



Back to Back Drawing

An activity that requires a participant to draw what their partner describes to them

TIME

20-30 minutes



TEAM STAGE

Storming, Norming, Performing

MATERIALS

Clipboards with blank paper, writing utensils, drawing templates

SUMMARY

This activity tests communication and listening skills by asking participants to take turns drawing what their partner describes to them and describing an image to their partner.

SET UP


- Before beginning, create three drawings to use as templates during the activity. They can be of anything: random shapes, a scene, etc. Make enough copies of each drawing for half of the group.
- Divide your group into pairs (or groups of three with one person as an observer) and have them sit back to back.
- Give one person a clipboard with a blank piece of paper and a writing utensil. They are the “drawer”.
- Give the other person a drawing template. They are the “direction giver”.


INSTRUCTIONS

- Tell the direction giver that they have to get the drawer to draw an exact duplicate of the picture on their drawing template using only verbal directions. The drawer may not speak in this round.
- After they are done, the partners should compare the template with what was drawn, and then switch roles.
- Repeat the process, but this round allow the drawer to ask yes/no questions. The direction giver can only answer yes or no.
- Repeat the process a third time, but this round allow the drawer to ask or say anything they would like.

VARIATIONS



- For a more challenging variation, add a round where the pairs sit face-to-face and the direction giver is not allowed to speak or show the drawing template to the drawer. They must get the drawer to draw the picture using only visual cues.
- For another more challenging variation, have the direction giver describe a photograph instead of a drawing, or have them describe a word or phone number without saying any letters or numbers.

 **Large Group:** To facilitate this activity for a large group, have partners sit back to back in a line with all of the direction givers on one side and show them a large poster or whiteboard drawing. This way, you do not need a separate drawing template for each pair.

 **Medium Risk:** To facilitate a medium risk version of this activity, have one person be the direction giver for the rest of the group. No one else is allowed to speak and everyone must try to draw whatever the direction giver is describing. Afterwards, have everyone compare their drawings.



VARIATIONS *(continued)*

-  **Online:** To facilitate this activity virtually, send one participant a drawing template to describe to the rest of the group. The person giving instructions may not show the drawing or use gestures or props. You may also try this activity in pairs using breakout rooms, trusting that group members will follow the rules on their own. [\[click here for video\]](#)
-  **Asynchronous:** To facilitate this activity asynchronously, have one participant record a video of themselves describing the drawing template and upload it to a shared folder. Have the other participants watch the video, draw the picture, and upload a picture of their drawing to the shared folder. After a specified time, upload the drawing template to the shared folder for the rest of the participants to see. Then, use a shared document like a Google Document or other chat platform to ask questions about the experience for participants to respond to.

DEBRIEF QUESTIONS

- What:
 - What was challenging about this activity?
 - What tactics were the most helpful for you as the “drawer”? As the “direction giver”?
- So What:
 - Why is it important to have clear communication?
 - How does feedback help you communicate more effectively?
- Now What:
 - How can you give clear instructions when others might not have all the same information as you?
 - What can you do to ensure you are on the same page when communicating with someone?
- **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.