



BEYOND WORDS: THE ART OF CRITICAL THINKING

TEATER

Facilitator Guidelines



Co-funded by
the European Union

2025-1-EL02-KA152-YOU-000300192



1. About This Guide

These guidelines translate the **TEATER** simulation game, developed within the Erasmus+ Youth Exchange "**Beyond Words: The Art of Critical Thinking**" (2025-1-EL02-KA152-YOU-000300192) hosted in Thessaloniki, April 2026, into a stand-alone resource that youth workers, youth professionals and trainers can run in their own organisations.

The game was designed by six partner organisations from Greece, Italy, Germany, the Netherlands, Türkiye and Estonia as the central non-formal education method of the exchange, and is intended to outlive the mobility itself: partner organisations have committed to keeping **TEATER** in active use in youth centres, schools, NGOs and universities long after the project ends.

2. What Is the TEATER Game?

TEATER is a non-formal education method that combines theatre techniques, structured debate and critical-thinking frameworks into a single, staged simulation. Small teams research a position, build an argument, and perform it in front of the group across three escalating "Acts," moving from open discussion to formal argumentation to collective reflection.

It sits at the intersection of three approaches:

- **Theatre-based learning:** role, voice, body and staging are used to make abstract arguments concrete and memorable.
- **Structured debate:** the ACTION communication model and the **ProVoice** argumentation model give participants a repeatable structure for building and defending a claim.
- **Critical-thinking psychology:** tools such as Life Script and Ego States analysis help participants notice the assumptions and personal narratives behind their own and others' opinions.

Best suited for: groups of 12–40 young people aged 18–30, mixed in background where possible

Typical duration: a full multi-day arc (see Section 6), or a condensed one-day/ half-day version (see Section 9)

Group size per team: 5–7 participants, with 4–8 teams depending on group size

3. Educational Aims & Learning Outcomes

Facilitators should hold these aims in mind when adapting sessions, they are the criteria against which the game should be evaluated afterwards.

Knowledge

- Understand core principles of critical thinking, objectivity and structured argumentation.
- Recognise how personal narratives ("Life Scripts") and cultural background shape opinions.
- Understand the ACTION communication model and how to apply it in dialogue.

Skills

- Build, structure and deliver a persuasive argument under time pressure.
- Practise public speaking, improvisation and non-verbal communication.
- Give and receive structured feedback; facilitate discussion in a peer group.

- Identify misinformation and biased reasoning in real time.

Attitudes / Behaviours

- Increased confidence in expressing opinions in front of a group.
- Greater openness to opposing viewpoints and cultural difference.
- A habit of questioning sources and assumptions rather than reacting emotionally.

4. Roles & Facilitation Team

TEATER needs a small facilitation team rather than a single trainer, the theatrical element benefits from a coach role that is separate from the process-management role.

Role	Responsibility
Lead Facilitator	Runs the overall timeline, introduces each Act, keeps time, and holds the group container (safety, ground rules, energy).
Theatre / Staging Coach	Supports teams with voice, body language, staging and improvisation during preparation and rehearsal.
Debate Coach	Introduces the ACTION and ProVoice models, helps teams structure arguments and anticipate counter-arguments.
Wellbeing Support	Available throughout for participants experiencing performance anxiety or discomfort; leads the emotional check-in at the end of each day.
Documentation Team	Participant-led role: photo/video capture, notes for the BOOKLET, and daily reflection prompts on the group's shared platform.

5. Before the Game: Preparation Phase

Do not open with the game itself. Building the group's psychological safety and shared vocabulary first is what allows participants to take creative and argumentative risks later.

1. **Trust-building & ground rules:** icebreakers and a co-created set of ground rules (confidentiality, no personal attacks, right to pass) established with the whole group on day one.
2. **Introduce non-formal education & Erasmus+/Youthpass:** orient participants to how the exchange works and how their learning will be recognised.
3. **Artistic Critical Mindset workshop ("Fears and Expectations"):** participants map what they are anxious about and what they hope to get from the process; this becomes a baseline to revisit at the end.
4. **Critical thinking models:** introduce Life Script and Ego States as lenses for understanding why people hold the opinions they hold.
5. **ACTION communication model & ProVoice argumentation:** a dedicated workshop teaching participants to build a claim, support it with reasons and evidence, and respond to a counter-argument.
6. **Non-verbal communication exercises:** short physical/voice exercises (breathing, posture, eye contact) so participants are comfortable holding the floor.

Allow at least one full day (or 3–4 shorter sessions spread over a week) for this phase before moving to team preparation.

6. Team Preparation: The LAB Day

Once the group has the shared vocabulary from Section 5, split participants into mixed-nationality or mixed-background teams of 5–7. Each team is assigned or chooses a topic connected to the group's theme, e.g. a current social issue, a piece of media, or a controversial statement, and spends a dedicated "LAB" session developing their position.

- **Research and develop arguments:** teams gather facts, identify the strongest version of their position, and anticipate objections.
- **Storytelling & improvisation:** the theatre coach runs short exercises to help teams find a compelling way to stage their argument, not just state it.
- **Role distribution:** within each team, agree who opens, who responds to challenges, who closes, and who manages staging/props.
- **Rehearsal:** at least one full run-through with feedback from the facilitation team before the performance.

7. Playing the Game: The Three Acts

The performance itself runs as a single continuous session (typically split across a morning, afternoon and evening block), structured in three Acts of increasing intensity.

ACT I — The Opening Debate

Teams present their position for the first time, in front of the full group.

Purpose: To get each team's core argument on the table clearly and confidently, without yet being challenged.

How it runs

- Each team has a fixed time (e.g. 5-10 minutes) to stage and present its opening argument.
- Presentation may use theatre techniques (role-play, tableau, monologue) rather than a straight speech.
- No interruptions from other teams during Act I, this is a safe first exposure.

Facilitator focus

- Keep strict time to protect equal airtime for every team.
- Note (privately) which arguments are strongest, to seed Act II questioning.
- Reassure nervous performers before they go on; this is where wellbeing support is most needed.

ACT II — Argumentation & Response

Teams challenge each other's positions using the ACTION / ProVoice structure.

Purpose: To practise real-time critical thinking: listening, identifying weak points, and responding under pressure.

How it runs

- After all opening statements, open the floor for structured cross-examination, one question at a time, addressed to a specific team.
- Responding teams must use the ACTION model (claim → reason → evidence → acknowledge counter-view → conclusion) rather than reacting emotionally.



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- The debate coach can pause the round to coach a team publicly if the group is struggling, turning it into a teaching moment.

Facilitator focus

- Actively manage tone: the goal is rigorous, not personal.
- Redirect any argument that becomes an attack on a person rather than a position.
- Watch for participants who are being talked over and open space for them.

ACT III — Evaluation, Group Voting & the "Life List"

The group steps out of role to reflect, vote, and consolidate learning.

Purpose: To close the fiction, recognise effort over "winning," and turn the experience into personal takeaways.

How it runs

- Teams step out of character; facilitators explicitly mark the transition ("the game is now over").
- Open group discussion: which arguments were most convincing, and why? What changed participants' minds?
- An informal, non-competitive vote can be used to prompt discussion (best argument, most improved, most courageous), never to rank people.
- Each participant completes a personal "Life List": 3–5 things they want to think, say or do differently after the game.

Facilitator focus

- This Act belongs to reflection, not performance: slow the pace down deliberately.
- Make sure every team receives specific, appreciative feedback, not just the strongest performers.
- Collect Life List entries (with consent) as raw material.

8. Debrief & Reflection Questions

Close every full run of the game with a facilitated debrief. Suggested prompts:

- What was the strongest argument you heard today, from any team, including your own opponents?
- Did any argument change your mind? What made it persuasive?
- Where did you notice your own assumptions or "Life Script" showing up in how you argued or reacted?
- What was harder: building your argument, or responding to a challenge? Why?
- What is one thing from today you want to do differently the next time you disagree with someone?

Keep debrief non-hierarchical: facilitators should participate as listeners, not graders.

9. Adapting TEATER for Different Settings

Condensed half-day / one-day version

- Skip multi-day trust-building; replace with a 45–60-minute compressed warm-up (ground rules + one icebreaker + a short ACTION model briefing sheet).
- Reduce to 3–4 teams, 2–3-minute opening statements, one round of cross-examination in Act II, and a 20-minute Act III.

Classroom / school setting

- Align topics with curriculum themes (media literacy, civics, history) so TEATER supplements rather than replaces lesson content.
- Use existing class groups as teams to reduce logistical friction, but rotate roles within each team across sessions.

Online / blended delivery

- Act I and III work well over video call; Act II benefits from breakout rooms for team huddles between challenge rounds.
- Use a shared digital board (e.g. the platforms used in "Beyond Words": Padlet, Miro, Google Jamboard) for teams to log arguments live.

Youth centres / informal settings

- Let topics emerge from participants' own concerns rather than assigning them: ownership increases engagement in informal settings.
- Shorten Acts and increase movement/theatre content if the group is younger or has shorter attention spans.

10. Inclusion & Accessibility

TEATER was designed with participants with fewer opportunities in mind, and the same principles apply wherever it is run:

- Never force a participant to perform alone if they are uncomfortable: offer paired or small-group speaking roles as an alternative.
- Provide topics and role assignments in advance to participants who need more processing time.

- Keep a visible "pass" option at all times, established as part of the ground rules.
- Balance teams for gender, background and first-language where possible; avoid isolating a single non-native speaker in a team.
- Have wellbeing support visibly present and known to participants before Act I begins, not introduced only if a problem arises.

11. Materials Checklist

Item	Notes
Space	An open room or hall that allows a clear "stage" area and audience seating; a theatre or performance space is ideal for the final run.
Timing tools	Visible timer or bell for enforcing speaking limits.
Reference sheets	One-page printed summaries of the ACTION model and ProVoice structure for each team.
Reflection materials	Journals or printed "Life List" templates for Act III.
Documentation	Camera / phone for photo and video capture (with participant consent).
Props (optional)	Simple, flexible props (chairs, fabric, signage), theatre techniques should rely on performance, not elaborate sets.

12. Evaluation & Recognition of Learning

Combine the in-game reflection (Section 8) with a short written or online questionnaire immediately after the session, covering self-assessed confidence, argumentation skills, and openness to other viewpoints before and after the game.

- Use a simple before/after self-rating scale for 3–4 key skills (e.g. confidence in public speaking, ability to structure an argument, openness to opposing views).
- Where the game is run within an Erasmus+ activity, log outcomes against Youthpass competence categories (communication, cultural awareness, learning to learn).
- Encourage participants to contribute their Life List and reflections to the organisation's version of the "BOOKLET," continuing the practice established in the original exchange.

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Ideas
take the stage.
People create
change.



“Not just
opinions.
Perspectives.
People.
Possibilities.”



Same stage.
Different stories.
A brighter tomorrow.

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DIALOGUE
CREATIVITY
INCLUSION
YOUTH EMPOWERMENT

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