

Learning About Team Dynamics w/Forbidden Island (boardgame by Gamewright) Facilitation Guide

Game Concept

[Forbidden Island](#) is a cooperative game by Gamewright. The objective of the game is to collect 4 treasures and escape the island before the Island sinks beneath the waves. There is a team of 2-4 people attempting to do this as a cross-functional team made up of 2-4 roles (one role per player). Each person can do something of any role, but the person in that role is much stronger at the capabilities. Each person takes a turn until the entire team loses OR they succeed in getting off the island. The rules are available for free on [Gamewright's site](#).

Introduction to the Facilitated Version to Learn Team Dynamics

This version of play was created by [Teague Hopkins](#), but as far as I know it wasn't documented anywhere until this. I'm trying to stay true to how he facilitated it. The basic objective is to allow people to learn the rules, play the game under a 10 minute timebox (objective get as far as you can towards the goal), retrospect, and then discuss/debrief what happened as far as team dynamics. Considering how team members self-organize and make decisions is the primary debrief areas.

Agenda Item	Time	Activity	Supplies Needed	Comments/Notes
Purpose & Agenda	~5 min	Purpose: Understand the role of team dynamics in a cross-functional team.	Purpose and Agenda posted on a flip chart	
Allow the Teams to Form & Understand the Rules	~ 15 min	<p>Break the group into teams of 3-4. It's best to have one person that knows the rules on each team; it shortens the learning cycle of the boardgame itself.</p> <p>Explain to the teams they will be playing the game of Forbidden Island, but under a timebox of 10 minutes.</p> <p>Point to the Summary on the game play they may Use for Reference.</p> <p>Let the teams explain the rules and formulate how they want to work – offer little guidance in the first round for any teamwork they decide to establish.</p>	Rules Summary on Flip Chart w/Goal and Timebox	<p>Rules Summary</p> <p>GOAL: Collect as many items before the island sinks. If you happen to get off the island, that's cool, but not required for this game. You still lose with any of the losing conditions.</p> <p>Timebox: 10 min.</p> <p>Order of Play Summary:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Take up to 3 actions. Remember your role's special abilities! <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Move b. Shore Up c. Give a Treasure Card d. Capture a Treasure 2. Draw 2 Treasure deck cards. 3. Draw Flood cards equal to the water level. <p>4 Ways to Lose:</p> <p>There are four possible ways to lose:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. If both Temples, Caves, Palaces, or Gardens tiles sink before you collect their respective treasures. 2. If the Fools' Landing tile sinks. 3. If any player is on an Island tile that sinks and there is no adjacent tile to swim to. 4. If the water level reaches the skull and crossbones.

Agenda Item	Time	Activity	Supplies Needed	Comments/Notes
Play the Game	10 min	Let the participants play the game.	# of copies of Forbidden Island per team.	Roam around and note team behaviors.
Retrospect	5 min	Ask teams to retrospect on how they could have worked differently together to be more effective. Record these on a flip chart. Also record what went really well.	Flap charts and markers.	
Debrief	~20 min	<p>Key Questions:</p> <p>How did your team approach working together?</p> <p>Did you have a dominant player? Was that person 'elected' or did they basically take on the mantel themselves? If the latter, how did that make you feel?</p> <p>How did your team make decisions? How did you utilize your unique talents?</p> <p>How did you resolve conflict (different ideas about what you should do...)?</p> <p>Debrief your team's learnings?</p> <p>What was similar and different about how real life teams operate?</p>		

Multiple Rounds

Play at least one more round. A debrief point is ask how did the team tweak its behavior to make improvements.

Options for more rounds:

- Allow team members to choose the role they want. Debrief Q: Did people gravitate to what they knew? Why did people choose what they did?
- Take away the ability to perform some actions that are better in the specialties so that only the specialist can do them. Debrief point: what knowledge bottlenecks did this cause?
- Remove a team member after about 5 min (probably from just one team that has 4), perhaps just prior to to their move. Reinsert them at the 2 min left mark. Debrief the problems that removal and reinsertion caused.
- All team members must communicate by notes and not verbally; consider making the timebox 15 min. Debrief: what did this do to team performance?
- Change the team members so all the teams are different; timebox the form/storm/norm stages to 1 minute only as they are in hurry up and execute (no time for this fuzzy get to know one another crap). Debrief Qs: how did curtailing the time to understand how to work well together effect team performance.
- Suggested by untested: Have the PERSON that got the artifact hold onto it and then reward the person that got the most on a team? Or if two are equal it will the person that got an item first. (Candy, book, small present, etc. Ensure it is something they can't split and share.) You could announce this before or after the game. If before, ask in the debrief how this impacted the way in which they played the game. For both, ask how this made people feel about their contributions.