



Five Easy Pieces

Purpose: To provide people with an experience that helps them shift from thinking about different objects to relationships among them.

Time: 15-20 minutes`

Synopsis: Participants are divided into teams of five, and individuals or pairs are given three random pieces of a square. Each team member must make a square.

Number: 5 minimum, or any multiple of 5 participants.

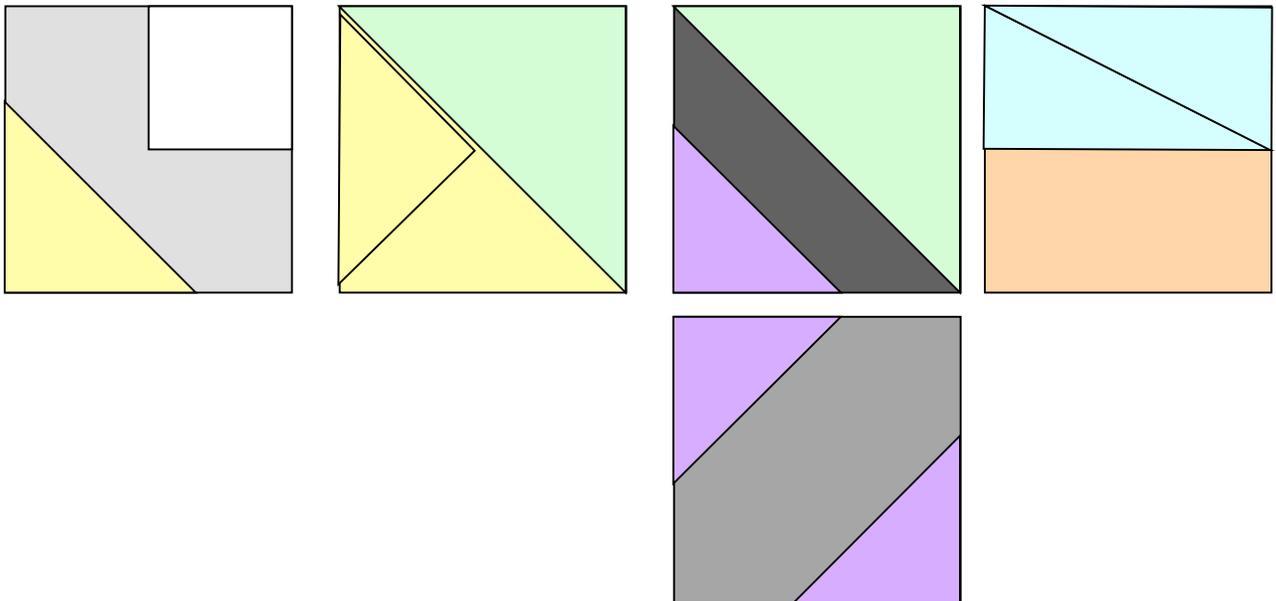
Space: Enough for each group of 5 people to sit in a circle in chairs at a table, or on the floor without a table.

Materials: Five square pieces of paper or cardboard for each team:
5 square pieces of colored paper or cardboard, 10 inches by 10 inches (or close as long as it is square).

If there are 30 people in the training session, there 6 sets of 5 squares (each square cut into 3 pieces), prepared according to the instructions below.

Preparation: Using scissors, ruler, and a pencil, make five 10 in. X 10 in. (or close to this size) squares for each participant. Use a sturdy material, such as construction paper or cardboard is preferable.

For each set of five people, cut up the squares as indicated below:



Use the different colors as guides for the different shapes to be made (i.e., same color = same shape).

Note: The pieces used by the participants should all be the same color.

Also Note: There are 3 pieces or shapes for each square, and each group gets 5 squares, so the total number of pieces for each group of five participants will be 15 pieces.



For each group of 5 participants, once the shapes are cut, mix them up and divide them into five piles, with three pieces in each pile.

Set Up: Have as many sets of 3, randomly divided, pieces of squares ready to give each participant.

Instructions:

1. Ask participants to gather in circles, in groups of five, either around tables or circular areas on the floor. If, for example, you had 50 people, you can either divide them into 10 groups of five, or 5 groups of 5 pairs.
2. Give every person or pair three random pieces.
3. Tell everyone that their goal is to form a square (flat on the table or ground) with the cut up pieces of paper. (Be careful not to suggest that the members of the team are competing with each other.) Each team member is to form 1 complete square.
4. Explain these rules:
 - A person or pair wanting to exchange a piece can place it in the center of the circle on the table or floor. Exchange just 1 piece at a time.
 - A piece placed in the center may be taken by another participant.
 - No one should have more than 3 pieces at one time.
 - *No talking.*
 - No folding of paper pieces.
 - No overlapping of pieces.
 - All pieces should be used (each square is comprised of 3 pieces).

During the activity:

Usually the first reaction is for each person or pair to try to solve the puzzle individually. Eventually, someone or pair will either sit self-satisfied with a square in front of them, or raise their hands and say, "I got it!"

At this point, you may have to remind the group of the objective: Each team member is to form a square with the cut up pieces of paper. One complete square is not enough. There must be 5 complete squares in each group.

The person who completed a square may have to give up a piece of that square so all members are able to form squares. This exchange seems counter-intuitive to many at first.

Debrief:

Ask "What happened?" and let participants talk.

Key points:

- How, in real-time, it is possible to shift our perceptions from objects (the cut up pieces of paper) to relationships (among the players).
- How our tendency to "go it alone" can create barriers to effectively seeing the interdependencies in systems and inhibit problem-solving.
- How a greater ability to identify mental models enables us to more readily see underlying systemic structures and key inter-relationships.