



# Jet Fighter

Navigate challenges in communication and figure out what symbol everyone has

## TIME

30-45 minutes



## TEAM STAGE

Norming, Performing

## MATERIALS

¼ sheets of paper, pens, copies of role instructions

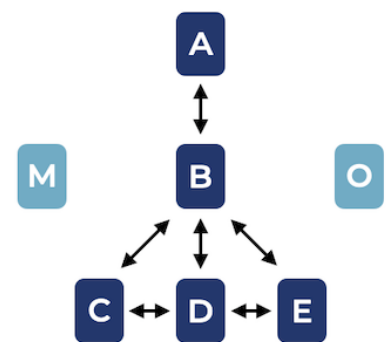
## SUMMARY

Explore communication systems and the ways that messages are or are not delivered in a group.

## SET UP

- Divide participants into groups of five or six. If desired, groups can have seven participants and include an observer. If a group has five participants, remove a chair from the C-E row or share messengers with another group.
- Arrange groups of five chairs so they are in a “Jet Fighter” formation (one chair at the front, one chair behind, and three chairs next to each other behind the middle chair). If there are not that many chairs available, groups can sit on the floor in this formation.
- Put a stack of ¼ sheets of paper and pen at each seat.
- Prepare the following rules on poster paper or whiteboard so they can be referenced throughout the activity:

Seating Chart



- Seating Chart (as indicated above. Omit “O” if there is not an observer.)
- [The following information can be on a flip chart, or it can be for your information only]
  - A, B, C, D, and E are Participants.
  - M is the Messenger.
  - O is the Observer.
  - A can communicate with B (that’s what the arrows represent).
  - B can communicate with A, C, D, and E.
  - C, D, and E can communicate with B and with each other.
- All communication must be in writing, in memo format (see below). You must use participants letters, not their names, in all communication. Messages that are incorrectly formatted may be delayed or destroyed.

**To:** B  
**From:** D  
**Memo:** I have an idea about what we can do. Would you like to hear it?



## INSTRUCTIONS

- Give each role their instructions. Either have posters prepared for each role and then call the participants in those roles out of the room to give them instructions, or hand out individual instruction print-outs to each participant. Either way, make sure each participant has their symbols written down. Tell participants that no questions will be answered about the instructions and there will be no speaking once the instructions have been given.
  - **Facilitator Note:** The instructions say that participants may not "show" their symbols to anyone. Participants may interpret this in different ways, which will add to the challenge of the activity. Ultimately, everyone will need to find some way to communicate their symbols.
- The instructions for each group are as follows:

- Person A:
  - In this exercise, you are Person A. The reporting structure is as follows: B reports to you; C, D, and E report to B.
  - Each of you have been given five symbols, each of which is one of six familiar symbols. Your job is to find out which one of the six symbols is held in common. You must finish this job in 20 minutes. You may communicate with B only through the exchange of written notes. B may exchange notes with you and C, D, and E. Persons C, D, and E may exchange notes with B and with each other. No other communication is permitted.
  - To Elaborate:
    - There are six unique symbols.
    - Each person has five of these six possible symbols.
    - There are five symbols that appear four times each
    - There is one symbol that appears five times.
    - You are to determine which one symbol all five people hold.
  - Your symbols are as follows:  
 $= \div \Sigma \& ?$

- Person B:
  - A & B may exchange notes.
  - C, D, and E may exchange notes with B, and with each other.
  - No other communication is permitted.
  - You will find five symbols below. You may not show them to any other person.  
 $\Sigma \div = \& \Psi$

- Person C:
  - A & B may exchange notes.
  - C, D, and E may exchange notes with B, and with each other.
  - No other communication is permitted.
  - You will find five symbols below. You may not show them to any other person.  
 $\Psi \div ? = \&$



## INSTRUCTIONS *(continued)*

- Person D:
  - A & B may exchange notes.
  - C, D, and E may exchange notes with B, and with each other.
  - No other communication is permitted.
  - You will find five symbols below. You may not show them to any other person.  
 $\div$  ? &  $\Psi$   $\Sigma$

- Person E:
  - A & B may exchange notes.
  - C, D, and E may exchange notes with B, and with each other.
  - No other communication is permitted.
  - You will find five symbols below. You may not show them to any other person.  
 $\Psi = \Sigma$  ?  $\div$

- Messenger:
  - Please move as quickly as you can.
  - You must correctly deliver all messages which are properly addressed, although messages can be delayed. You are encouraged to delay messages to the extent that you wish.
  - Do not deliver messages that are not properly addressed.
  - If you have any questions, raise your hand.
  - All communication must be in writing, in memo format.
    - TO:** Person A
    - FROM:** Person B
    - Memo:** *Include message here.*
  - If a message is incorrectly addressed, either return it without saying anything, put it in your pocket, or throw it away. You can be dramatic or subtle. You do not have to tell them why you are returning or throwing it away. The point here is that sometimes messages are given incorrectly, not addressed correctly, or given to the wrong person, with the result being that they don't get "delivered."


- Observer:
  - Watch what each of the other participants in your group does.
  - Take notes on what is taking place and how each participant is responding.


- Once you have given each group their instructions, tell the whole group that they have 20 minutes to complete the activity. If they need more paper, they can request some from their Messenger.
- Stand back and watch what happens. Do not answer questions or engage with participants aside from assisting Messengers if they raise their hand or providing additional supplies to participants.
  - **Facilitator Note:** Person A will have all of the instructions and information. Persons B-E will have very limited instructions. The Messenger will have even less information and the Observer will have the least information about what is going on.



## VARIATIONS


- This activity can be done using pieces of a project or event instead of symbols. Give different parts to plan to different roles and tell them that they need to complete their project together and the only way they can communicate to each other is through a Messenger. For example, the goal can be to plan a birthday party where Person A needs to decide on a theme, Person B needs to plan food, Person C needs to choose vendors, etc.
  - The instructions would need to be changed for this variation. For example, the instructions for Person D could be:
    - A & B may exchange notes.
    - C, D, and E may exchange notes with B, and with each other.
    - No other communication is permitted.
    - Your task is to choose decorations for a birthday party. You may not reveal your task to any other person.

 **Small Group:** To facilitate this activity for a small group, have one Messenger serve all groups or have the facilitator serve as the Messenger. It is not necessary to have Observers and if needed Person E may be removed (although this will result in two common symbols instead of one).

 **Online:** To facilitate this activity virtually, use breakout rooms to give each role their instructions or private message the instructions to each participant. Put each group together in a separate breakout room and have each participant change their name to include their role, for example, "A - Morgan". Have everyone remain on mute and privately chat their memos to the Messenger, or exclude the messenger role and memo format and allow participants to private message only the roles they are allowed to communicate with. While it is not necessary for participants to have their cameras on, this is a silent activity so being able to visually see participants reacting makes the activity more interesting. [\[click here for video\]](#)

## DEBRIEF QUESTIONS

- What:
  - What was challenging or frustrating about this activity?
  - How was your group successful? What would have allowed your group to be more successful in this activity?
- So What:
  - Why is effective communication critical to the success of a group?
  - How do communication channels and structures effect the flow of information in a group?
- Now What:
  - What can your group do to ensure information is communicated effectively?
  - What changes, if any, should be made to the communication channels and structures in your group?

 **Facilitator Note:** These questions can be used to guide your debrief, however, pick the questions that best match your group's experience and add or change questions as needed.