



Activities to Bond Your Team That Are Not Hazing

You want your team members to grow and learn through affiliation with your team. You want to challenge them. How do you do that in a way that isn't hazing? Below are a few ideas for activities you can plan that challenge your team members to work together, test their personal courage, and teach them new skills.

Step 1: What are the outcomes you hope to achieve through the activity and how do they relate to your organization's goals? What do you want to teach them? Ex. Team members will be able to resolve conflict.

Step 2: What activities and events can accomplish this objective?

Step 3: Evaluate the options and select an activity.

Step 4: Make it clear to participants that all activities should be "challenge by choice," meaning that individuals should feel comfortable to not participate should the activity be too challenging for them. Please remember, something that is overly challenging does not help people learn. It actually results in the opposite—they shut down.

Step 5: Lead a discussion following the activity to talk about what everyone learned. Help make connections with your team goals or WPI's values. This is the most important part of the activity! Sample questions include:

- What was challenging about this activity?
- What did you learn about yourself?
- What would you do differently if you could do it over?
- What did you learn about the group?
- How does this relate to being a team member in this organization?
- How can you take what you learned and apply it to the team?

Sample Goals of a Bonding Activity

- Encourage individual leadership development
- Promote adjustment to college life
- Build respect for the individual
- Stimulate intellectual growth
- Promote an understanding of the values of athletics
- Provide an environment for the free exchange of ideas between all members
- Value team needs over individual needs
- Promote friendship

Please note: Do not do any of the climbing or winter activities without a trained guide or facilitator with you. Contact information is provided for contacting these facilitators below.

Outcome: Leadership Development

- Raft building exercise in the WPI pool: Reserve the pool for this exercise. Have team members write the goals organization on a piece of tissue paper. Then challenge the team members to build a raft using foam noodles and rubber bands and other floatable objects. All of the team members need to ride on the raft across the pool while holding up the creed so it doesn't get wet. For a good size group, consider breaking the team members into competing teams. Materials for the raft may be "purchased" from the "store" and decisions as what to buy, how much to buy, and how to build the most successful, efficient, and sea-worthy craft is at the discretion of each team. How successful teams develop and carry out a winning strategy becomes a potentially powerful metaphor for excellence, leadership, and effective teamwork within the organization. Teams can be purposefully created: seniors/freshmen vs. juniors/sophomores, etc.
- Go cross country skiing together (<http://www.bu.edu/outdoor/conferences/teambuilding/index.html>). People have to stay together, its physically tiring, and people need to work together.
- Divide team members into two teams. Give them each a box full of miscellaneous materials. Give them one hour to devise a competitive game using all of the items (only rules: everyone must plan and no one can get hurt). Have the two teams compete against each other.
- Leadership styles test—have team members learn about their leadership style and styles of others. Contact the Student Activities Office, sao@wpi.edu, for access to leadership tests and quizzes.
- Forced choice exercise (http://ctb.ku.edu/tools//sub_section_tools_1201.htm) Choose differences that are controversial---pro-life, pro-choice, etc. Have them debate. This is a great way to talk about 1) conflict and how you resolve it and 2) that your team accepts people for their differences.
- Take an ice climbing course through Plymouth State (<http://www.plymouth.edu/venturecenter/>)
- Ask each team member to be responsible for identifying someone on the team they think is a leader and interviewing him/her.
- Help team members learn about conflict management and how to deal with conflict. Contact the Student Activities Office, sao@wpi.edu, for resources.
- Do a team fundraiser
- Borrow the Project Adventure teambuilding kit from the Student Activities Office. There are tons of challenging team builders for your team members to try. Contact sao@wpi.edu for more information.
- Web activity: Using string, setup a web in between two poles in a large room. There should be plenty of holes, but make sure they are big enough. The entire team must put everyone through the web without touching the string, but each hole can only be used a certain number of times (depending on team size). This is a great problem solving activity that also builds teamwork and leadership skills.
- Plan a philanthropy project for a local charity
- Send team members to a regional leadership conference
- Invite someone from career services to market how skills gained from varsity athletic participation can help you in a job interview.



Outcome: Self Knowledge

- Go rock wall climbing at the YWCA (<http://www.ymcaworcester.org/>) or Central Rock Climbing (<http://www.centralrockgym.com/>)
- Have each team member pair with another team member and get to know him/her over lunch, etc. Have him/her design a binder or clipboard or something that represents who he/she is as a person. Have them include important information about the team inside (ex. practice schedules, plays, calendar of events, etc). Have team member present their gift to the team member they were assigned at a team member meeting. (This also has the following outcomes: presentation skills, creativity, learning about other people, relationship building.)

- Write the parents of all the team members and ask them to send a letter of support to their son/daughter as a surprise. Read them or give them to team members.
- Have an expert come in and have the team members learn to meditate—this is hard! Learning to quiet your mind is VERY challenging.
- Select a book as a group and read it with occasional discussions

Outcome: Brotherhood/Sisterhood Relationship Building

- Do a GPS adventure with clues to various locations. At each location, a mental or physical teambuilder is conducted by a trained facilitator. (Sargent Center: <http://www.bu.edu/outdoor/conferences/teambuilding/gps/index.html>) (Also develops team building, leadership, and conflict management)
- Play Assassins—but not when anyone is in class. It is important the team member activities not disrupt one's ability to get an education.
- Yellow page theatre for all members (learn confidence, creativity, thinking on the fly, and it's fun) Break the members into groups and give each group some ridiculous props from Goodwill, and have them pick three random pages from the phone book—they then have 30 minutes to put together a skit based on the topics on the yellow pages and with their assigned props.
- Have a talent show.
- Have a campfire and have every member talk about what the team means to them.
- Have team members interview a alumna/us team member about what they gained from varsity sports.
- Have team members compete in basketball, volleyball, or softball against current members or other groups.
- Have team members compete against current members in bowling (catch: everyone must use the opposite of their dominant hand).
- Have team members compete in laser tag or paint ball.
- Floating Stick: Get a long (10 feet) stick that the group must lower to the ground. Each person's fingers must be in contact with the stick at all times. Pinching or grabbing the stick is not allowed - it must rest on top of their fingers. If anyone's finger is off, the task must be restarted. At the beginning the stick will rise up quickly, but with some teamwork they might actually get it to the ground.
- Riddle: Send out a riddle an hour before the regular meeting time. The team members must get together in pairs to figure out the riddle, which leads them somewhere on campus. Once there, you can have a discussion about that location on campus and the history or resources available there.
- Go paintballing as and mix up the team members on teams with the members.

Outcome: Accountability

- Require team members to do 3 hours of community service. Have them pick a cause as a team and do that—ex. work at the Mustard See (a local soup kitchen) once a week (they learn time management, responsibility, event management, etc). Go to the Community Service Center on the third floor of the Campus Center for service ideas.
- Talk to team members about bystander behavior. If you are with another member and he is doing something wrong, what do you do? Do you have a responsibility to stop him? When? How do you do that?
- Have lunch together in the dining hall with the entire organization



Want more ideas? Have an idea that should be on here?

Contact Emily Perlow, Director of Student Activities, at eperlow@wpi.edu, to schedule a meeting. The Student Activities staff would be happy to help you design customized experiences based on your desired outcomes.