



Anti-Bias Advocacy

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Audience

University students, young professionals, or community groups interested in deepening their understanding of other cultures and enhancing intercultural dialogue skills.

Goal

To help participants recognize and address biases, both conscious and unconscious, while understanding their cumulative impact on group cohesion, workplace culture, and interpersonal relationships.

Description

This exercise engages participants in recognising how biases shape interactions and contribute to exclusion or discrimination. Using Bias Jenga, an interactive activity, participants will visually experience how biases accumulate and destabilise social and professional structures. The exercise introduces practical advocacy techniques such as active listening, challenging stereotypes, and promoting inclusive language. Through reflection and discussion, participants will learn how to effectively address biases and advocate for more equitable and welcoming environments.

Structure

Part 1: Introduction and Ground Rules (5 minutes)

Participants begin by reviewing key concepts related to bias and setting expectations for the discussion.





Intercultural Dialogue Exercises

Key Concepts:

- **Bias:** A preconceived opinion that may be favorable or unfavorable and affects how we perceive others.
- **Unconscious Bias:** Automatic assumptions or stereotypes that influence our decisions without us realizing it.
- **Advocacy:** Taking action to challenge biases and create more inclusive spaces.

Ground Rules:

- Listen actively and respect different perspectives.
- Challenge ideas, not individuals.
- Reflect on personal biases without fear of judgment.
- Use real-world examples responsibly and sensitively.

Part 2: Bias Jenga Activity (50–60 minutes)

Step 1: Setting Up Bias Jenga

- Download the printable Bias Labels Sheet. Print and cut out the labels to tape them onto some of the Jenga blocks.
- Prepare a Jenga tower with labeled blocks.
- Keep some blocks blank to represent neutral interactions.
- The tower symbolizes a stable, inclusive society or workplace.

List of Biases on Jenga Blocks

Each labelled Jenga block will have one of the following biases:

- **Accent Bias** – Assuming intelligence or competence based on how someone speaks.
- **Age Bias** – Believing younger individuals are less capable or older individuals are out of touch.
- **Appearance Bias** – Judging someone's abilities based on their physical looks and weight.
- **Attribution Bias** – Interpreting someone's actions based on stereotypes rather than individual merit.





Intercultural Dialogue Exercises

- **Confirmation Bias** – Only seeking information that supports pre-existing beliefs.
- **Cultural Bias** – Assuming one's own cultural practices are superior.
- **Disability Bias** – Assuming someone with a disability is less capable.
- **Ethnicity Bias** – Making assumptions about a person's abilities, behaviours, or interests based on their perceived or actual ethnicity.
- **Gender Bias** – Believing certain roles or abilities are more suited for one gender over others.
- **Halo Effect** – Assuming a person is competent in all areas because of one positive trait.
- **Horns Effect** – Assuming a person is incompetent in all areas because of one negative trait.
- **Linguistic Bias** – Preferring one language or dialect over another, or assuming it is "normal" and expected.
- **Name Bias** – Preferring individuals with "common" or "Western-sounding" names in various contexts.
- **Nationality Bias** – Assuming you know someone's skills or behaviors based on their country of origin.
- **Race Bias** – Making assumptions or judgments about a person's capabilities, character, or worth based on their perceived or actual race or skin tone.
- **Religious Bias** – Treating people differently based on their religious beliefs or practices.
- **Stereotype Bias** – Making subconscious judgments based on preconceived stereotypes.

Step 2: Playing the Game

Participants take turns pulling out a Jenga block. If they pull a labelled block, they read the bias aloud and discuss:

- How does this bias affect individuals in real life?
- How does it impact workplace culture or social interactions?
- How can this bias be addressed or challenged?

If a participant pulls a blank block, they reflect on a personal experience with bias or share an example they've witnessed.





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Part 3: Reflection and Action Plan (10 minutes)

Step 1: Personal Reflection

Participants reflect on:

- What biases they became more aware of during the session.
- How bias accumulation weakens relationships and group trust.
- What advocacy techniques they feel comfortable using.

Time Required

Approximately 90 minutes.

Hints for Success

- **Think Critically:** Don't just pull a block, take a moment to reflect on the bias written on it. Ask yourself if you've encountered or unconsciously held this bias before.
- **Engage in Honest Discussion:** Be open about your thoughts and experiences, even if they challenge your previous beliefs. The goal is learning, not perfection.
- **Be Respectful:** Some biases are deeply personal for others in the group. Approach each discussion with empathy and care.

Supplies Required

- Bias Labels
- Jenga Tower
- Space for group discussion.





Intercultural Dialogue Exercises

Resources

Behm-Morawitz, E., & Villamil, A. M. (2019). The roles of ingroup identification and implicit bias in assessing the effectiveness of an online diversity education program. *Journal of Applied Communication Research*, 47(5), 505-526.

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Izumi, C. (2010). Implicit bias and the illusion of mediator neutrality. *Journal of Law and Policy*, 34(71), 71-156.

Kim, J. Y., & Roberson, L. (2022). I'm biased and so are you. What should organizations do? A review of organizational implicit-bias training programs. *Consulting Psychology Journal*, 74(1), 19.

Pritlove, C., Juando-Prats, C., Ala-Leppilampi, K., & Parsons, J. A. (2019). The good, the bad, and the ugly of implicit bias. *The Lancet*, 393(10171), 502-504.

Wiggins, B. E. (2017). Intercultural games and simulations. In Y. Y. Kim & K. L. McKay-Semmler (Eds.), *The international encyclopedia of intercultural communication*. Hoboken, NJ: Wiley.

Source

This exercise was developed by Ifeoma Onyebuchi, Stellina Ogedengbe, and Favour Ilolo, drawing inspiration from established concepts of bias, including the halo/horns effect. The idea of using Jenga as a tool for promoting diversity and inclusion activities was adapted from <https://teambuilding.com/blog/diversity-games>. Others are welcome to use and adapt this exercise.

