



# RIVER CROSSING CHALLENGE

*Students participate in a group activity that require skills such as collaboration, support, problem solving, flexibility, and trust.*

## OBJECTIVES

- Students will utilize various SEL skills.
- Students will evaluate personal and group behaviors.

## MATERIALS

- “River Stones” such as paper or vinyl spots.
- Boundary markers such as tape or rope.

## TIME

30 min

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## LESSON INTRO

This activity pairs well with most of the other lessons. If you are looking to extend time on any lesson, or get students up and practicing skills, this is your ticket!

The objective of this activity is for students to complete a mildly difficult task (crossing an open space using only a few “stepping stones”). In order for students to complete it successfully, they will need to utilize skills such as creative problem-solving, communication, group organization, seeking to understand others, and moments of support.

Students should be allowed to work through the activity without teacher intervention in order for student skills to emerge and struggle to naturally occur. The reflection time of this activity is where the facilitator can guide student learning.

If your student group seems to believe that a “leader” is the one with the loudest voice and in charge, consider changing some language here. Either frontload this activity with an emphasis on leadership skills such as listening, followership, and support—OR—instead of bringing up leadership at all, discuss 1) what roles are needed to help make this successful, or 2) what skills will the group need to employ.

## LESSON STEP BY STEP

1. In advance, randomly distribute enough “river stones” between two lines spaced about 20 feet apart.
2. Place “river stones” close enough so that people can step from one to another easily. If you are on a slippery floor, consider taping down the spots.
3. Gather the group behind a line identified as the Start zone.
4. Explain that this activity is meant for students to practice the leadership skills that they have been discussing and/or researching (if you are not focusing on leadership for this activity, change the language to include the skill you ARE focusing on, such as collaboration, communication, or creativity).
5. Spend a few moments reviewing the class list of the SEL skills you have been discussing, or create a list of skills that students imagine they will need to use during this activity. Ask students to pay attention to the behaviors that they observe.
6. Challenge students to traverse the area between the two lines by stepping only on the marshmallows.
7. Invite individuals to traverse the area first, using any path they choose.
8. If a person happens to touch the area outside of the marshmallows, invite them to restart.
9. Next, invite two people to cross together while keeping physical contact at all times.
10. Again, if someone touches the ‘no-go’ zone, invite the pair to restart.
11. Finally, form small teams of 4 to 6 people.
12. Challenge these teams to cross the area together while keeping constant physical contact.

## VARIATIONS

1. Limited Steps: Invite individuals, pairs and small teams to traverse the area in as few steps as successfully and as quickly as possible. Allow ample time for people to plan, experiment and accomplish this task.
2. Crossing Paths: Divide your group into two, and ask each half to start from opposing start zones. The goal is the same, to safely get every person to the other safe zone, but note the propensity of one half or both to assist the other, or not.

## FACILITATOR TIPS AND NOTES

1. Watch for slipping “stones” which can be a safety concern. Tape paper to the floor or move to a carpeted or grassy surface.
2. As noted earlier, the theme if this activity can be altered to fit a variety of themes. See the Variations and Reflection tabs for suggestions about how to modify.

## REFLECTION & WRAP UP

1. Invite students to reflect on their experience using some or all of the questions below that best fit the student experience:
    - What did you notice about yourself and the group during this experience?
    - In what ways did you offer, or were you offered **support** during the traverse?
    - What effective **communication** skills were used?
    - What **role** did you take? What role did you notice others took?
    - What **leadership** skills were needed? Which were used? Give examples.
    - Did you always admit to touching the 'no-go' zone? Why or why not?
    - What does **integrity** mean? What does **trust** mean? How did you see these related?
    - How do we know when **integrity** is compromised? Can you provide examples?
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## NOTES

Source: <https://www.playmeo.com/activities/team-building-problem-solving-activities/marshmallow-river/>

Educational Standards: CASEL: Self Awareness, CASEL: Social Awareness, CASEL: Relationship Skills, CASEL: Responsible Decision-Making, P21: Creativity and Innovation, P21: Critical Thinking and Problem Solving, P21: Communication and Collaboration, P21: Flexibility and Adaptability, P21: Initiative and Self Direction, P21: Social and Cross-Cultural Skills, P21: Leadership and Responsibility, CCRS:SL1 Have Diverse Conversations