

The 'prisoner's dilemma' win-win game (based on the 'prisoner's dilemma' puzzle, for team building, and team-working, co-operation skills)

Use this exercise for a great team building game, and to demonstrate the value of cooperation. Run the exercise as it appears on the sheet or adapt it to suit your situation (change values and numbers etc, etc). Here's a [free 'prisoner's dilemma' win-win game sheet and scorecard \(pdf\)](#) and the same [game sheet/scorecard in MSWord format](#) which you can amend to suit your needs.

Ideally split the group into two teams of up to five per team (larger teams require leaders to avoid chaos or disaffected passengers). The teams must select simply either 'defect' or 'co-operate' in each round. Scoring is based on the selections of both teams. The point of the game is to demonstrate that poor co-operation leads to winners and losers, and ultimately everyone loses as a result of retaliation. When the teams decide to cooperate, everyone wins. The facilitator acts as the 'banker'. Use this free team building exercise with groups sizes from four (in which case the 'teams' would be pairs), up to twenty or more, or split teams into pairs and have them play separately. For details and examples of the prisoner's dilemma look at the [puzzles](#) section.

More guidance for playing the prisoner's dilemma game:

- The game is better with two teams, but it will work with several teams - adapt the sheet and scoring accordingly.
- The game sheet that is available as a [pdf](#) or [MSWord](#) file is all you need to give to the teams.
- The only 'question' each round for each team is to decide whether to 'defect' or 'cooperate'.
- If delegates want to start with an imaginary 'float', rather than having to contemplate being in debt, you can agree a small credit balance for each team.
- The point of course is that if all teams cooperate they will beat the banker, but it takes a while for them to realise this - so don't tell them before hand, just explain the scoring system and tell them the point is to accumulate as much 'money' as possible - teams then tend to defect and try to win at the other team's expense, which in turn causes retaliation, which produces unsustainable losses.
- For background reference, read the explanation of the prisoner's dilemma on the [complex puzzles](#) page.
- Use the game sheet ([pdf](#) or [MSWord](#) format - also available from the [free resources section](#)) - one game sheet per team - make sure all team members can see it - if necessary issue copy-sheets or show the sheet on a screen.
- The facilitator should practice the game first with individuals (eg family members) playing the part of the teams, so you see how it works.
- In early rounds make sure that teams do not reveal their selection to other teams until they all show their selection at the same time - the best way is have them write down on a sheet of paper and then all show together, or for them to hold up a pre-prepared 'defect' or 'cooperate' card, simultaneously, when the facilitator says to. As the game progresses allow teams to confer if they ask to.
- The facilitator needs to keep the score for all the teams on a flip-chart or equivalent.
- The game ends when the teams get the point and are all cooperating every round, which will beat the banker.

Info: <http://www.businessballs.com/teambuildinggames.htm>