline knowledge and shows them that learning starts from what they already know. It also ensures that your escape room connects to real needs instead of assumptions.

THE TOPIC EXPLORATION MAP

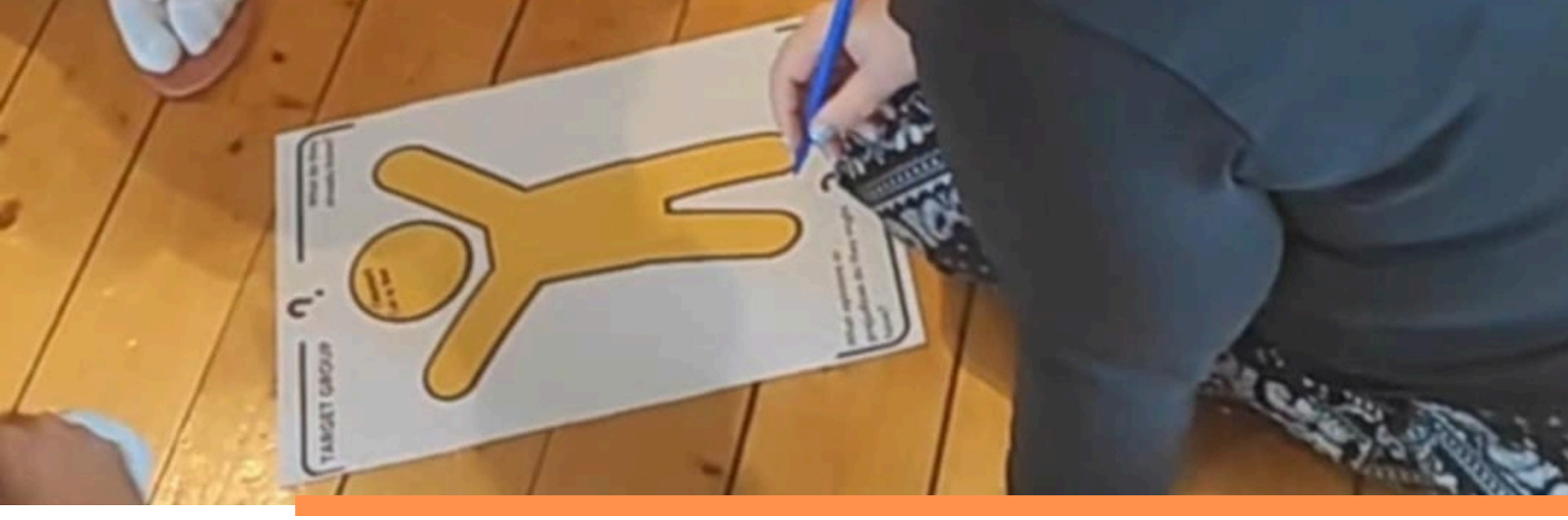
What do we know about the topic?

(In one color)





What do we need to know more about the topic? (In another color)



2. Clarifying your target group

Before you can design a meaningful educational escape room, you need to know who you are designing it for. Understanding your target group is one of the most important steps in the whole creation process. A well-designed escape room is never "one-size-fits-all"-it speaks directly to the experiences, knowledge, and needs of the players who will interact with it.

Different groups bring different levels of knowledge, different motivations, and sometimes even different prejudices or misconceptions. An 8th-grade class, for example, might need simple explanations and more guidance, while university students could be ready for deeper analysis and complex puzzles. A group of LGBTQI+ activists creating an escape room about transphobia may take some knowledge and concepts for granted if not looking at the topic from the view of their target group.

To truly understand your players, it's useful to explore their thoughts and perspectives before you start designing. Here are several methods you can use to gather insights:

- **Focus Group Interviews:** Gather a small group of young people and ask open questions about the topic. What do they know? What confuses them? What interests them?

- **Surveys or Questionnaires:** A quick way to reach many people. Surveys help identify general trends, knowledge levels, and attitudes.

- **Snowball Interviews:** Start by interviewing one or two people, then ask them to recommend others. This method often reaches individuals you might not otherwise think of.

- **Existing Research and Trends:** Look at youth surveys, reports, news articles, TikTok trends, or academic studies related to your topic. This can help you understand how young people currently talk about and experience the issue.

By gathering this information, you form a clearer picture of the people you want to reach. This knowledge will guide your choices when creating puzzles, building storylines, and designing learning outcomes.



Target group persona

A great tool to get concrete with your target group is the Target Group Persona Exercise. This activity helps you picture a "typical player" and think about their knowledge, needs, and possible challenges related to your topic.

Have a paper with a large outline of a person in the center (see the template on the next page). This represents your persona - a fictional but realistic character that symbolises your target audience.

You should describe this person inside the outline (age, background, interests, school situation, hobbies, personality, etc.) and then answer the guiding questions around the figure:

- **What do they already know about the topic?**

Encourage the group you work with to think about what knowledge or experiences the target audience already has. This helps avoid creating puzzles that are too easy or too difficult.

- **What opinions or prejudices might they have about the topic?**

Every young person brings beliefs and attitudes, sometimes positive, sometimes based on stereotypes. Identifying these helps you design puzzles and stories that challenge harmful assumptions and open up new perspectives.

- **What do they desire and need to learn about the topic?**

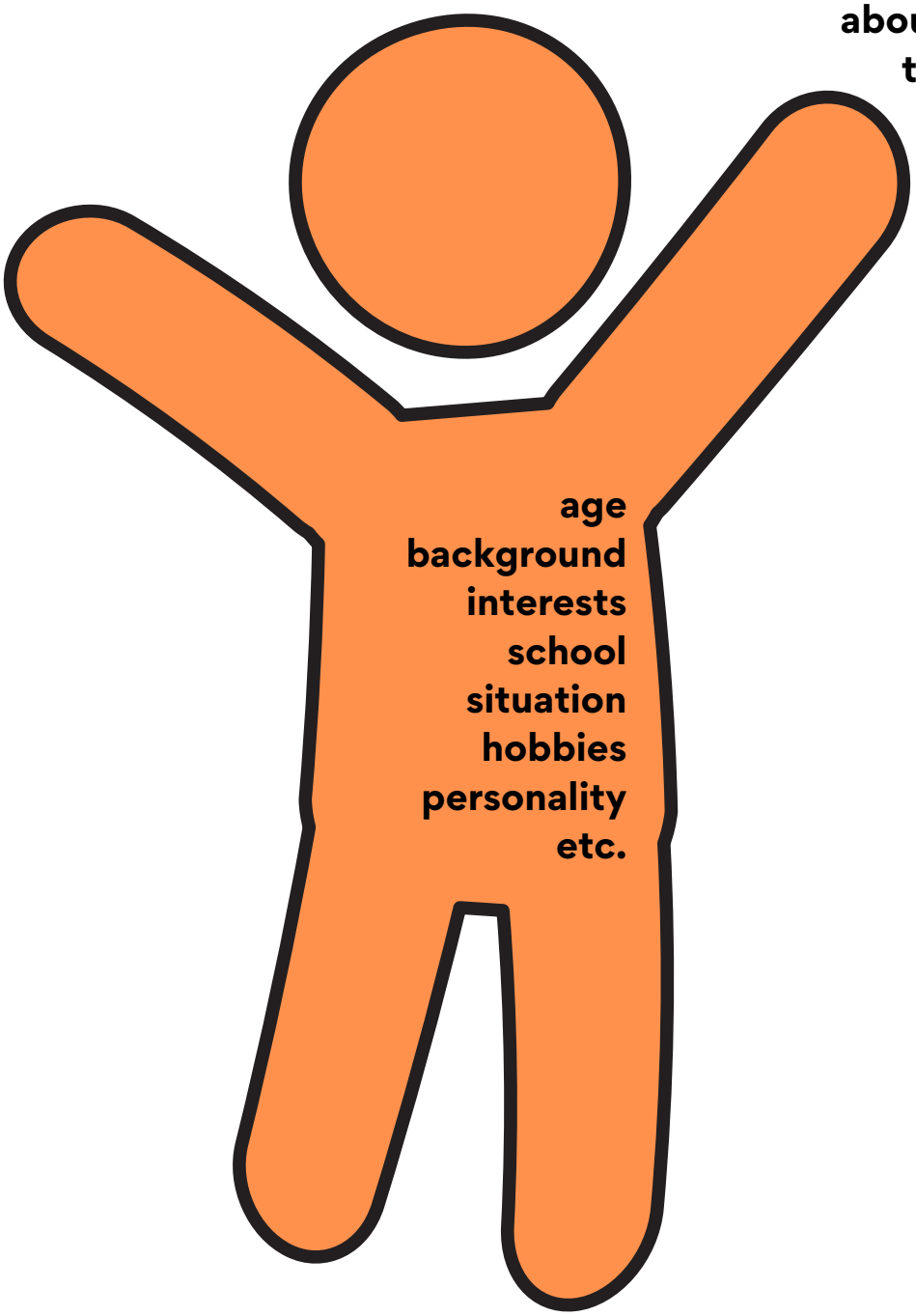
This question connects your escape room to real learning goals. What knowledge, skills, or reflections should the participant walk away with after playing?

By completing the persona, you get a much clearer picture of the target audience. This makes it easier to create an escape room that feels meaningful, relatable, and engaging for the young people who will experience it.

TARGET GROUP PERSONA

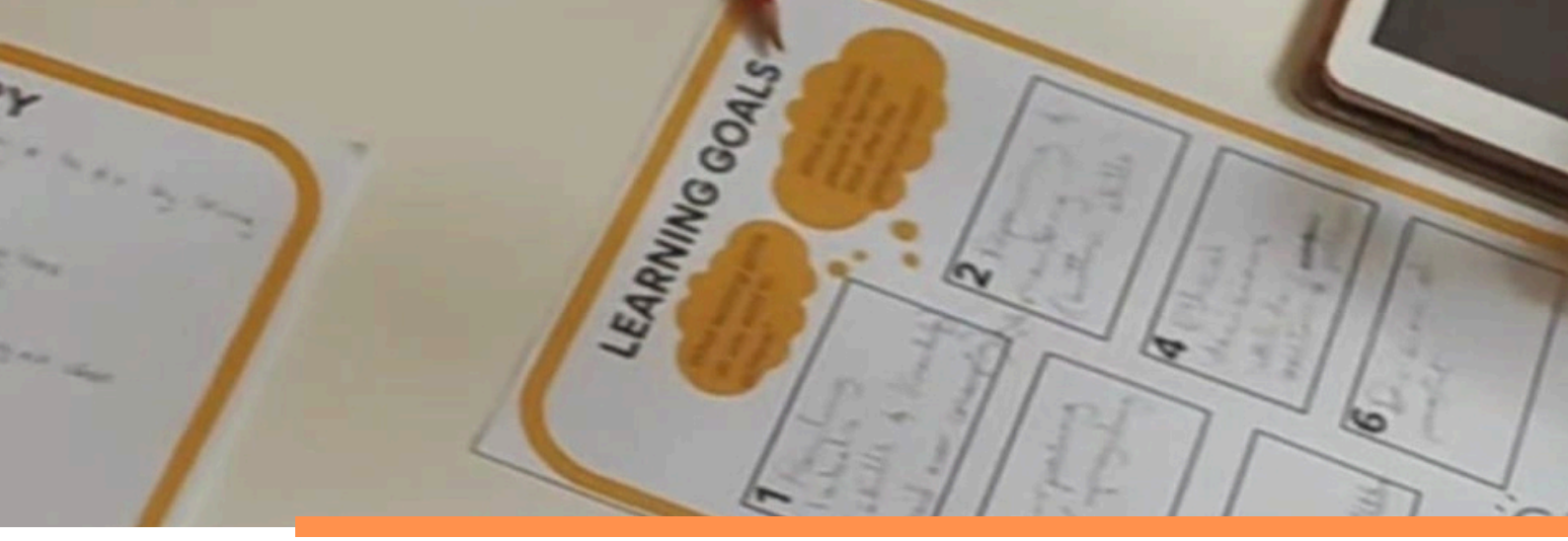
TARGET GROUP

What do they already know about the topic?



What opinions or prejudices do they might have about the topic?

What do they desire & need to learn about the topic?



Define your learning objectives

Once you have identified your topic and explored your target group the next step is to define clear learning objectives for your educational escape room. These objectives guide the design of your puzzles, your storyline, and the overall experience you want participants to have.

Why Set Learning Goals First?
Starting with puzzles might seem tempting ("This cipher looks cool, let's use it!"), but without clear goals, you'll end up with a fun activity that misses the educational mark.

- **Purpose-Driven Design:** Learning goals ensure that every clue and challenge serves a purpose beyond entertainment.
- **Focus**: They help you avoid overloading players with unnecessary complexity (or worse, boring them with irrelevant tasks).
- **Assessment**: Clear goals make it easier to evaluate whether the escape room achieved its intended outcomes.

How to set learning goals?
For a 30-minute escape room, it is ideal to include 4–6 learning objectives. This matches well with the typical number of puzzles you can fit into the gameplay. Some objectives can be linked directly to specific puzzles, while others can be more general goals that participants take away from the whole experience—such as increased awareness, changed attitudes, or deeper understanding.

To make your objectives meaningful and balanced, it is helpful to divide them into three categories: **Knowledge**, **Attitude/Behavior, Skills**. The easiest category to include in a PEER is knowledge and the hardest is skills but challenge yourself and try to include as many categories you can in your learning objectives that you find relevant.

1. Knowledge
What new information or facts should participants learn?
Examples: key concepts, important definitions, historical events, rights, processes, or real-life examples connected to your topic.

2. Attitude / Behaviour
What perspectives, values, or attitudes do you want to influence?
Examples: reducing prejudices, encouraging empathy, challenging stereotypes, or motivating people to take positive action.

3. Skills
What abilities should participants practice or develop?
Examples: communication, problem analysis, teamwork, recognizing harmful behaviour, or knowing how to support someone in a real situation.

Where to Find Your Learning Objectives
Your Topic Exploration Map and Target Group Persona are your best tools here. They show:

- What your target group already knows,
- What misconceptions or prejudices they might hold,
- What they need or want to learn,
- And what knowledge gaps exist.

Use these insights to shape learning objectives that are relevant, realistic, and impactful for the specific young people who will play your escape room.

The Key Question
Throughout the process, always come back to the central question:

"What do you want people to feel and think after they have played your room?"

Your learning objectives are the bridge between your topic and the emotional, cognitive, and behavioural impact you want to create.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

What learning goals do you want to achieve?

What do you want people to feel and think after they played your room?

1

2

3

4

5

6



Knowledge



Skills



Attitude/Behavior

PRACTICAL EXAMPLE



Islamophobia room: “I am Mohammed and I am a terrorist”

Learning objectives:

Knowledge

1. Understand the different forms of discrimination that Muslims face in everyday life, such as name-calling, harassment of Muslim women wearing hijab, and unequal treatment in the labour market.
2. Recognise that terrorism is not representative of Islam, and that the majority of victims of global terror attacks are Muslims themselves.
3. Know that religious texts-across all religions can be interpreted in many ways and may be used to spread both love and hate depending on the person’s intentions.

Attitude / Behaviour

4. Develop a more positive and informed view of Muslims and decrease Islamophobic attitudes.
5. Become more critical towards biased or sensationalised media coverage of Muslims.

Skills

6. Analyse information critically, especially when encountering simplified or fear-based narratives about religious groups.

What do we want people to feel and think after they have played the room?

After completing the room, participants should feel more aware, more empathetic, and more critical in their thinking. They should walk away understanding that Islamophobia is built on stereotypes rather than facts, recognising the real human impact of discrimination, and feeling confident that they can question biased narratives when they see them. Most importantly, they should leave with the belief that every person deserves respect and fair treatment, regardless of religion.

Doing your research



Once you have explored your topic, identified your target group and defined your learning objectives the next step is research. This phase is essential for creating an educational escape room that is accurate, meaningful, and responsible. The research phase begins here but you work with it throughout the creation of your PEER and especially when finalizing the reflection.

Start by collecting information based on what came up in your Topic Exploration Map, your Target Group Persona Exercise and your Learning objectives. What facts do you need? What misunderstandings or prejudices do you want to challenge? What stories or examples could support your learning objectives?

To stay organised, we recommend creating one research document where you save all useful information — links, books, articles, videos, reports, and your own notes. This makes it much easier later when you need to:



✓ design puzzles connected to real facts
✓ choose stories, examples or quotes
✓ write the reflection questions
✓ double-check the accuracy of your content

The length of this phase depends on the topic. Some themes are straightforward and have plenty of reliable information available. Others require much deeper work.

EXAMPLE

- When we created an educational escape room about the tobacco industry, we received a collection of high-quality sources from a university researcher. With that support, we were able to draft the full room in just two hours.

- When developing our room on Islamophobia, the process was very different. Because the topic is sensitive and complex, we spent several months reading books, articles, and research to ensure a balanced and responsible approach.

There is no “right” amount of time - what matters is that your research gives you a solid foundation for storytelling, puzzle-building, and meaningful learning.

RESEARCH CHECKLIST (1/2)

1. Basic Information
Topic:
Date started:
Team members responsible for research:

2. Key Questions (Based on Topic Exploration & Persona)
List the most important questions your research needs to answer. Examples:

- What facts are essential for understanding the topic?
- What myths or prejudices do we need to check or challenge?
- What knowledge does our target group already have — and what do they need to learn?

3. Reliable Sources List
Create a table or bullet list with:

- Links to articles, websites, videos, reports
- Books + page numbers
- Expert names or organisations
- Notes on why the source is trustworthy

Example format:

- World Health Organization - Tobacco Industry Influence **(URL)** - Explains health impact and marketing strategies.
- Academic article by X University (**PDF**) - Provides statistics that can be used for puzzle code.

4. Key Facts to Use in the Escape Room
Write down the most important facts you might want to:

- turn into puzzles
- hide in clues
- use in storylines
- include in the reflection

Try to keep this section clear and short - think “puzzle-friendly facts”.

Example:

- There is a phone help line in Sweden you can call if you want to quit smoking
- 9 out of 10 media reports about Islam or muslims are negative

5. Possible Puzzle Connections
As you learn more, note down ideas for how facts could be transformed into puzzles and gameplay elements.

Example:

- Fact: “There are four main reasons why you should not smoke”
- → Puzzle idea: Final puzzle you need identify the four reasons that have been mentioned in the game by choosing the right four images representing these four reasons.
- Fact: “Islamophobia only mention the bad things about Islam and the Koran”
- → Puzzle idea: Both positive and negative quotes from different religious texts.

This list will be extremely helpful in the design phase.

RESEARCH CHECKLIST (2/2)

6. Sensitive Content Notes
If your topic touches on identity, discrimination, trauma, or personal experiences, use this space to reflect on:

- What must be handled carefully?
- What should NOT be turned into a puzzle?
- How can the room stay respectful toward the target group?

7. Reflection Material
Collect quotes, questions, examples, or stories that could be used later for the reflection part of your escape room.

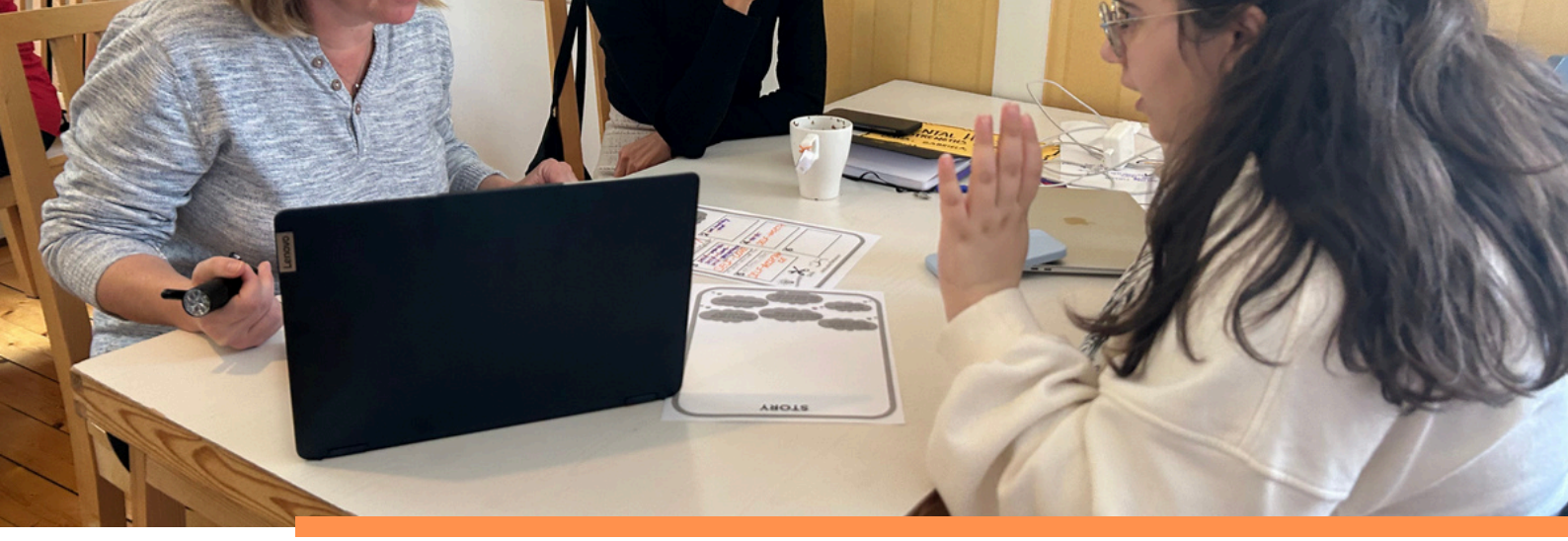
Example:

- Quote: “One child, one teacher, one book, and one pen can change the world” - Malala Yousafzai
- Possible debrief questions: “Where do our assumptions come from?” “What surprised you today?”

8. Summary of What We Still Need
List what information is missing and who is responsible for finding it.

Example:

- Need updated statistics for learning objective 2 – Person A
- Need expert interview quote – Person B
- Need a youth-friendly explanation of term X - Person C



The importance of Story in PEERs

A great escape room isn't just a collection of random locks and riddles; it's a fully immersive adventure. At the heart of every memorable escape room is a compelling story. The narrative gives players context, purpose, and a reason to care. Without it, your escape room is just...a room.

Start With the Pre-Story: Setting the Stage
Before the game begins, the game master becomes the storyteller, painting the picture of the world the players are about to enter. This introduction is crucial—it's like the opening scene of a movie, setting the tone and stakes.

Why Stories Matter: Immersion and Engagement
A well-crafted story is the secret ingredient that makes escape rooms unforgettable. Here's why:

- **Immersion**: Stories transport players into another world. When the puzzles and environment connect seamlessly to the narrative, players forget they're in a classroom or meeting room. They're there.

- **Engagement**: A good story motivates players to keep going. They aren't just solving puzzles for the sake of it, they're unlocking doors, deciphering clues, and chasing answers to uncover what happens next.

Environmental Storytelling: The Room as a Narrative Canvas
Every detail in the room should connect to the story. This is called environmental storytelling, and it's what makes the escape room feel alive.

- A forgotten backpack belonging to an active teenager tells a different story than a desk belonging to a CEO.

- Even the puzzles should fit the narrative. For example, a computer makes sense in a contemporary story where you need to install a new protocol through a USB but not in an old dungeon looking for a secret book about financial literacy.

In-Game Storytelling: Let the Story Unravel
The story doesn't stop when the game begins-it deepens. In-game storytelling keeps players engaged by revealing pieces of the narrative as they progress.

- Perhaps a diary entry reveals a clue about a teenager's mental health issues.
- Or a locked drawer contains a letter explaining how a queer person feels about their family's rejection.

This gradual storytelling builds suspense and keeps players hooked until the final moment.

The Story Defines the Theme and Setting
Your story isn't just background, it determines the entire experience:

- Theme: Whether it's a pirate's treasure hunt, a futuristic space station, or a historical escape, the story sets the mood.
- Setting: The narrative influences the design of the room, from props to sound effects.

A great story is the glue that holds an escape room together. It gives meaning to the puzzles, life to the setting, and purpose to the players. So, before you build your room, build your world, and invite your players to step inside it.

Craft your pre-story



Before you start writing the full narrative of your escape room, you need a strong pre-story -the short introduction that sets the scene, hooks the players, and explains why they are stepping into this adventure. A good pre-story makes the experience feel meaningful rather than random, and it helps players immediately understand their role, the stakes, and the world they are entering.

To create an effective pre-story, you must answer the following questions. These elements form the backbone of your introduction and give your game clarity, atmosphere, and purpose:

1. Where It's Taking Place and Why
Is this an abandoned laboratory? A castle under siege? A secret agent's hideout? The setting not only creates atmosphere but also hints at the puzzles to come.

2. Who Are the Players?
Are they time travelers? Treasure hunters? Journalists chasing a lead? Giving players roles helps them connect to the story and feel like active participants.

3. Why the Player's Characters Are There
Every adventure needs a reason. Maybe they're investigating a mystery, stopping a catastrophe, or rescuing someone. The "why" provides the stakes and urgency.

4. Who Is the Game Master?
If the game master has a role in the story, explain it! Are they a guide, an ally, or even the villain? This adds an extra layer of immersion.

5.What Is the Goal for the Players?
Players need a clear objective: solve the mystery, escape the room, find the artifact. A focused goal gives the game structure and momentum.

6.How Much Time Do They Have and Why?
The ticking clock, it is about context. Maybe the bomb will explode in 30 minutes, or the villain will return at any moment. Whatever the reason, it makes the time limit feel logical and urgent.

PRE-STORY/INTRODUCTION

What is the goal for the players and how can they achieve it?

Who is the game master? (If they have a role)

Where is it taking place and why?

Who are the players?

How much time do they have and why?

Theme and setting?

PRACTICAL EXAMPLE



Tobacco room: “The Office”

Prestory

You work for a newly formed government agency, which investigates the work ethics and processes of tobacco companies. You got an appointment with the biggest tobacco company and now sitting in the CEO's office. The CEO went out for a 30-minute coffee break, which gives you enough time to look through his office desk. Your objective is to find the secret documents the company's leader is trying to hide from your investigation. You have to report back to the agency with the information of the 4 biggest reasons the company should be shut down immediately.

Environmental storytelling

The room setup resembles a corporate CEO’s office, centred around a large desk. On the desk, players immediately notice an envelope stamped “TOP SECRET”, hinting at confidential and possibly illegal activities. Several drawers in the desk are locked, each containing classified folders that must be uncovered by solving puzzles. The final puzzle reveals a locked briefcase secured with a number code, inside lies the most critical evidence the CEO is trying to hide.

In-game storytelling

As players explore the classified folders, they discover a QR code that leads to a video of a child working on a tobacco farm. In the video, the child describes the harsh labour conditions and how tobacco cultivation harms their health. This emotional testimony strengthens the narrative, deepens the learning impact, and provides crucial evidence needed for the players’ final report against the company.



Deciding on the puzzles

If the story is the soul of an escape room, the puzzles are its heartbeat. They challenge, engage, and guide players through the narrative. But designing great puzzles requires balance, they should be tricky enough to intrigue, but not so tough they lead to frustration. Here's how to get it right:

Provide a Clear Starting Puzzle
The first puzzle is your players' entry point into the experience. Make it clear and straightforward, like an open invitation to the adventure.

- Use visual or physical cues, such as a prominently placed locked box or a highlighted clue.

- Avoid overwhelming players with too many options at the start; give them a single clear task to focus on.

Example: A riddle is written in big on the suitcase "All the stars shines over the EU countries". Players immediately know they need to look solely at the unlocked things, the travel badges with the European Flag and the map of the European countries.

Go From Easy to Hard Puzzles
Think of your puzzles as a staircase. Each step (or puzzle) builds confidence while gradually increasing in difficulty.

- Start with simpler puzzles to draw players in and give them a sense of achievement.

- Gradually add complexity, requiring more connections and teamwork.

This progression keeps players engaged without overwhelming them.

Not Too Easy, Not Too Difficult
Finding the "Just right" (or lagom in Swedish) of puzzle difficulty is key.

- Too easy: Players lose interest and breeze through the room.

- Too hard: Players get stuck and frustrated, breaking the immersion.

Test, test, test! Run your puzzles with different groups to ensure they hit the right balance.

No Requirement for Specific Knowledge
Unless your room is designed to assess prior knowledge (e.g., for a specific course), puzzles should be solvable using logic, observation, and creativity, not niche trivia.

- Provide all the information players need within the room itself.
- Avoid puzzles that rely on cultural or contextual knowledge not everyone might have.

Example: A riddle requiring knowledge of ancient Greek mythology might stymie players unfamiliar with it. Instead, include hints or references within the room.

One Solution Per Puzzle
To avoid confusion and ensure flow, each puzzle should have only one clear solution. Ambiguous answers can derail players and lead to unnecessary frustration.

Different Kinds of Puzzles
Variety is the spice of escape rooms! Include a mix of:

- Visual puzzles: Matching patterns, spotting differences.
- Logical puzzles: Decoding ciphers, solving equations.
- Physical puzzles: Arranging objects, opening locks.
- Interactive puzzles: Requiring teamwork or simultaneous actions.

This ensures every player has a chance to shine, catering to different strengths and learning styles.

One Object Plays Once
A good rule of thumb: if an object has been used to solve a puzzle, it shouldn't be reused elsewhere.

- This prevents confusion and keeps players moving forward without second-guessing prior solutions.

Simple Language
If puzzles involve written instructions, keep the language clear and concise.

- Avoid overly complex wording or jargon that could confuse players.
- Use visual aids or symbols to clarify meaning when possible.

Correlation Between Puzzles and Story
Every puzzle should feel like a natural part of the narrative.

- Avoid puzzles that feel disconnected or out of place ("Why is there a computer in a cave-themed room?").
- Each task should move the story forward or reveal new layers of the narrative.

Example: In a detective-themed room, solving a puzzle might reveal a suspect's alibi, pushing players closer to solving the case.

4-6 Puzzles for a 30-Minute Room
For a 30-minute escape room, aim for 4-6 puzzles. This keeps the pace brisk and ensures players don't run out of time or get stuck in a bottleneck.

Puzzle Structures: Linear, Open, or Mixed
When designing your puzzle flow, it's important to decide how players will progress through the room. A linear structure means each puzzle unlocks the next one in a clear sequence, ideal for learning-focused escape rooms because it helps guide players and ensures they reach all learning objectives in the intended order.

An open structure allows several puzzles to be solved in parallel, often feeding into a multilock or final meta-puzzle; this gives players more freedom and can create a dynamic atmosphere but requires careful design to maintain clarity.

A mixed structure combines both approaches, for example, starting with a linear introduction, opening into several parallel puzzles, and finishing with a linear finale.

While linear is usually the easiest and most effective for educational rooms, open or mixed formats can be beneficial when you want to encourage autonomy, teamwork, or exploration.

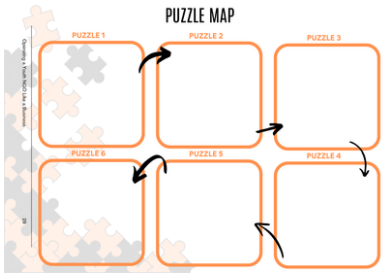
Well-designed puzzles are the lifeblood of your escape room, drawing players into the story and keeping them engaged from start to finish. With these tips, you'll create a room that's challenging, fun, and unforgettable.



Bonus Tips for Puzzle Success

- Playtest Thoroughly: Gather feedback from multiple groups to fine-tune difficulty and flow.
- Include Fail-Safes: Have hints or a clue system ready in case players get stuck.
- Design for Collaboration: Create puzzles that require teamwork, such as holding multiple clues or solving parts simultaneously.

Create your puzzle map



Your Puzzle Map is your blueprint. It helps you see how every puzzle fits together, how the story flows, and what materials you'll need to bring your escape room to life. Use this sheet to clearly outline each puzzle and how it contributes to the overall experience.
Follow these steps for every puzzle you include:

1. Name Your Puzzle
Give each puzzle a short, descriptive name (e.g., Clock Cipher, Hidden Symbols, Farmers' Testimony Puzzle).
This makes it easy to reference and discuss during the design process.

2. Describe How the Puzzle Works
Write a clear explanation of the mechanics:
- What do players see when they encounter the puzzle?
- What action do they need to take?
- What clues guide them toward the solution?

Keep the description simple but detailed enough that someone else could understand the puzzle without seeing it.

3. Identify the Solution
Write the exact solution players must find:
- If it's a code, write the full code (e.g., 3742).
- If it's a word, write the word (e.g., TRUST).
- If it's a physical action, describe it (e.g., Place all three coins into the wooden box).

This helps you ensure that the solution is unambiguous and that the puzzle has only one intended answer.

4. List the Materials Needed
Write down every item required to run the puzzle:
- Printed clues
- Locks and codes
- Props
- Boxes, envelopes, artifacts
- Digital elements like QR codes or videos

This becomes your packing list when creating a portable escape room.

5. Explain How This Puzzle Supports the Learning Objectives and the Story
In 1–2 sentences, describe how this puzzle connects directly to one or more of your learning objectives and how it fits into the overall narrative.
Ask yourself:

- Which learning objective does this puzzle help players understand, practice, or reflect on?
- How does the puzzle reinforce the message or theme of the story?
- Does the action players take in this puzzle meaningfully contribute to the educational goal?

This step ensures that every puzzle has a clear pedagogical purpose and that your escape room stays aligned with the learning outcomes you defined earlier.
Remember: Don't adjust your learning objectives to fit the puzzles, design your puzzles to serve the learning objectives.

6. Show How This Puzzle Leads to the Next One (For Linear Rooms)
If your escape room follows a linear path:

- Describe what this puzzle unlocks or reveals.
- Explain what players will naturally do next.
- Make sure the transition is logical and intuitive.

Example:
"Solving the symbol puzzle reveals a key that opens the red box, which contains the map for Puzzle 3."
If your room is non-linear, note that players can complete this puzzle in any order.

7. Note Any Special Instructions
Use this space to add anything important, such as:

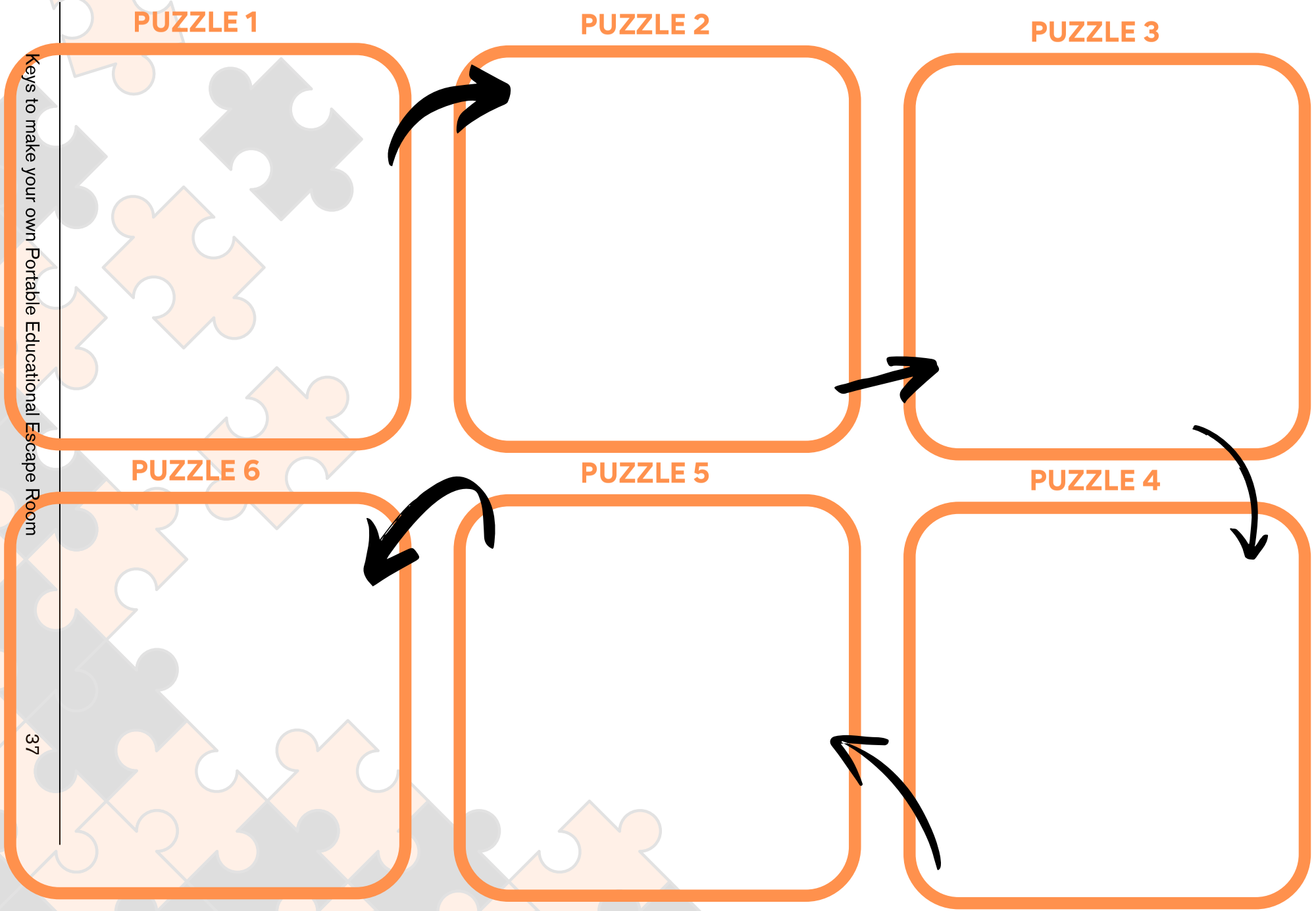
- Reset instructions
- Safety notes
- What can go wrong during facilitation
- Whether the puzzle requires teamwork or timing

Why This Exercise Matters
Your Puzzle Map helps you ensure:

- No puzzle is too confusing or disconnected
- All materials are prepared
- The room maintains a strong narrative flow and is connected to its learning objectives
- The difficulty curve makes sense
- The game master can easily set up, reset, and run the room

A clear Puzzle Map is the foundation of a smooth, professional, and impactful escape room experience.

PUZZLE MAP



PRACTICAL EXAMPLE



SDG 4 Quality Education room: “The lost letter”

Puzzle 1 - The Article & Magnifying Glass

Players find an article about SDG 4 with certain red letters in bold. they read out the hint “It is important to see the small things on the top of the article,” which leads them to a small printed text containing a 3-digit code which they can see when using the magnifying glass.

Solution: **774**

Symbolic meaning: 774 million adults lack basic literacy

Learning connection: Understand global literacy challenges

Materials:

Printed article, magnifying glass, 3-digit lock for the calendar.

Connection to learning objectives & story:

This puzzle introduces the topic of quality education directly through the article. It links to the learning objective understanding why education matters and who lacks access to it. It also aligns with the story: the players are searching the mum’s desk, so finding an article she is reading makes narrative sense.

How it leads to the next puzzle (linear):

The solution opens the calendar, the next item on the desk.

PRACTICAL EXAMPLE



SDG 4 Quality Education room: “The lost letter”

Puzzle 2 - The Calendar & QR Video

How the puzzle works:

Inside the calendar, players find photos and short texts describing barriers that prevent girls from attending school. On the final page, a picture of a child and a QR code leads to a video about two girls born on the same day but living very different realities due to the fact that one go to school and one doesn’t. The video hints at which numbers in the calendar captions to add together to obtain the code.

Solution: 260

Symbolic meaning: 260 million children/young people out of school and most of them are girls

Learning connection: Understand barriers to education, especially for girls

Materials:

Calendar with printed images & captions, QR code linked to film, tablet/phone, 3-digit lock for the book.

Connection to learning objectives & story:

This puzzle directly addresses the learning objectives about factors preventing girls from accessing education and the global scale of the issue (260 million children out of school). It expands on the narrative theme: the mother is a teacher invested in global education issues, and her calendar visually represents the systemic barriers she works with.

How it leads to the next puzzle:

The code 260 opens the locked book.

PRACTICAL EXAMPLE

SDG 4 Quality Education room: “The lost letter”

Puzzle 3 - The Book & Greek Cipher

Inside the locked book, players find a text written fully in Greek along with a cipher key. At first, the text appears as unreadable symbols—mirroring the experience of people who cannot read and for whom letters have no meaning. Using the cipher key, players decode the highlighted red sentence, which reveals the message from Malala Yousafzai’s UN speech:

“One child, one teacher, one book and one pen can change the world.”

The underlined words correspond to words that reveal numbers on the desk lamp, forming the code.

Solution: 1842

Symbolic meaning: Year Sweden introduced public school for all genders

*Learning connection:*Link education to equality & historical progress

Materials:

Book with Greek text, cipher key, printed sheet with the encoded sentence, lamp revealing hidden numbers, 4-digit lock for the thermos.

Connection to learning objectives & story:

This puzzle supports the learning objective of helping players empathize with what it feels like to lack basic literacy, experiencing firsthand how text can become meaningless symbols without the ability to read. The sentence is from Malalas UN Speech. This puzzle fits naturally into the story, as the mother (a teacher) keeps inspirational material connected to global education.

How it leads to the next puzzle:

The decoded numbers form the code that opens the thermos, guiding players to the next step.

PRACTICAL EXAMPLE



SDG 4 Quality Education room: "The lost letter"

Puzzle 4 - Thermos, Hot Water & Symbol Cup

When players pour hot water from the thermos into the cup, symbols appear. These must be matched with symbol–number pairs on the coaster to form a 4-digit code.

Solution: 1050

Symbolic meaning: Education boosts income by 10% & reduces conflict risk by 50%

*Learning connection***:** Understand why education matters for society

Materials:

Thermos with hot water, heat-sensitive cup, coaster with symbol–number key, 4-digit lock for the pencil case.

Connection to learning objectives & story:

The symbols represent why quality education is crucial: gender equality, better health, economic growth, climate action. This reinforces multiple learning objectives by linking education to broader societal benefits. It also supports the story: the cup reading "World's Best Teacher" ties back to the mother's role.

How it leads to the next puzzle:

Code 1050 opens the pencil case.

PRACTICAL EXAMPLE

SDG 4 Quality Education room: "The lost letter"

Puzzle 5 - Pencil Case, Action Cards & QR Sounds

Inside the pencil case, players find pictures representing actions young people can take to support SDG 4. A pen hides a paper strip with three QR codes. When scanned, each QR plays a distinct sound (likes, donation, writing). Players match each sound to the correct picture and take the numbers on the back in sequence.

Solution: 157

Symbolic meaning: From 100 to 57 million out-of-school children (progress)

Learning connection: Learn how individuals can support SDG 4

Materials:

Pencil case, action picture cards, pen with hidden strip and QR codes, 3-digit lock for the final box.

Connection to learning objectives & story:

This puzzle fulfills the learning objective of increasing players' attitude and motivation to improve educational conditions for others. It gives actionable examples of how young people can contribute. It fits the story's climax: the final step before finding the letter must emphasize personal agency and empowerment.

How it leads to the final puzzle:

The code 157 opens the locked box containing the lost letter.

PRACTICAL EXAMPLE

SDG 4 Quality Education room: “The lost letter”

Final Box - The Letter (Ending Point)
Opening the final box reveals the lost letter and a translated version of Malala’s speech, used later in reflection.

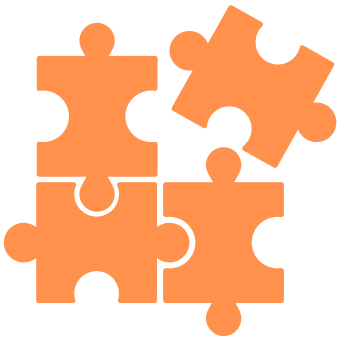
Solution: Opening with the code from Puzzle 5.

Materials:
Box, 3-digit lock, printed letter.

Connection to learning objectives & story:
The players complete their mission (mailing the letter in time) while receiving a final educational resource to support the debrief. The letter and speech tie the narrative and the learning objectives together, the game master can highlight the sentence: **“One child, one teacher, one book and one pen can change the world.”** from Malalas UN Speech while at the same time taking the specific artefacts from the room, the child from the calendar, the cup where it says the world’s best teacher, the book and the pen. This creates an “aha moment” and anchors one of the most powerful messages about education from Malala’s speech.

(Curious to learn more about our Quality Education room? Or any of the other 16 Sustainable Development Goal rooms? You can find the full manuals at www.awesomepeople.se)

Puzzle creation on a limited budget



Designing an educational escape room doesn't require a blockbuster budget or brand-new materials. With creativity, resourcefulness, and a focus on sustainability, you can build thoughtful, high-quality puzzles that are affordable, durable, and environmentally friendly. Here's how to make the most of what you already have.

1. Basic Equipment

Start by gathering versatile, low-cost items that can be reused for multiple puzzles and across different themes. Think of this as your core puzzle kit—a toolbox you can expand over time.

Locks and Keys
Padlocks, key locks, directional locks, and combination locks work for almost any puzzle. You only need a few: they can be reused endlessly.

Boxes and Containers
Recycled cardboard boxes, tin cans, second-hand tins, wooden crates, or glass jars make great containers for clues. Paint them or label them to match different storylines.

Paper & Cardstock
Old printouts (printed on one side), cardboard scraps, leftover craft paper, or recycled folders are perfect for codes, maps, checklists, and written clues.

Markers, Tape, and Simple Craft Tools
Colored markers, masking tape, glue sticks, scissors—everything you need to prototype puzzles quickly and cheaply.

Household Items
Books, cups, jars, utensils, coasters, postcards, clothing items... With imagination, everyday objects become puzzle pieces or environmental storytelling elements.

Digital Tools (Optional)
If you have access to a laptop, mobile phone, or tablet, you can create digital puzzles, audio clues, QR codes, or short videos—often completely free.

Most escape room creators discover that they already have around 50–70% of what they need in their office, home, or storage room.
Before buying anything, challenge yourself:
"Can I reuse something I already have?"
"Can I borrow it?"
"Can I adapt an existing puzzle instead of creating a new one?"
Sustainable design is both cheaper and smarter.

2. Sustainability Tips

A sustainable escape room isn't just good for the planet-it also saves money and keeps your materials adaptable for future projects.

Reuse Over Replace
Choose materials that can survive many rounds of gameplay. Laminate paper clues or use plastic sleeves so they don't need to be reprinted.

Choose Durable Basics
Invest in a few high-quality locks—they last for years and fit every theme.

Upcycle Creative Materials
Old magazines, packaging, outdated brochures, fabric scraps, or leftover paint can be transformed into beautiful puzzle elements.

Design for Rebuildability
Create puzzles that can be reset easily and do not require permanent damage or single-use items.

Borrow Before Buying
Tools, decorations, props, even small tech items can often be borrowed from schools, youth centres, libraries, or colleagues.

Think Multi-Use
A wooden box can be a treasure chest in one game, a secret archive in another, and a suitcase in a third.
The more flexible an item is, the more sustainable it becomes.

3. Extra Budget-Friendly Puzzle Ideas
Here are additional puzzle concepts that require almost no spending:

Cipher Wheels or Sliding Codes
Made with two pieces of cardboard and a paper fastener.

Jigsaw Clues
Cut up a printed image or message and hide the pieces around the room.

Symbol Matching
Use recycled paper and create symbols that players must connect, decode, or count.

Hidden Messages
Write clues with lemon juice (invisible ink) or place messages under objects to create surprises using simple materials.

Sorting & Categorisation Puzzles
Use everyday items: coins, utensils, photos, and packaging to create classification or pattern puzzles connected to your theme.

QR Code Trails
QR codes are free to generate and can link to audio, video, maps, or text clues.

Story Objects
Items like an old diary, a coffee cup, or a broken toy can become storytelling elements that make the puzzles feel more immersive.



The power of reflection

The escape room may end when the clock stops, but the learning doesn't. Reflection is the secret sauce that transforms a fun experience into a powerful educational moment. It's the time for players to connect the dots, understand how the puzzles tied into the topic, and solidify the knowledge they've gained.

But effective reflection doesn't just "happen." It requires preparation: knowing your facts, choosing the right questions, deciding what story connections to highlight, and ensuring that every puzzle has a clear link back to the topic. When a reflection is well planned, players walk away with insights that are meaningful, memorable, and connected to real life.

You need to go back to your research to make sure the information you share is accurate, identify which learning objectives each puzzle supports, and create a flow that helps players connect the dots.

You will also prepare questions, visuals, or small interactive moments that deepen understanding and make the reflection engaging.

For examples of reflections, take a look in our different PEER manuals that you can find at www.awesomepeople.se

Bonus Tips for Reflection part

- Go through each puzzle at a time in the reflection, in this way you will not miss anything in the room
- When codes are connected to statistics or facts this can be highlighted and creates a aha-moment for the players
- To keep the reflection interactive, have discussion questions ready for each reflection part so players can engage throughout the reflection and not just in the end.

Prepare your reflection



Reflection is as much about the players' perspectives as it is about the game master's explanations. Ask open-ended questions to spark thought and discussion:

About the game: What was your favorite puzzle and why? Were there any moments where you felt stuck? How did you solve it? How did your team work together?

About the topic: What new information did you learn during the game? How did the puzzles connect to the topic? Did anything challenge your assumptions or change your perspective?

About application: How can what you learned today be applied in real life? Why do you think this topic is important?

How Can You Create an Interactive and Interesting Reflection?
Make the reflection session just as engaging as the escape room!

- **Visual Recap:** Use props or visuals from the game to jog players' memories and encourage discussion.
- **Interactive Activities:** Have players match puzzle pieces to the learning objectives they represent. Create a quick quiz or game to reinforce key takeaways.
- **Group Challenges:** Assign players to small groups and have them discuss how the experience changed their perspective. Ask them to brainstorm solutions or actions based on what they learned.
- **Story Epilogue:** Tie the reflection back to the story. For example, "Thanks to your teamwork, you unlocked the secret to sustainability. Now the planet has a fighting chance!"

REFLECTION CHECKLIST

A. Review Your Research
□ Revisit your topic research to ensure all information you will share is accurate
□ Double-check statistics, quotes, stories, and examples used in the puzzles
□ Identify the factual or thematic message behind each puzzle
□ Prepare any real-world facts you want to highlight during the reflection

B. Connect to the Learning Objectives
□ List the learning objectives you want to address during reflection
□ Decide which puzzles will be linked to each objective
□ Organise the order in which these connections will be explained
□ Ensure each learning objective has a clear, visible connection to the gameplay

C. Plan the Structure and Flow
□ Decide the length of the reflection session (usually 10–15 minutes)
□ Choose which components your reflection will include:
- recap of key moments in the game
- puzzle → story → topic explanation
- open discussion questions
- real-life application
- story conclusion or epilogue

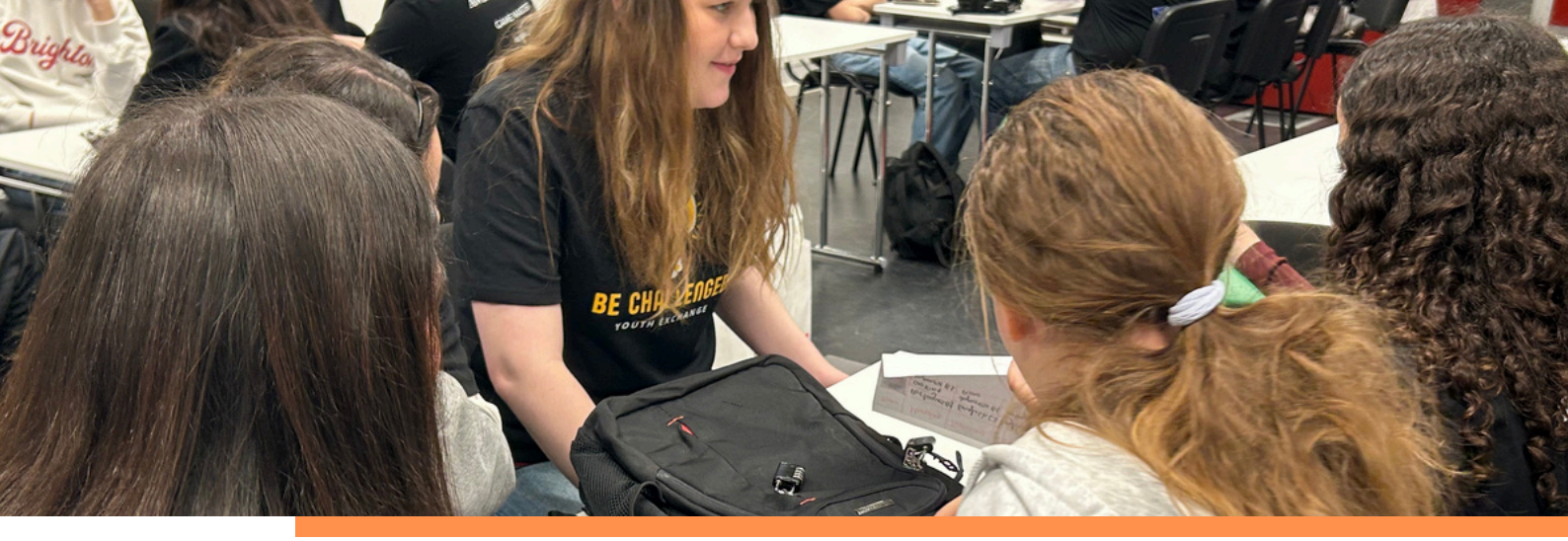
□ Prepare a clear start–middle–end structure

D. Prepare Strong Reflection Questions
□ Write 3–6 open questions about the gameplay experience
□ Write 3–6 open questions about the topic/theme
□ Write 2–3 questions about real-life application
□ Make sure questions are:
- open-ended
- age-appropriate
- non-leading
- safe to discuss in a group

E. Plan Visual or Interactive Elements
□ Identify game props you will reuse in the reflection for visual recall
□ Consider interactive add-ons:
- matching puzzles to learning objectives
- a quick quiz
- small-group discussions

□ Decide what “takeaway message” you want players to remember

F. Prepare Your Materials
□ Have printed notes, questions, or prompts ready
□ Ensure all facts and explanations are correct and easy to communicate
□ Gather the props/items you will show
□ Prepare a short closing statement that summarises the key learning points



Time to Test Your Escape Room

Before you invest time, money, and creativity into designing beautiful props, printing materials, or buying locks, you need to know one thing: Does your escape room actually work? The testing phase is where your idea becomes a functional learning experience. It is not about polish—it is about discovering what players understand, what they miss, and where your puzzles shine or fail.

That's why every escape room should first be created in the simplest possible form. Use paper sketches instead of final designs. Replace locks with post-it notes where players write their answers. Keep everything flexible, because in this phase you will almost certainly need to adjust, combine, simplify, or completely replace puzzles.

During test sessions, your main job is to observe carefully. Notice which puzzles players solve quickly and which ones stop the flow. Look for misunderstandings, false assumptions, unnecessary confusion, and moments where players light up because something feels fun and clear.

Time each puzzle so you can judge if the pacing works--especially in a 30-minute escape room where each puzzle should take roughly 4–5 minutes.

Finally, feedback is essential. Players may not always express critical thoughts out loud, which is why you need both verbal debriefing and a standardized written feedback form. Oral feedback helps you understand emotions and reactions; written feedback helps you collect patterns, compare results across groups, and get more honest responses.

The goal of the testing phase is simple: turn your draft into a playable, balanced, and meaningful learning experience.

Bonus Tips for Testing part

- Test, test and test some more! Have different groups playing your portable educational escape room so you make sure it is an engaging and well balanced room for the majority!

FEEDBACK FORM FOR TEST PLAYERS

General Ratings

Circle one number for each statement.

Question	
Overall, how would you rate the game?	Not so good 1 2 3 4 5 Very good
How fun was the experience?	Not so fun 1 2 3 4 5 Very fun
How strong were the learning elements?	Not so strong 1 2 3 4 5 Very strong

Story & Puzzle Quality

Statement	
The story was believable and engaging.	Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Agree
The puzzles connected well to the story.	Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Agree
The puzzles felt logical and understandable.	Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Agree
I understood what I was supposed to do in each puzzle.	Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Agree

Game Flow & Difficulty

Question	
The game rules were clear.	Confusing 1 2 3 4 5 Clear
The game duration felt...	Too short 1 2 3 4 5 Too long
The difficulty felt...	Too easy 1 2 3 4 5 Too difficult

Likelihood to Recommend

Question	
How likely is it that you would recommend this game to others?	Not likely 1 2 3 4 5 Very likely

Open Questions

1. What elements did you enjoy the most?
 .....
2. What elements did you enjoy the least?
 .....
3. Was there any puzzle that felt unclear or confusing? Which one and why?
 .....
4. Did any puzzle feel too easy or too difficult? Explain.
 .....
5. Did you ever feel stuck without knowing what to do next? When?
 .....
6. What can be improved to make the game more fun or more educational?
 .....
7. Any additional comments?
 .....

What's Next?

By now, you have explored the core elements that turn an idea into a meaningful portable educational escape room: identifying a relevant topic, understanding your target group, defining clear learning objectives, building a compelling story, shaping puzzles that support learning, planning a reflection that helps participants connect the experience to real-life understanding and growth and tested a draft version, received feedback and completed the finalized portable educational escape room.

Together, these steps form the foundation of a PEER experience where every detail is intentional and every challenge has a purpose.

With this design process in place, you're ready to move from planning to doing. In the next chapter, we shift our focus to the practical implementation of PEERs—from managing materials and resetting rooms to facilitating reflection, ensuring durability, and running multiple rooms at the same time. Now that you know what to create, it's time to learn how to bring it to life. Let's dive into the hands-on part of the journey.

03 Practical Implementation of PEERs

03 Practical Implementation of PEERs

Designing a Portable Educational Escape Room is only half the journey—the real magic happens when you put it into practice. This chapter focuses on everything that must work smoothly outside the puzzle design: how to run the room as a Game Master, how to organise sessions in schools or youth centres, how to manage multiple groups at the same time and how to collect feedback & assess impact.

In other words, this chapter turns your PEER from a great idea into a successful, repeatable learning experience.
Whether you are facilitating one group in a classroom or running a large event with hundreds of players, this chapter will guide you through the practical decisions, logistics, and responsibilities that make PEERs engaging, accessible, and safe for everyone involved.



The Game master role

In a portable educational escape room, the game master is far more than a facilitator—they are the architect of the learning environment, the guardian of the experience, and the person who holds the entire flow together. While players see only the story, puzzles, and physical materials, it is the game master who ensures that every piece comes to life with purpose. A well-trained game master can transform a simple set of puzzles into a powerful journey of discovery, teamwork, and reflection.

Brief players Before the Game

The game master sets the tone and prepares players for an immersive experience. The briefing includes:

Introducing the Story

Share the pre-story to immerse players in the setting and explain their roles.
“You’re journalists investigating a mysterious disappearance. Your mission: uncover the truth before time runs out!”

Explaining the Goal

Clearly state what players need to achieve.
“Find out who is the terrorist before a new attack strikes in 30 minutes.”

Providing the Rules

Outline what players can and cannot do. For example:

- No cheating to get into locks
- There will never be needed to break anything
- Collaborate & Communicate with each other

This is also the moment to set expectations about respecting materials, since many PEER rooms depend on reusable props.

Describing How to Get Hints

Let players know they can ask for help, and explain how hints will be delivered (verbally, written notes, a screen, etc.).

Ensuring Safety & Inclusion
A calm, confident briefing helps players feel secure.
The game master should also gauge the group's energy, ensure everyone understands the instructions, and check if anyone needs extra support (language, reading difficulties, anxiety about time pressure, etc.).

Monitor how the game is going

Once the game begins, the game master transitions into an observer and guide.

Keep an Eye on Progress
Watch how players interact with the room and each other. Are they making headway? Are they stuck? Are they using materials carefully or about to break something?

Manage Time Subtly
A great game master stays aware of pacing:

- If players are slow, hints might need to come earlier.
- If they rush through, the game master might need to have some back-up quiz for them to do while waiting for the other groups to finish. If only one group is playing the game master can have a more thourugh reflection.

Maintain a Positive Emotional Climate
PEER rooms are meant to be solved and to have a good experience while doing so. The game master must pay attention to:

- Signs of frustration
- Uneven group dominance
- Confusion caused by language or cultural barriers

Sometimes a soft reminder-"You're doing well; try looking at the photos again"-is enough to reset the group dynamic.

Stay Engaged Without Interfering
A good game master balances stepping in when needed without removing the sense of discovery.

Give Hints When Asked or When Players Are Stuck

Hints can make or break the experience. Too many, and the game feels spoon-fed; too few, and players get frustrated.

When to Give Hints

- When players explicitly ask.
- When players are stuck for an extended period and frustration becomes counterproductive.
- When a misunderstanding threatens the learning objective (e.g., using a clue incorrectly in a way that derails the educational point).

How to Give Hints

- Keep hints subtle and story-aligned.
- "Johanna's diary might help you figure out the next step."
- Nudge players rather than solving for them.
- Keep difficulty consistent—don't give one group a much easier experience than another.

Facilitate communication

The game master is the bridge between the players and the game.

During the Briefing

Explain how players can interact with the game master.
“If you need a hint, raise your hand or call out.”

During the Game

Stay responsive but unobtrusive. Clarify rules when needed, check in if confusion becomes disruptive, and maintain clear, calm communication.

Between Players

Sometimes teams forget to collaborate. A well-timed reminder—
“Maybe share what each of you found?”
—can help restore teamwork without giving away answers.

Manage Materials and Reset the Room Efficiently

- Ensure nothing essential gets lost or damaged during the session.
- Keep track of which items players have moved or misused so the reset can be quick and consistent.
- Protect delicate props by intervening early if players are handling something incorrectly.

A smooth reset is crucial, especially when running multiple rooms or back-to-back groups.

Sometimes things don’t go as planned:

- Players skip a puzzle by accident.
- A lock jams, a QR code doesn’t load, or a clue gets misplaced.
- A key piece of narrative becomes unclear.

The game master must remain calm and professional, restarting or adjusting the game to keep the flow intact-without blaming the players or breaking immersion more than necessary.

Make the Reflection Meaningful

After the game, the game master guides reflection and ties the experience back to the learning objectives.

Explain Connections
Walk players through the room and demonstrate how puzzles linked to the theme.
“The code you deciphered represented the year this law was passed.”

Clarify Confusions
If a puzzle was misunderstood, explain how it was meant to work to avoid incorrect takeaways.

Encourage Reflection
Use questions that invite them to share insights about:

- teamwork
- emotions during the challenge
- new knowledge or perspectives
- stereotypes or assumptions the room challenged

Ensure a Safe Emotional Space
Since many topics (discrimination, identity, social issues) can trigger strong reactions, the game master needs to create a respectful atmosphere during the reflection.

The Game Master as the Key to Success
A skilled game master doesn’t just run the room—they elevate the entire learning experience. By balancing structure with flexibility, safeguarding materials, managing time and emotions, and anchoring the gameplay in meaningful reflection, they ensure the escape room becomes not only an adventure but a powerful educational moment.

GAME MASTER REFLECTION CHECKLIST

A. Set the Right Atmosphere
□ Ensure the group sits comfortably and can see each other
□ Use a calm tone to help players shift out of “game mode”
□ Remind participants that all perspectives are welcome
□ Establish that there are no wrong answers in reflection

B. Facilitate, Don’t Lecture
□ Ask open-ended questions
□ Let players speak more than you
□ Encourage multiple voices, not just the confident few
□ Validate contributions without giving judgement
□ Create space for silence so players can think

C. Manage Group Dynamics
□ Balance dominant and quiet participants
□ Redirect if someone speaks too much
□ Show empathy toward emotional reactions
□ Adjust your approach to the age group and energy level
□ Support participants who may struggle to express themselves

D. Clarify the Puzzle–Topic Connection
□ Use props to remind players of what they solved
□ Let them guess connections before explaining them
□ Highlight the intended message or insight behind each puzzle
□ Confirm that everyone understands before moving on

E. Navigate Sensitive Topics
□ Be prepared for difficult emotions or controversial statements
□ Respond with calmness and professionalism
□ Correct stereotypes or misunderstandings gently
□ Normalise confusion or mistakes — they are part of learning

F. Close the Reflection Strongly
□ Summarise the key learning points
□ Give a clear takeaway or action the group can bring into real life
□ Tie back to the story if appropriate
□ Thank the group and end on a positive, reflective note



Running multiple rooms /groups

When working in schools or at events where many groups play back-to-back or in parallel, preparation is everything. Good planning saves time, reduces stress, and ensures that every group gets the same high-quality experience.

Plan the Flow Before You Start
Before the first group arrives, make sure you have a clear and realistic plan for the entire flow of the session. This plan should also be communicated to the school or event organizers so everyone knows the timing, the rotation, and what support you need.

For a standard **30-minute room**, you need additional time for:

- **5 minutes** – Introduction (story + rules)
- **30 minutes** – Gameplay
- **15 minutes** – Reflection
- **5–15 minutes** – Resetting the room(s)

If possible, always include buffer time to handle late arrivals, slow groups, or classroom changes.

Total recommended session length:
5 min intro + 30 min gameplay + 15 min reflection + 10 min reset = ~60 minutes per group

Determine the Number of Groups You Can Handle
Ask yourself:

- How many groups can you realistically run at the same time without lowering the quality of the experience?
- How many game masters do you have, and how experienced are they?
- How many room copies do you have available?

For an experienced game master, the maximum capacity is usually 6 groups at the same time—but only if it's a room they know extremely well and the reset system is fast and reliable.

Set Up an Effective Reset System
When running many rooms back-to-back, resetting quickly and accurately is essential.
A simple and efficient system we use is:

- Prepare a reset desk with rows or sections
- As players progress through the game, place each used item or lock in a specific row assigned to each room
- When resetting, take one complete row and return everything to its exact place in the correct order

This method greatly reduces mistakes.

If you have more than one game master, try to reset rooms during gameplay—this saves time and prevents delays. For a single game master, this can be challenging, so buffer time becomes even more important.

4. Bring an Extra Materials Kit
Have a dedicated “emergency kit” with you, including:

- Extra locks (depending on the room)
- Tools to open locks that get stuck or have been tampered with
- Extra printed puzzle pieces
- Spare pens, envelopes, tape, batteries
- Replacement objects for any puzzle element that could break

This kit will save you during busy school days or festival events.

5. Prepare Evaluation Tools

- Print the QR code for evaluation so it is easy for players to scan.
- Have the evaluation link ready on your device in case QR scanning doesn’t work.
- If needed, prepare a few paper versions for groups without smartphones.

6. Organize Room Branding & Photo Materials

- Bring photo signs ("We escaped!", "Dream Team!", etc.) that players can hold after finishing.
- Keep a small backdrop or a simple corner marked for photos to make the moment memorable.

GAME MASTER PREPARATION CHECKLIST

A. Prepare Enough Copies of the Room
□ Make sure you have enough room sets so every team stays within the ideal group size: 3–4 players per room (maximum 5).
□ If possible, bring one extra complete room as a backup in case something breaks.

B. Check All Materials Before Starting
□ Verify that every room contains all the materials and nothing is missing.
□ Do a full test reset to make sure each clue, code, and puzzle is placed correctly.
□ Print reset lists and keep one inside each room box.
□ If you have new game masters, make sure they have access to the room manual to double-check solutions or codes.

C. Prepare Reflection Materials
□ Print enough reflection cards so every reflection session has a full set.
□ Always bring a digital version as a backup in case cards get lost.
□ If you run several reflections in parallel, prepare multiple copies so each game master can lead a discussion.

D. Bring an Extra Materials Kit
Have a dedicated "emergency kit" with you, including:
□ Extra locks (depending on the room)
□ Tools to open locks that get stuck or have been tampered with
□ Extra printed puzzle pieces
□ Spare pens, envelopes, tape, batteries
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F. Organize Room Branding & Photo Materials
□ Bring photo signs ("We escaped!", "Dream Team!", etc.) that players can hold after finishing.
□ Keep a small backdrop or a simple corner marked for photos to make the moment memorable.

G. Make a Quick-Access GM Kit
Each game master should have:
□ A copy of the story intro
□ The solution sheet
□ The hint list
□ A timer
□ Reset checklist
□ Reflection cards
This makes it easy for new or rotating GMs to jump in.



Collecting Feedback & Assessing Impact

A Portable Educational Escape Room is not successful just because players solved the puzzles or had fun. Its true value lies in whether it achieved the learning objectives you designed it for.
To know this, you need systematic feedback.

Collecting feedback and assessing impact helps you to:

- Understand what players actually learned, not only what you hoped they learned.
- See which puzzles supported learning—and which ones confused or distracted players.
- Evaluate whether attitudes, empathy, or critical thinking changed during the experience.
- Improve your room, your facilitation, and your future educational designs.
- Communicate results to partners, schools, municipalities, funders, and stakeholders who want proof of impact.

Without feedback, you are designing in the dark. With feedback, you build a room that transforms players.

How to Collect Feedback: Different Methods

You can collect feedback in several ways depending on time, age group, and learning goals:

1. Reflection Discussion (Immediate)
A structured conversation right after the game.
Useful for: emotional reactions, attitude change, group dynamics, and misunderstandings in puzzles.

2. Quick Written Survey (2–5 minutes)
Short questions focused on learning, difficulty level, and clarity.
Useful for: classrooms, youth centers, large groups.

3. Digital Form (Google Forms, Typeform)
Easier to analyze over time and compare across groups.
Useful for: long-term monitoring and reporting

4. Exit Tickets
One question written on a post-it before leaving, such as:

- “One thing I learned today…”
- “One idea that surprised me was…”

Useful for: younger groups or very limited time.

5. Observation Notes from the Game Master
What players struggled with or understood quickly can show whether puzzles support learning.

6. Follow-up Survey (1–4 weeks later)
Measures whether learning and attitudes stayed over time.
Useful for: deeper topics such as discrimination, human rights, sustainability.

How to Use the Feedback

- Compare responses across groups to see patterns.
- Identify which puzzles consistently fail or succeed in teaching.
- Use open answers to understand emotional impact and moments of insight.
- Share results with teachers, youth workers, or partners to show measurable learning.
- Update learning objectives, puzzles, or the reflection discussion based on findings.

A strong feedback process strengthens your room, your facilitation, and the credibility of your educational method.

How to Design an Effective Feedback Questionnaire



How to Design an Effective Feedback Form

Before you create your feedback form, it's important to understand why the form exists and what kind of information you need to collect. A well-designed form helps you measure whether your learning objectives were reached, how players experienced the room, and what improvements are needed.

Here are the key things to think about when designing your questionnaire:

1. Start from Your Learning Objectives

Every question should connect to what you wanted players to learn.

Ask yourself:

- "Which learning objective does this question measure?"
- "Does this question help me understand if players truly learned it?"

If a question cannot be linked to an objective or improvement need — remove it.

2. Keep It Short and Focused

Young people get tired of long surveys. Aim for 8–12 questions.

Use a mix of:

- Closed questions (easy to answer, easy to analyse)
- Open questions (give depth, insights, emotional impact)

3. Use Simple and Clear Language

Avoid academic or complicated phrasing.

Make questions short, direct, and easy to understand.

4. Measure Both Knowledge and Attitudes

Educational escape rooms aim to change both:

- What players know
- How they think, feel, or reflect

Include questions like:

- "How much did you understand about…?"
- "How did this experience make you think/feel about…?"

5. Include at Least One Reflection Question

Open-ended questions give valuable insights, such as:

- "One thing I learned today…"
- "One part I will remember is…"

These are often the most powerful answers.

6. Avoid Leading Questions

A leading question tells the participant what they should answer.

Instead of:

- "Did the escape room teach you that quality education is important?"
- Use:
- "How did the escape room affect your thoughts about quality education?"

7. Use Scales Wisely
Likert scales (Agree/Disagree, Very much/Not at all) make patterns easy to analyse.
Be consistent — use the same scale throughout when possible.

8. Test Your Form Before Using It
Give the form to a small group or colleague. Check if:

- Any question is confusing
- The form is too long
- The scales make sense
- Important learning objectives are missing

9. Decide How You Will Use the Data
You should know beforehand how the results will help you.
For example:

- Improve puzzles that are unclear
- Adjust the reflection discussion
- Communicate impact to teachers or funders
- Track learning progress over multiple events

If you don't know how you will use a question — remove it.

EXAMPLE FEEDBACK QUESTIONNAIRE (1/2)

1. How much did you already know about *global education challenges* before playing the room?
- o Nothing
- o A little
- o Some
- o A lot

2. After the escape room, *how well do you understand the main barriers that stop children from accessing education*?
- o Not at all
- o A little
- o Quite well
- o Very well

3. I can explain *why education is a human right and why it is important for reducing inequalities*.
- o Strongly disagree
- o Disagree
- o Agree
- o Strongly agree

4. The puzzles helped me understand the topic better.
- o Strongly disagree
- o Disagree
- o Agree
- o Strongly agree

5. *The Greek cipher puzzle (Malala quote) helped me reflect on how it feels to not understand a language or text.*
- o Not at all
- o A little
- o Quite a lot
- o Very much

6. After the room, *I can name at least two factors that prevent children from going to school.*
- o Yes
- o Not sure
- o No

7. The escape room made me think about *how important teachers and learning materials are for students around the world.*
- o Strongly disagree
- o Disagree
- o Agree
- o Strongly agree

EXAMPLE FEEDBACK QUESTIONNAIRE (2/2)

8. How emotionally impactful was the experience for you?
- ○ Not at all
- ○ A little
- ○ Quite a lot
- ○ Very much

9. What is one new thing you learned from the escape room?
(Open answer)

10. What is one thing you will remember or think about after today?
(Open answer)

11. What part of the escape room helped you learn the most?
- ○ Story
- ○ Puzzles
- ○ Reflection discussion
- ○ Working in a team
- ○ Other: _____

12. What should we improve in the future?
(Open answer)

What's Next?

Bringing a Portable Educational Escape Room to life requires more than a strong storyline and well-designed puzzles — it requires structure, preparation, and a clear understanding of how to manage the learning experience from start to finish. By mastering the practical elements covered in this chapter — time management, material organisation, durability, game master responsibilities, multi-room coordination, and feedback collection — you ensure that your PEERs remain both impactful and sustainable over time.

These practical skills not only help you deliver high-quality sessions, but also make it possible to scale your work: reaching more learners, running events in new environments, and creating experiences that remain engaging no matter how many times they are repeated. When your implementation is solid, your escape room becomes a reliable educational tool that teachers, youth workers, and partners can trust.

With the foundations of practical delivery in place, you are now ready to explore the final piece of the PEER puzzle: extra resources that can support your development and growth. In the next chapter, Resources & Tools, we introduce external materials that will help you improve your rooms, strengthen your facilitation, and continue building high-quality learning experiences.

Let's take a look at what you can use to support your PEER journey even further.

04 Resources & Tools

04 Resources & Tools

Still puzzled?

A final chapter to support your journey as a creator of Portable Educational Escape Rooms

Designing powerful learning experiences does not end with finishing your escape room. As youth workers, facilitators, and educators, we grow by exploring new tools, reading inspiring materials, and learning from the broader community.

This chapter gathers practical resources, method libraries, research, and youth work materials that can help you deepen your understanding, develop new rooms in the future, and connect with others working with educational escape rooms across Europe.

The goal is simple:
To provide you with trustworthy, accessible, real-world resources that support your creativity, strengthen your facilitation, and help you bring meaningful learning to young people everywhere.



Dive in to more resources & tools

Partner Resources: Inspiring Tools Created Together with Our Collaborators

Before exploring broader tools and literature, we want to highlight resources developed by partner organizations we have collaborated with in the field of educational escape rooms. These partners have played a key role in shaping and strengthening the methodology.

Shokkin Group Estonia / Shokkin Group International
In our joint Erasmus+ project “Critical Escape” we developed educational escape rooms on various topics. https://shokkin.org/materials-2020/gamebasedlearning/

Shokkin Group has created a rich collection of materials on both educational escape rooms and game-based learning in general. Their platform Playversity gathers methods, toolkits, and inspirational resources that youth workers can easily adapt to their own contexts. You will find their handbooks, podcasts and manuals on educational escape rooms such as the manual “**Breakout Box**” here.
https://playversity.co/resources/

Logos NGO
In our joint Erasmus+ project “Secret Code for Active Citizenship”, we developed educational escape rooms focused on democracy and active citizenship, as well as a series of instructional videos explaining key principles for designing meaningful learning experiences.
https://eduescape.org/results/

Logos has also produced a manual for this methodology:
Manual on Creation of Educational Escape Rooms – a comprehensive guide containing examples, puzzle ideas, facilitation tips, and ready-to-use scenarios.
https://logos.ngo/materials/

Puzzle creation & design tools

Genially - interactive puzzles, breakout rooms & gamified presentations
https://genial.ly

Canva - visual puzzle elements, codes, posters, clue design
https://www.canva.com

Puzzle.org Escape Room Puzzle Generator - code wheels, cipher tools
https://puzzle.org

Google Forms / Microsoft Forms - digital locks, branching choices
https://docs.google.com/forms

Flippity Lock Game – simple digital lock mechanism
https://flippity.net/

Storytelling & scriptwriting tools

Miro or Mural - storyboarding & puzzle mapping
https://miro.com
https://www.mural.co

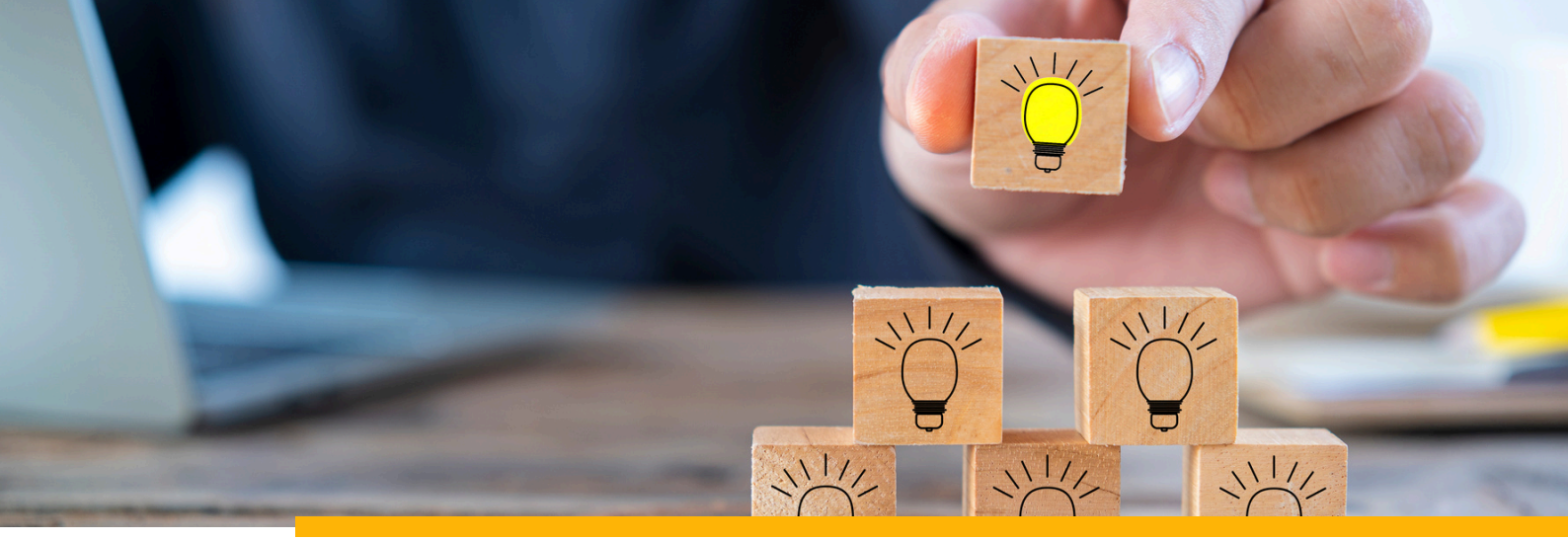
Twine – for nonlinear storytelling
https://twinery.org/

Online Platforms

Breakout Edu & Escaply - Platforms dedicated to bringing the excitement of escape rooms into the classroom.
https://breakoutedu.com/
https://www.escaply.com/en

Books

Unlocking the Potential of Puzzle-based Learning - *Designing escape rooms and games for the classroom,* Scott Nicholson & Liz Cable, 2021
Inescapable Learning: *Unlock the power of educational escape rooms,* Dr Rober James Ross & Sarah Lynn Ross, 2020
Escape Rooms in Education: *A Practical Guide,* Julia Morris, 2020
101 Escape Room Puzzles, SMARTpath Education Services, 2021
Escape Rooms and Other Immersive Experiences in the Library, Ellyssa Kroski, 2018



CONCLUSION

This guide serves as a comprehensive toolkit for youth workers, educators, and NGOs seeking to design impactful learning experiences through Portable Educational Escape Rooms. By following the steps outlined in each chapter—from identifying your topic and defining learning objectives to crafting puzzles, designing reflections, and managing practical implementation—you are equipped to create escape rooms that spark curiosity, challenge assumptions, and inspire meaningful learning.

Whether your work focuses on human rights, social inclusion, quality education, employability, or other youth-centred themes, the methods in this guide offer a clear path to turning complex topics into engaging, hands-on learning journeys. By combining storytelling, puzzle design, and structured reflection, PEERs enable participants not only to understand an issue but also to feel, question, and transform their perspectives. With careful planning—grounded in target group analysis, sustainable materials, accessible design, and strong game mastering—your escape rooms can be implemented anywhere, by anyone, and with high educational impact.

As you bring these tools into practice, remember that iteration, feedback, and continuous improvement are essential. Each test group, each reflection session, and each adaptation of the puzzles helps you refine the learning experience. By staying attentive to your players' needs, aligned with your learning goals, and open to creative experimentation, you will be able to build PEERs that are not only portable and practical —but truly transformative.

Now that you have the full framework, the next step is yours: turn your ideas into immersive learning spaces and unlock the potential of educational escape rooms to make a lasting difference for young people and their communities.

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