

# Categories

Come up with a list of items in a category and then put them in order

**TIME**  
20-30 minutes

**MATERIALS**  
Paper, pens

**TEAM STAGE**  
Forming, Storming,  
Norming, Performing

## Learning & Development Outcomes

Participants will collaborate to put information in an order that makes sense. They will make judgments and decisions about how to organize and interpret data.

Outcomes are focused on developing *21st Century Skills* and the *National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE) Career Competencies*, including, but not limited to:

- Assuming shared responsibility for collaborative work and valuing the individual contributions made by each team member.
- Synthesizing and making connections between information and arguments.
- Collaborating with others to achieve common goals.
- Making decisions and solving problems using sound, inclusive reasoning and judgment.



## Preparation & Logistics

### Set Up

- Make sure there are several tables available to use. If there are not enough tables, make sure there are spaces in the room for small groups to work with surfaces they can write on.

### Safety

- Participants may have the false idea that there is one correct solution in this activity. Because of this, there may be tension if disagreement arises within a group. If this happens, remind participants that all perspectives are valid and no perspective is better or more "right" than any other.

### Additional Considerations

- Set aside additional time for a debrief.
- [Click here to watch it live!](#)

## Instructions

### Summary

Participants will work together to come up with a list of items in a category and then put them in order.

For an older audience, give time constraints for each round. Facilitators can also choose the categories for each group that is centered around what the group is currently learning or tasks the group is currently facing.

### Step 1: Create lists

- Put participants in small groups of about four.
- Give each small group the Categories worksheet or a piece of paper and a pen, and have them find a table or space to work together.
- Have each group pick a category (i.e. colors, animals, shapes, states, books, vegetables, or fictional characters) and write it at the top of their paper.
- Then, have them participants brainstorm ten items in that category and write them in the first column the left of the paper.

### Step 2: Organize the lists

- Once each group is finished with Step 1, have them pass their paper to a different group.
- Have each group take the paper they were given and put the items in an order that makes sense to them. They should all come to an agreement on the order before writing the items in a list next to the original list.

### Step 3: Re-organize the lists

- Once each group is finished writing down their order, have them again pass their paper to a different group.
- With the new paper that each group is given, have them read the organized list and try to determine the order the previous group used.
- Then, challenge each group to reorganize the items into a new order that is different than what the previous group used.

### How to end the activity

- If there is time, repeat Step 3 one or more times.
- After the last round, have each group take back their original paper and see how the other groups chose to organize the items in their category.
- If there is time, have a few groups share out what their category was, how the other groups organized the words, and why they think the groups chose that order.



How many rounds should we do?

"This activity could be just one round, or until each group has had every other group's paper. Each additional round gets more challenging since the groups need to come up with a new order, so pick the level of challenge that is appropriate for your group."



## Debrief Questions



These questions are a starting point to guide your debrief. Pick the ones that best match your group's experience and add or change questions as needed!

### What

- What was difficult about this process?
- How did you figure out new ideas for organizing the items?

### So What

- How does hearing different perspectives help us?
- What is the value in collaborating with others on a task?

### Now What

- What are other tasks that require working together?
- How can you make sure that you are considering multiple perspectives when completing a task?

## Adjustments for...

### Large Group (25+)

- To keep more people involved, have each group pair up with another group to discuss.

### Small Group (1-9)

- Remove the rotating papers element out of the activity and have groups work with their own category and list of items the whole time. See how many different ways they can organize and order the items.

### Risk Level

- For a more challenging variation, have each group write down why they think the previous group chose the order they did before they try coming up with their own new order. This will require a more complex type of analytical thinking.

### Group has prior experience

- Pre-populate the initial list of items. You can be intentional with this list, like using it to help the group make decisions about an upcoming event or what they want to do in class one day. Have each group work with the same list, putting them in order of importance to them. Bring the entire group together to share their order and repeat the process for the larger group to come to a final consensus.

### Online

- Create a shared document with a page for each group.
- Explain the activity in the main room.
- Put each small group into their own breakout room.
- As each round ends, broadcast a message or visit each room to tell them which category they will work on next.
- Reassemble in the main room to debrief.

Each adjustment is its own unique idea for how to facilitate this activity for different groups and situations! Choose any or all that work!



# Categories

Category: \_\_\_\_\_

Original List	Group 1	Group 2	Group 3	Group 4	Group 5
	1.	1.	1.	1.	1.
	2.	2.	2.	2.	2.
	3.	3.	3.	3.	3.
	4.	4.	4.	4.	4.
	5.	5.	5.	5.	5.
	6.	6.	6.	6.	6.
	7.	7.	7.	7.	7.
	8.	8.	8.	8.	8.
	9.	9.	9.	9.	9.
	10.	10.	10.	10.	10.

*Worksheet for: Categories*