



"How Do You Do?"

A CNA Facilitation Training Game

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In "How Do You Do?," participants are given a "mundane activity" that is practiced by at least one of their peers and they must, by asking questions and facilitating a group discussion, tell as accurate a story as they can about what it looks like to perform that mundane activity. Participants earn points by accurately describing the activity written down by one of their peers—but they must be careful to not get distracted by others who also think they know what the activity looks like!

Introduction

This training game masquerading as a party game is half about analysis and half about facilitation. Analysis, at least the kind of analysis that we often need to do at CNA, is messy—the data do not come in neat, ordered columns and are rarely quantifiable. And when they are quantifiable, they are not always trustworthy. Facilitation is about managing a room, encouraging people who do know what they're talking about to speak up, discouraging people whose opinions are not needed, and figuring out how to get the most essential information.

Wargames encompass a unique combination of analysis and facilitation and require the facilitator to think on their feet: managing people and organizing information all while trying to put the whole story together mentally for immediate use. This training game attempts to recreate that environment but uses mundane tasks in a no-risk environment so facilitators can practice the skills they need to become expert facilitators and wargame directors.

In this game, the facilitator is tasked with developing the "story" for a mundane activity that one person in the group knows intimately. The other participants probably know something about the activity, but even if they don't, they likely have some opinions about it. The facilitator has 10 minutes to ask the participants questions, eliciting the information needed to develop the story of what it "looks like" to do the activity. The "expert" participant who submitted the activity, and everyone else who knows something about it, then judge the facilitator's story and determine its accuracy compared to the participants' versions.

The game is designed to provide good experience in asking and answering questions, managing a small crowd, rapidly synthesizing information, and performing effective storytelling.

Game Rules

Step 0: Setup

Gather people

This game can be played with as few as two people (“interview style”) but is best with a group of four to eight. More than eight people can lead to a crowd control problem (which is a known facilitation challenge but not the most pressing one to tackle). For a game of eight players or more, we suggest breaking them into teams of people all working out the same activity or perhaps playing independently and comparing notes.

Generate the mundane activities

On separate **Activity Cards**, each participant writes down two to four “mundane activities” that they do every day and *would be willing to discuss in public with the people present*. These activities should be typical, everyday actions that many, if not all, of the participants are familiar with to some degree—but participants should focus on things that they might know better than anyone else in the group. They should also be fairly specific and discrete activities that can be concretely described, ideally with a set of clear tasks. Examples include “making breakfast for my kids,” “watering my garden,” “commuting to work,” “making lunch,” and “making coffee.”

Then, on a separate **Story Card**, participants write their own personal narratives of each of those activities in about five sentences or a bulleted list of 8 to 10 items. **Story Cards** should include enough detail to compare to another person’s version of the same story if they happen to write the same activity. Participants should hold onto their **Story Cards**, with the topics hidden from the other participants, and add their **Activity Cards** to a common deck, and one of the participants should shuffle the deck.

Example	Activity Card: Watering my garden
	Story Card:
	Step 1: Check to see how dry the plants are.
	Step 2: Get the mason jar that I use to water my plants.
	Step 3: Fill the mason jar with water.
	Step 4: Pour half a jar of water into two different pots.
	Step 5: Repeat steps 3 and 4 until I’ve watered all the plants.
	Step 6: Check to see whether water is dripping out of the bottom of the pots.
	Step 7: If no water is dripping, repeat steps 3 to 6 until it is.
	Step 8: If water is dripping, empty remaining water in a pot, put the mason jar away, and close the door to the porch.

Select the first facilitator

Use any desired method to select the first participant to take the role of the facilitator.

Step 1: Choose an activity

The facilitator draws three **Activity Cards** at random and chooses one card to facilitate. They cannot choose a card that they wrote. If two or more of the drawn **Activity Cards** are ones that they wrote, set them aside, draw again, and then return the original cards to the stack. Facilitators should also discard and redraw any **Activity Cards** that have the same name or a similar one to a card in hand or a card that has already been facilitated this session (e.g., “making coffee” and “my morning coffee” are effectively the same).

Step 2: Facilitate the group

After setting a timer for 10 minutes, the facilitator asks questions and leads a discussion with the participants in order to create, as best they can, the version of the narrative as written by any one participant who wrote a **Story Card** for the chosen activity. Participants should *not* refer to their written **Story Cards** during this questioning and should go *only* by their memory of the activity and what they wrote down. By looking at their **Story Cards**, participants would tip off the facilitator as to who wrote the card, allowing them to hone their questions or disproportionately weigh the participant’s responses, making it easier to identify the “right” answers.¹ Multiple people may have written the same activity, which is OK (and makes the game more interesting!). Participant responses shouldn’t focus on how “I do it” versus how “you do it” but instead focus on how “it is done”—as if there is a single version of the activity that everyone is trying to describe from their own perspectives.

Any participant with knowledge of the activity in question, even if they didn’t write it down or don’t do it often (or even at all), are encouraged to engage with the facilitator in the discussion and provide their perspective on the activity and the questions asked (wargame participants often contribute in this manner—the most vocal participants are sometimes those who know the least about the topic!). Participants should not discuss the activity among themselves. Participants should answer only those questions asked by the facilitator and shouldn’t offer any information that isn’t requested. Participants cannot knowingly lie but should give answers that are the best information they have available, even if it’s not reliable. Participants should respond to the facilitator from their own experience and should refrain from correcting or clarifying another participant’s comments as if it were their own perspective. However, they may rebut, reference, or add information pertinent to the question based on their experience. The facilitator can direct comments to individual participants, but all participants should feel empowered to respond to any question from the facilitator regardless of whom it was directed toward. Moreover, participants shouldn’t make the facilitator’s role too easy by listing out exactly what they wrote on their cards; they should make the facilitator work for it! On the other hand, if the facilitator asks a good question, participants should reward them and not withhold information.

¹ Note: In this game there are no “right” answers. The facilitator is doing their best to create the story of the person who wrote it and has their own particular way of doing that mundane activity. It might even be a demonstrably wrong way to do it! The facilitator isn’t trying to identify the way that it *should* be done, they are trying to elicit information about how the participants *actually* do it.

Step 3: Craft and deliver a narrative

When the 10-minute timer is done, the facilitator sets a new timer and takes up to 3 minutes to collect their thoughts and craft the narrative that they believe best describes their selected activity based on the responses during Step 2. They should write down their **Facilitator's Story**: their best guess at the steps on the **Story Card** of the participant who they think wrote it.

The facilitator then shows and discusses their **Facilitator's Story** to the participants for scoring.

Step 4: Score the narrative

Any participants who submitted an **Activity Card** of effectively the same name should compare their **Story Card** to the **Facilitator's Story**, with points awarded for how accurately the **Facilitator's Story** matches the narrative written on the **Story Card**. Each participant with a matching **Story Card** assigns a "Story Card Score" from 0 to 10 to the facilitator, with 0 representing a **Facilitator's Story** that does not resemble the **Story Card** and 10 representing a **Facilitator's Story** that hits every aspect of the **Story Card**. If more than one person is scoring, it is possible for one to have a high score and one to have a low score, unless both participants perform that mundane activity in very similar ways.

The other participants are then asked to rate the **Facilitator's Story** from 0 to 3 across the following elements *independent of the actual alignment to the original Story Card*:

- **Detail.** How much detail about the actions, events, people, places, or objects was conveyed in the **Facilitator's Story**? A score of "0" indicates, "It would be hard to get more generic than that." A score of "3" indicates, "Whether or not it reflects the **Story Card**, the narrative is very specific, and the individual elements are clearly articulated."
- **Completeness.** Did the **Facilitator's Story** tell the entire story of the activity in a logical manner, or were there narrative leaps or gaps that required interpretation or assumptions to fill in? A score of "0" indicates, "The story was riddled with plot holes." A score of "3" indicates, "Whether or not it is correct, the narrative arc cohesively and logically flows from one element to the next."
- **Apparent accuracy.** Based on the other participants' limited knowledge of the activity, was the **Facilitator's Story** a convincing narrative of it? A score of "0" indicates, "It is either demonstrably false or laughably unlikely that this story is what that activity is about." A score of "3" indicates, "The narrative convincingly describes the activity without any obviously incorrect statements."

The other participant scores for each category are averaged and added together to get the final "Other Participant Score," which is added to all "Story Card Scores" to determine the facilitator's "Final Score."

Optional Step 5: Hotwash

Participants may take up to five minutes after scores have been assessed to discuss how the facilitator handled the prompt, the responses, and the creation of the narrative. This step is a good opportunity for participants to provide constructive criticism to the facilitator on topics such as the following:

- What questions should they have asked that they didn't?
- What questions did they ask that they shouldn't have?

- What questions prompted misleading or inaccurate information?
- What questions were strong and allowed participants to give clear and useful information to the facilitator?
- What aspects of the activity did the facilitator get right? What did they miss?
- How could the facilitator have improved their narrative?

Designer's Notes

Participants of this game are a caricature of both wargame sponsors and participants. They forget things, give incomplete or incorrect answers, provide stray or distracting information, and go into tremendous detail on irrelevant topics. We can't fully represent that experience in a 10-minute game, but these rules are designed to simulate some of friction that arises in wargames from conflicting or incomplete information by keeping participants from filling in too many of the gaps that aren't expressly identified by the facilitator.

The fact that we've centered on mundane activities that most players are likely familiar with in some regard adds to the "fog of facilitation" effect by clouding our meaning: everybody might *think* they know what other people are talking about, but there are probably subtle nuances where critical differences lie. For example, do you water your plants with a mason jar? A watering can? The drinking glass of leftover water from your bedside table? Are your plants inside or outside? Are they potted or in a garden? Each of these potentially unstated but critical facts helps to differentiate the details of the **Facilitator's Story** and by thinking through them, a facilitator can practice how to find the missing critical details and how to ask questions that elucidate clear answers. This game won't hit all aspects of facilitation, but by including "adversarial players" in the form of competing ideas, it provides good reps and sets in a concise and engaging environment.

Appendix: Wargame Facilitation Guide

The role of the facilitator in a wargame is primarily to keep the conversation moving. Most facilitation-heavy wargames are designed to have the right subject matter experts (SMEs) present to speak about the concepts for discussion and how they influence the core theme of the wargame.

This document outlines some of the general principles involved in facilitating that conversation, outlined in order of our perceived value of their importance.

General Principle 1: The players should dominate the conversation, not you.

If the players are arguing among themselves, provided they are staying on topic and neither delving too deep nor becoming unduly aggressive, *let them argue*. You may need to interject to maintain the theme. But try not to dampen their momentum. An energized and engaged player is a contributing player. Work to redirect appropriate energies instead of limiting them (unless they are being disruptive to the theme).

General Principle 2: Watch the time.

Players may talk about the things they're interested in for much more time than you have available to debate it. It's your responsibility to ensure that the conversations meet the desired objectives. You need to consume and parse enough of their arguments to understand whether the people documenting the conversation (who should not be you) are currently getting valuable information, and whether the projected value to the theme looks to be increasing or decreasing for the near future. By remaining observant, you can decide whether to ask good questions (keep the conversation going) or to suggest the group moves on (stop the current conversation). Critically, this decision is based on the time allotted for the current conversation and the expectation value of the next topics.

Avoid following the time limits rigidly and stifling creativity and momentum. Instead, compare the relative value of the current information plus the value of the participants' eager engagement in the current topic to the value of the next conversation topic. Take or return time based on that metric and constantly update your balance. You will need to have a good understanding of what the next conversation is likely to entail in order to make that assessment.

General Principle 3: Think of the next question.

You need to follow the current line of discussion closely enough to understand whether you should stay on the current topic or move to a different one (see **General Principle 2**). But if you follow it too closely (e.g., taking too many notes on what is currently being said), you may miss an opportunity to redirect players back onto the main theme or the players may reach the end of a conversation thread without you providing a clear next step. Conversations can end abruptly and sometimes without warning. You should always have another question ready to ask as soon as the value of the current conversation drops below an acceptable level. And you should always be thinking actively about what that next question is and whether there's a better next question to ask. Keep a list of those questions and go back to them when you need to keep the discussion on theme, return to a previously discussed important point, or delve into some crucial detail. Choose the questions from your list in accordance with **General Principle 1** and **General Principle 2** to keep the discussion consistently productive and useful.

General Principle 4: Summarize the discussion.

You are not the SME for every topic being discussed, *and neither is anyone else in the room*. Help others participate and help them accept the fact that their lack of knowledge on every topic is OK. They still have important things to contribute, and, in many cases, fresh perspectives can spark new ideas. By summarizing long conversations or important statements, you help keep everyone on the same page about what's being discussed. Doing so also allows you to emphasize things that you know are important to the theme and clarify points that may have been unclear. A good way to start a summary is by saying, "So, what I'm hearing is..." This phrase makes it clear that you are not the origin of the information, and it openly invites others to correct you if you spoke incorrectly. *You should welcome their corrections*. When they correct you, make sure you incorporate their notes into your summary and knit the whole thing together again. Start over and summarize from the beginning if the corrections changed the substance of your summary to minimize confusion.

Use different words than the ones the players used. This practice forces you to process their words and forces them to process yours. Substituting words requires players to think critically and actively decide whether you are right or wrong. Plus, it helps to provide another point of clarity for players who have not been following the conversation as closely as you.

You don't need to summarize players' statements *correctly*. Sometimes there is value in summarizing player statements or conversations slightly out of context or in an exaggerated manner; you can also postulate uses of the original statement in ways it wasn't intended. This practice encourages players to reiterate, clarify, and set bounds on the range to which their statements should be accepted. It imposes limits, which aids in understanding.

General Principle 5: When at a loss for the next step, buy time by asking the last few speakers to go into a little more detail.

Sometimes you need a moment to catch your breath. Maybe you weren't able to follow the last piece of the conversation or simply haven't had time to come up with the next question. In many cases, you can simply move on to the next question on your list (if you have one) or move to the next phase of the discussion if you're at or near the right time mark. But in other cases, skipping ahead might mean missing critical information or moving ahead too early. When you're at a loss, a good go-to move is to ask, "Can you go into a little more detail about that?" or "Can you help me understand that a little more? What did you mean by X?" Rarely do SMEs turn down the opportunity to go into detail. At the very least, they will likely reiterate their previous statement in new words, which you can pay close attention to and get yourself back on track.

General Principle 6: Have a backup.

If possible, have someone that you know and trust in the room with you who shares the same goals for the facilitated discussion. This person could be a notetaker or another analyst who is following the conversation. They should be focusing on their reason for being in the room, but, as a secondary duty, consider mentioning to them that you might turn to them and see if they have any questions from time to time. Ask them to jot down important things that they noticed that may not have been discussed, or topics that weren't discussed to the desired level of detail. If you're at a loss for what to say next, you can always turn to them and ask if they have any "thoughts or questions."

Finally, you can always encourage "thoughts or questions" from others in the room, which is good to do before moving on to the next conversation topic provided time allows. This practice is especially important if you are having trouble coming up with questions *and* have a lot of time left in the current session.

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