

**Incredible**

# ICE BREAKER

**Games & Ideas**

**Sticky  
Rope**

**Everything you Need to Make  
Your Event a HUGE Success**

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## **INTRODUCTION**

Thank you very much for purchasing our **Sticky Rope "How To"** activity guide from our <http://ice-breaker-ideas.com> website.

**Sticky Rope is an engaging, cerebral activity that rewards teams for planning their work... and then working their plan! Teams are asked to tie a knot in the Sticky Rope, but this apparently simple task proves harder than expected. This activity produces big smiles and rewards teams for collaborating effectively, keeping a cool head under pressure, and keeping their eyes on the goal!**

Our team activities have been developed over the course of hundreds of events, run across the UK and Europe during the past 20 years. We believe they represent the highest-quality team building activities available for purchase anywhere. Already, we have received exceptional feedback from teams and organisations that are using our activities to promote their team building initiatives.

As well as the downloaded set of instructions you will receive a CD with a copy of the participant brief in editable .doc format. You are welcome to adapt and edit this to suit your purposes or to add your own logos. We simply ask that you maintain the copyright statement at the foot of the document. Thank you.

We hope you will be completely satisfied with your order. Please make sure to tell your friends and colleagues about us.

Should you have any questions about the running of your activity, or are not completely satisfied with what you have purchased, please do not hesitate to contact me using the details below.

Thank you again for choosing Incredible Ice Breaker Games & Ideas

## **The Role of Adjudicator and Facilitator**

In running experiential team exercises you will need to fulfil the roles of *Adjudicator* and *Facilitator*. Understanding these two different roles is vital to doing a good job.

### ***Adjudicator:***

As *Adjudicator* your role is to monitor the activity ensuring that operating conditions are observed. An adjudicator may need to intervene if a participant fails to observe these conditions. An adjudicator may also need to record or time a group during a particular phase of the activity. The good adjudicator is alert and friendly but consistent, firm and fair.

The adjudicator is not a member of the team and should not be drawn into helping the team. You may, during the activity, be asked by a participant "Can we..." or "Are we allowed to...". We have found it best to simply refer the questioner back to the written brief. A simple statement like "Everything you need to know is on the brief" is very effective. As an adjudicator, you should avoid being drawn into answering task-related questions. Participants tend to put extra weight on any information they detect from the adjudicator. So things as simple as a smile, a creased brow or a nod will be picked up on. Try to stay as neutral as possible.

It is also the team's job to read the brief and extract from this the key points. Teams often do a poor job of this. If a team is unclear about objectives and operating conditions then problems are very likely to follow. This is something that can very usefully be discussed in the de-brief by the facilitator. It is not the job of the adjudicator to read the brief to the participants or to highlight key points.

It should be a team responsibility to manage time during the activity. If, during the exercise, you are asked you "how long do we have left" we suggest you tell them that you will indicate clearly when their time is up. Don't manage time for them!

As adjudicator you will need to intervene when the allotted time has expired. Don't just allow the exercise to run over! It is usually best to end the exercise and then to consider the reasons that time ran out in the de-brief. Alternatively you may decide to allow the team more time if they wish to continue. Agree how much additional time is needed then tell them you will be discussing their reasons for needing more time during the debrief.

Finally, if the group has struggled on a task it may be helpful for the adjudicator to provide some clarity on the task. The aim here is to help participants to understand the nature of the problem and possible solutions.

This should help participants to move in to the de-brief without feeling a need to dwell on task elements that would otherwise dominate discussion. The adjudicator must be careful to avoid telling the team what they “should have done”. It is the desire of the group to discover for themselves what they “should have done” that helps make the debrief a vital part of the learning process.

### ***Facilitator:***

As *Facilitator* your role is to assist the group in the process of learning from the activity. Typically the facilitator observes during the activity without interfering or commenting on the task as it unfolds. The facilitator then guides the group through a de-brief that should, ideally, immediately follow the activity.

The facilitator is a neutral and skilful observer who is seen, by the team, as having “no axe to grind”.

Of course, the facilitator may also decide to intervene *during* the activity if they observe something that is of particular relevance to the team. For example, a team may have decided before starting the activity that they will consult all team members during their planning stage. If the facilitator observes the team not implementing this agreed action then the facilitator may decide to intervene. This type of intervention can be very powerful and valuable however it is our experience that on short team activities it is usually better to save observations for the debrief.

However, as facilitator, if you decide to intervene during the activity we recommend you indicate clearly to the team that you want to intervene and that you are “stopping the clock” or “taking a time-out”. This allows the team to temporarily switch from the task to consider the question or information you are presenting to them. When the intervention is complete tell the team and then restart the clock.

The facilitator is more actively involved during the debrief stage. There are many ways of structuring a de-brief. Much will depend on the maturity level of the group and also the time that is available. A more directive and structured approach may be called for when time is very pressed. A group that is proficient in self-review may prefer a more free-flowing approach.

### ***In conclusion:***

In team building situations the focus should be fixed clearly on the team and the members of that team. The effective adjudicator/facilitator recognises this and does not seek to dominate. The good adjudicator/facilitator will encourage the team to police themselves and identify relevant learning for them selves. In practice this may take some time, and each team will progress towards this goal at a different rate.

# Sticky Rope – Trainer’s Notes

<b>Participants:</b>	Flexible, however, this event works well with a team size of between 4 – 7 people
<b>Timings:</b>	Flexible, however, 15 minutes tends to be a challenging but achievable time frame for the activity
<b>Location:</b>	Any clear flat space - indoors or outdoors

*Teams attempt to tie a knot while their hands are “stuck” gripping the rope. This is a challenge that at first appearance seems simple but proves to be much trickier than expected. The activity is a fun energiser that requires group problem-solving skills.*

## **Equipment Checklist - You Will Need:**

- 1 x Participant Brief
- 1 x 5m length of rope (climbing rope is ideal however any type of rope that is pleasant to handle is fine)
- 1 x stop watch

## **Setting-up the Activity:**

Have the Participant Brief and Sticky Rope available to the team. Ensure that the adjudicator can tie a Reef Knot!

## **Monitoring the Activity:**

Tell the team they have 15 minutes to complete the challenge and that their time begins when you hand them the brief. This is a challenging time allowance. If you want to be a little less challenging then allocate 20 minutes.

After the team fully reads the brief, they may request the adjudicator to demonstrate a reef knot. Please note that, although a reef knot is common

across many nations and cultures, participants may know this knot by a different name (e.g. a square knot).

The adjudicator should show how the knot is tied using the Sticky Rope.

The knot is tied using two ends of the rope and then placing *left over right and under* followed by *right over left and under*. The resulting knot looks like the photo.



*The correctly tied and loaded Reef Knot*

You will see that the correctly tied knot is essentially two loops that pull tight on each other. Make sure you are comfortable tying a reef knot before demonstrating it to the team.

Stand back and allow teams to practice. When they are ready they will call for an adjudicator to time their observed attempt.

The adjudicator should call out *1...2...3...Go!* And then start their stopwatch.

While observing, the adjudicator should check that the conditions of the brief are being observed. In particular the brief states that all participants must fully grip the rope with both hands. Sliding hands along the rope or releasing fingers to flick the rope are breaking this condition. A group infringing this rule should be given a verbal warning that they are breaking the condition and allowed to try again.

It is possible that the group correctly ties the knot but then pulls the knot in the wrong direction. This is referred to as *splitting the knot* and is a mistake as it results in a knot that will not do the job of a correctly tied and loaded Reef Knot. It is their job to show you the correct knot!



*A reef knot correctly tied but "split". This or any other permutation is NOT acceptable for a successful outcome on this challenge!*

Finally, the adjudicator needs to confirm that the team has completed their knot in less than 60 seconds. If they fail a team may make a second observed attempt.

### **Debriefing the activity:**

This activity can be debriefed in many ways. Try and steer the discussion on to the process of HOW the team worked together rather than the detail of the task. For example: did the team listen to all ideas and suggestions or did one person dominate?

Sticky Rope is a good example of an activity that proves to be rather more difficult than first anticipated. It is worth exploring strategies a team can use in these situations.

For a few suggestions about debriefing please refer to the accompanying guide "Debriefing Team Activities".

### **Variations on the activity:**

**COMPETITIVE:** If you are working with multiple teams, you can arrange the activity as a race between the teams to be the first to complete the challenge in under 60 seconds. You will need an additional Participant Brief and Sticky Rope for each additional team.

You should verbally instruct teams that they now have time to practice and, when ready, should call for you to adjudicate their attempt. If teams call

you while you are adjudicating another team, you should make note of the order in which teams call for you, then finish the adjudication you are on.

**CONTINUAL IMPROVEMENT:** a team can be challenged to improve their performance. They could set themselves a time target and then practice more before further observed attempts.

**OTHER KNOTS:** There is no need to stick to the reef knot (if you excuse the pun!). Why not try other knots?

## Participant Brief - Team Challenge



# STICKY ROPE

**Your objective is to tie a REEF KNOT in the rope.**

*This is a very special sticky rope with special characteristics!*

- Once one team member touches the rope, ALL team members must place BOTH hands on the rope.
- Hands must be totally closed and tightly gripping the rope at all times.
- As the rope is sticky, no one will be permitted to release hands or fingers, or slide hands along the rope or allow rope to be pulled through their hands until the challenge is completed or abandoned.

You now have an opportunity to practice before making an observed attempt.

During practice you may regard the rope as a standard piece of rope however once you start an observed attempt the adjudicator will watch carefully to ensure that you adhere to the conditions outlined in the bullet points above.

When ready to make an observed attempt please call for an adjudicator. You have TWO chances to demonstrate to the adjudicator that you can tie a reef knot in the sticky rope in 60 seconds or less. Observed attempts must be completed within the allotted time for this activity.

*If you are unsure about how to tie a reef knot then the adjudicator will, on request, demonstrate. Your finished reef knot MUST clearly match the knot shown by the adjudicator. It is possible to correctly tie a reef knot but then to pull the ends of the rope in such a way as to "split the knot". This is not acceptable.*

## **A guide to debriefing team building activities:**

Debriefing a team activity involves reflecting upon what has just happened. The debrief may include discussion, analysis, feedback, problem-solving, recognising patterns of behaviour, examining team dynamics, exploring theoretical model, drawing parallels, and action planning.

An activity can be debriefed in many ways – there is no single “right way” or “wrong way.” The skilled facilitator aims to maximise learning opportunities for participants. In the longer term the facilitator may build internal facilitation skills within the team so they become proficient at self-review.

Following an activity most groups are keen to talk about the experience they have just been through. While replaying “what happened and why” may be useful, the skilled facilitator is looking for opportunities to examine wider ranging issues about effective teamwork, the team and the team’s objectives.

For example, during an activity the team may have encountered a problem due to a knot failing to do its intended job. Discussion about the merits of different knots and which knot should have been used may be interesting however there is little to be gained by the team unless knot selection is a component of the team’s real work. Instead the facilitator may guide the review toward how a team can discover new skills within the team, gain consensus on a course of action and then ensure the right team members get the right tasks.

The facilitator will normally try to steer the discussion on to the process of HOW the team worked together rather than the detail of the task. Here are a few suggestions you might like to try:

1. Ask the group to discuss and then identify things they did well that helped them work effectively as a team. These could be recorded on a flipchart.
2. Ask the group to identify things they did that got in the way of them working effectively (or when they felt least effective as a team). Again, these could be recorded on a flipchart

A member of the team can record discussion points or the facilitator can act as “scribe”.

It is worth looking deeper at the points generated by questions 1 and 2. While some points may simply be interesting, other points may be particularly significant for the team. A team may have built-up some very good habits but also some unhelpful ones. The skilled facilitator helps a team to recognise patterns of behaviour. For example, the team may have a fun and lively approach to solving problems together; this is worth maintaining. However, the same team may lose heart rather easily, giving-up when

problems arise. In this case, the team may usefully look at how this can be addressed in their work together as a team.

3. It is also useful to hear how team members individually experienced the event. It frequently happens that team members experience the same activity very differently. For example, one team member feels *"really pleased because we worked extremely well together"* while a second team member *"felt frustrated because I was sidelined and not listened to"*. It is useful to examine the emotional aspect of working in teams not because the aim is "happy families" but because, in the longer term, the effectiveness of the team depends on team members feeling valued. The facilitator should avoid being drawn into who was "right" and who was "wrong" but instead asks the team to consider the outcome if team members do feel frustrated in their work, or asks the team to discuss how they can check that individuals are being consulted.
4. Are there any parallels with the workplace? Do any of the issues arising from discussions in 1, 2 and 3 occur in the work place. Again, the facilitator tries to differentiate between the "interesting" points and the "relevant" points.

To conclude the de-brief, the facilitator should guide the team toward identifying what they can carry forward from the activity. This action planning should not only focus on how the team can improve but also on maintaining and building upon those things that are already working well. Learning points may relate to the team completing tasks more effectively, building a sense of unity and purpose to the team or helping individuals to contribute and gain satisfaction from participation.

Learning points can be carried forward to implement in following team activities and also provide valuable material for action planning at the end of a longer team building event or programme. At this point all learning points derived from team exercises should be discussed in the wider context of the team and the team's goals.

The good debrief re-enforces the good things that the team is already doing (and that may otherwise go un-noted) while addressing those areas that need attention. This process of self-review with a clear focus on results is characteristic of high-performing teams.