

AND NOT BUT

The And Not But activity helps us to reflect on the simple words we use to communicate, and how these can impact a conversation. "But" is an interesting word in communication. It is a minimizing word that detracts from, and qualifies, the statement before it. By replacing the word "but" with "and," communication can have a more positive and powerful feel. Our choice of words and responses can frame a conversation and help us to communicate more effectively.



10-15 minutes



Minimum of 2



None

Source: Adapted from multiple sources

DEBRIEF *(following the activity)*

In both planning sessions you were using the word "yes."

- How did it feel when you were planning your trip using "yes, but?" Now, how did it feel when you were planning your trip using "yes, and?"
- Did you feel the flow of the conversation change when you used "and" instead of "but?" If yes, how did it change?
- How can we change our language and framing around issues to communicate more effectively in health care?
- Where can you embed this change in your day-to-day work or activities? What's one thing you could try in the coming week?

By replacing the word "but" with "and," communication can have a more positive and powerful feel. "But" often acts as a minimizing word that detracts from, and qualifies, the statement before it.



1. In partners, plan a vacation with one partner using only “yes, but” after each statement.
2. One partner will start the conversation with a statement and then the second partner will follow with a statement starting with “yes, but.” For example:
 - Partner 1: We are going on a trip to Hawaii and we are going to go to Maui.
 - Partner 2: Yes, but I can’t go next week as I have a work meeting.
 - Partner 1: That’s okay – we can switch the time.
 - Partner 2: Yes, but I don’t like Hawaii.
3. After a few minutes of planning your trip using “yes, but,” switch and repeat the exercise above using nothing but “yes, and.”
4. One partner will start the conversation with a statement and then the second partner will follow with a statement starting only with “yes, and.” For example:
 - Partner 1: We are going on a trip to Hawaii and we are going to go to Maui.
 - Partner 2: Yes, and we are going to go to the beach every day.
 - Partner 1: Yes, and we are going to go snorkelling.
5. After a few minutes of planning your trip using “yes, and”, debrief on the language used and how it felt using “and” versus “but.”

BLINDFOLD

In this activity, blindfolded participants must rely on their partners to navigate an obstacle course successfully. The activity is designed to help improve communication and listening skills, and to build trust between partners.



15-20 minutes



10-50



- A large private room
- Enough blindfolds for half of the participants
- Furniture and other items to use as obstacles

Source: Adapted from Mindtools

DEBRIEF *(following the activity)*

- How did participants have to communicate differently to guide their partners?
- How did their listening skills change and adapt when they were blindfolded?
- What did it feel like to give up control and trust your partner?
- How could you apply this learning/experience in your work?

WHAT TO DO



1. Scatter furniture and objects around the room before the activity begins. Your course should be challenging, but still safe to navigate.
2. Put team members into pairs and ask them to stand together at one end of the room.
3. One person from each pair should put on a blindfold.
4. The sighted people must verbally guide their partners across the room by giving them instructions to help them avoid the obstacles and other people.
5. When each team reaches the other side of the room, partners should switch roles and then repeat the exercise.

BUILDING BLOCKS

This activity develops descriptive and instructional skills as well as teamwork.



30-45 minutes



4-24



2 identical building block sets for each participating group

Source: Adapted from LiveStrong

DEBRIEF *(following the activity)*

Based on the role you had in the activity:

- What was the hardest part of this activity?
- What was the easiest part of this activity?
- As the observer in the activity, what suggestions would you make?
- What did you learn as a team?
- What communication strategies could be embedded into this activity to ensure greater success for the team?
- How was the activity different the second time around?

WHAT TO DO



1. Organize attendees into groups of four.
2. Each group member will choose one of the following four roles: the director, the runner, the builder, or the observer.
3. The director and builder will be located on opposite sides of the room with their backs to each other, each with their own set of building blocks.
4. The facilitator will ask the directors to build something with their blocks.
5. The director must then give instructions to the runner, who must relay those instructions to the builder in an attempt to have the builder create an exact replica of the director's blocks.
6. The observer should observe the activities of the builder, runner and director without commenting aloud.
7. The activity is limited to ten minutes.
8. Once the builders have completed their structures, have the rest of the group come over to the builders' side of the room for debriefing.
9. Following the debrief, run the activity a second time, using the same method and team members in the same roles. Once the builders have completed their second structures, have the team come over to the builders' side of the room for debriefing.

FLAME THROWING

Body language can be a huge indication of how a person is feeling, and facial expressions are often the conveyor of meaning. We can free ourselves from feelings of rejection and threat by eliminating eye contact. Removing eye contact allows us to stay present and absorb feedback more effectively.



30-60 minutes



Groups of 8-10 (can have multiple groups)



Paper on which to write feedback

Source: Adapted from THNK School for Creative Leadership

DEBRIEF *(following the activity)*

For those receiving feedback (idea pitchers):

- Was it difficult listening to feedback?
- Did it get easier over time?
- What elements did you hear that needed improvement?
- How did you improve/adjust for your next pitch?

For those giving feedback (flamethrowers)

- Was it difficult to provide feedback?
- What did you like about this method of providing feedback?

WHAT TO DO



1. Arrange the room with 1-2 chairs for those pitching their idea(s) at the front of the room, facing a semicircle of 6-8 chairs. Ask 1-2 participants to volunteer to pitch an idea to the group.
2. Ask 6-8 participants to volunteer to be flamethrowers.
3. All volunteer participants are invited to come up to the chairs at the front of the room.
4. The volunteers with the idea(s) take three minutes to make a pitch to the flamethrowers.
5. Flamethrowers should have a few minutes to ask clarifying questions of the idea pitchers.
6. After the pitch, those pitching the idea should turn their chair(s) around so they are facing away from the flamethrowers.
7. The flamethrowers provide feedback on the pitch and try to "burn down" or pick holes in the idea. Note: The idea pitchers are not allowed to respond to feedback during this time, they are only allowed to listen.
8. Once the flame throwing is over, the idea-pitching volunteers are given five minutes to refine their idea(s).
9. A new group of flamethrowers are chosen.
10. Idea-pitching volunteers present their refined idea(s), and repeat the questioning and flame throwing process a second time.

JUST LISTEN

This activity encourages participants to communicate how they think and feel about a subject. It is intended to strengthen team members' listening skills.



25-30 minutes



Minimum of 2



8 index cards per pair; each card lists 1 discussion topic

Source: Adapted from MindTools

DEBRIEF *(following the activity)*

- How did speakers feel about their partners' ability to listen with an open mind?
- Did their partners' body language communicate how they felt about what was being said?
- How did listeners feel about not being able to speak their own views on the topic? How well were they able to keep an open mind? How well did they listen?
- How well did the listening partner summarize the speakers' opinions? Did they get better as the exercise progressed?
- How can we use the lessons from this activity in our day-to-day work?

Listening is an incredibly important part of good communication; however, it is a skill that people often ignore in team activities. This exercise can show team members how to listen with an open mind.

WHAT TO DO



1. In advance of the session, prepare enough index cards for each team of two to have its own set of eight cards. Each card will have a different discussion topic listed on it (e.g. the role of culture in health care, trust in our work, patient safety, etc.).
2. Ask everyone present to pair off.
3. Provide each pair with their own set of eight index cards.
4. One partner blindly chooses a card and then speaks for three minutes on how they think and feel about that topic. Their partner cannot speak during this time – their primary goal is to listen.
5. After three minutes, the listener has one minute to recap what their partner said. They cannot debate, agree, or disagree – only summarize.
6. Next, the roles switch and teams begin the process again.

LOTS AND LOTS

This exercise provides an opportunity to be agile and adaptive while communicating. The hand gestures presented by the partners force the story to take a different direction than it might have otherwise taken. Often, when we are leading change, outside forces may come along unexpectedly. Being able to adapt in these situations will contribute to our success with whatever we are working on.



5-10 minutes



Pairs



None

Source: Adapted from THINK School for Creative Leadership

DEBRIEF *(following the activity)*

- What was difficult about this exercise? Did anyone stumble while telling their story?
- Who successfully told their story using the five senses?
- Who shifted their story according to the hand gesture delivered?

WHAT TO DO



1. Ask participants to come up with hand gestures that signify the five senses (sight, sound, smell, taste, and touch). For example, pinching your nose may signify "smell."
2. Divide participants into pairs.
3. Assign one member of each team to be the storyteller and another to deliver hand gestures to influence the direction of the story.
4. Have the storyteller make up a story starting with "There once was a boy who was lost in the woods..."
5. While the story is being told, the other team member will help direct the story by giving the storyteller different hand gestures.
6. The storyteller must shift the description of the story according to the hand gestures being presented. For example, if their partner pinches their nose, they may say "but there was a strange smell in the woods."
7. As you work through the story, try to direct the story by using all the hand gestures.
8. After one round, ask participants to switch roles and play again.

MAKE A TEAM WITH...

In this activity, team members must act quickly to form small teams based on instructions that you shout out. The aim is to strengthen communication and help teach participants to “think on their feet” when needing to make quick decisions.



15-20 minutes



Minimum of 10



None

Source: Adapted from Mindtools

DEBRIEF *(following the activity)*

- How did you communicate during this activity?
- What communication strategies worked well?
- What communication strategies did not work well?
- What communication strategies could we embed into our day-to-day environments to help make communication more effective?
- Were you surprised by what you had in common in the room?
- Were you surprised by differences in the room?

WHAT TO DO



1. Explain to participants that they will have to form a team based on the instructions that you shout out. For example, some instructions could include getting into a team with people who have the same number of children as you, or getting into a team with people who are born in the same month as you.
2. As the facilitator, shout out the instructions for the team request. Encourage participants to work as quickly as possible.
3. Once a team is complete (i.e. all the people in the room with two children have come together), participants can shout out or sit down to signal that their team is finished.
4. Repeat the exercise as many times as you want.

REINFORCER

Feedback is important. Learning to provide it effectively is key for high functioning teams. This activity helps you consider the most effective ways to guide your teammates to their goals, and demonstrates the power of using positive and negative reinforcement.



10-15 minutes



Minimum of 6



Timer/stopwatch

Source: Unknown

DEBRIEF *(following the activity)*

- Which method was the most effective in guiding the volunteer to the object?
- Which method was the least effective?
- What does this exercise tell us about the usefulness of different types of feedback we should be giving to our teammates?
- How could the learning from this exercise be applied to your work?

WHAT TO DO



1. Send three volunteers outside of the room (they are not to hear what the activity is about at the start).
2. As the facilitator, instruct the remaining participants to choose one object in the room (e.g. someone's coffee mug).
3. Inform the participants that the objective is to help each volunteer locate this object.
4. Before bringing the first volunteer into the room, tell the participants that they may only help this volunteer by booing or jeering whenever they move AWAY from the object.
5. Bring the first volunteer into the room. Tell them there is an object in the room they need to find, and that the audience will be giving them clues on how to locate it.
6. Time how long it takes for the first volunteer to locate the object.
7. Before bringing the second volunteer into the room, tell the participants that they may only help this volunteer by cheering or applauding whenever they move TOWARD the object.
8. Bring the second volunteer into the room, and tell them there is an object in the room they need to find, and that the audience will be giving them clues on how to locate it.
9. Time how long it takes for the second volunteer to locate the object.
10. Before bringing the third volunteer into the room, tell the participants that they will combine both methods by jeering when the volunteer moves AWAY from the object and applauding when they move TOWARD the object.
11. Time how long this takes for the third volunteer to locate the object.

TELEPHONE

When we communicate with others, we cannot know if they have heard us as intended unless they tell us what they have heard. Communication strategies like closed-loop communication can ensure the message was transferred as intended. Telephone is an easy way to experience the differences between one-way (open-loop) and two-way (closed-loop) communication.



15-30 minutes



Groups of 5-10 (can have multiple groups)



2 pre-prepared messages (approximately 3 sentences long)

Source: Unknown

DEBRIEF *(following the activity)*

In both rounds you were receiving and conveying a message.

- What were the differences between Round 1 and Round 2?
- What was the difference in the accuracy of the message conveyed?
- Did you feel the flow of the message change depending on one-way versus two-way communication?
- Was there a clarifying question that was helpful?
- How can we embed closed-loop communication in our day-to-day work?

WHAT TO DO



This is a familiar activity that requires virtually no set up and is easy to pull together quickly. Two rounds of telephone will be played with two different examples. In the first round, one-way communication will be used. The second round will involve closed-loop communication (two-way).

1. Once in groups, identify who the first message sender will be for both rounds. Provide that person with a pre-prepared message that is about three sentences in length.
2. In the first round, the message sender must whisper the message exactly as written to the person sitting next to them. They can only say it once (no repeating). The receiver listens to the message once and cannot ask questions or write anything down.
3. The receiver then becomes the new sender and conveys the statement quietly to the next receiver in line.
4. Continue through the entire group.
5. The last receiver will share the message they heard aloud with the group. The first sender then reads the original message aloud.
6. Debrief with the group (see debriefing questions back of card).
7. Now, repeat this activity a second time with a new message. This time, the message sender says the message once and the receiver listening to the message repeats what they heard back to the sender. They can also ask one clarifying question. The sender repeats the message or clarifies discrepancies. This can only happen once per pair.
8. The receiver becomes the new sender and conveys the statement to the next receiver with the new rules.
9. Continue through the entire group.
10. The last receiver will share the message they heard with the group. See how this compares to the original message written down by the initial sender.
11. Debrief with the group a second time .

TOSS ME SOME FEEDBACK

This activity brings a team together to explore the importance of giving and receiving feedback and support in order to achieve successful outcomes.



10-15 minutes



Groups of 4-7 (can have multiple groups)



- Balls, bean bags or similar tossing items
- Blindfolds
- Stopwatch/timer
- Masking tape
- Boxes (empty paper boxes are great)

Source: Adapted from Team Building Toolkit

DEBRIEF *(following the activity)*

- Tossers: What was challenging for you in Round 1 when you were receiving no feedback? How did you overcome the lack of support? Team: During Round 1, how did it feel to simply watch?
- Tossers: What was challenging for you in Round 2 when you received minimal feedback? Team: Your experience during Round 2?
- Tossers & Team: How was Round 3 different? How did it feel to be able to provide feedback? How did it feel to receive it?
- In the workplace, do we sometimes simply watch, or do we offer to help each other and accept help from others?
- When we do offer and accept help, what makes this process effective? What would make it more effective?
- What kind of feedback is most effective for you and why?

WHAT TO DO



1. Each team needs one blindfold, one ball or bean bag, and one box.
2. Tape a start line for each team on the floor.
3. Place a box at least ten feet away from each start line.
4. Each team needs to assign a tosser, a retriever, a scorekeeper, and an assistant.
5. The tosser is blindfolded, stands behind the start line, and will throw the ball.
6. The retriever picks up the ball and throws it back to the assistant.
7. The assistant gives the ball back to the tosser.
8. The scorekeeper adds up the successful tosses for each round.
9. The remaining team members observe and/or cheer as per round instructions (see below).
10. One point is scored for every ball the tosser gets into the box. Note: the ball can bounce out; as long as it bounces into the goal box first, it counts as a point.
11. Play each round (1 minute per round). The goal is for the tosser to score as many points as possible in that minute.

Round 1:

1. No talking.
2. The tosser attempts to score as many points as possible with no input or coaching from their team.

Round 2:

1. The team can coach their tosser by saying either "yeah" or "boo," but nothing else.
2. The tosser attempts to score as many points as possible with this limited feedback from their team.

Round 3:

1. The team can coach their tosser by providing any helpful information.
2. The tosser attempts to score as many points as possible with extensive feedback from their team.

TRADE

In this activity, team members trade pieces of playing cards to put together complete cards. This activity is useful for showing team members others' perspectives, building communication and negotiation skills, and helping individuals to develop empathy.



15-20 minutes



Minimum of 9



- Playing cards (enough for 4-6 cards per team), cut into 4 triangular pieces
- Envelopes
- Private room

Source: Adapted from Mindtools

DEBRIEF *(following the activity)*

- Which negotiation strategies worked? Which didn't?
- What could you have done better?
- What other communication and teamwork skills could have made this activity more successful?

WHAT TO DO



1. Cut each playing card in half diagonally, then in half diagonally again, so you have four triangular pieces for each card.
2. Mix all of the pieces together and put equal numbers of cards into as many envelopes as you have teams.
3. Divide people up into teams of three or four – you need at least three teams. Give each team an envelope of playing card pieces.
4. Each team has three minutes to sort its pieces, determine which ones it needs to make complete cards, and develop a bargaining strategy. This strategy can be anything you like, but you might want to consider the best approach to get the cards you need – think bartering!
5. After three minutes, allow the teams to start bartering for pieces. People can barter on their own or collectively with their team. Give the teams eight minutes to barter.
6. When the time is up, count each team's completed cards. Whichever team has the most complete cards wins the round.