



Teaching Method

Matchmaking Trump Game



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Abstract

Sometimes total strangers meet in an online course and you have to build functioning teams in a short time. The Matchmaking Trump Game is a fun way to quickly build teams with complementary skills, using skill point cards not unlike in a trump card game.

Preparing the Game

Start with creating a trump-card template. Depending on your audience you can either use an online tool, e.g. google draw or you provide photoshop templates. Best is if you have the cards prepared and sent to you in advance. If you prepare them online, plan for a break of up to 30 minutes to let students prepare their cards.

Select four skills that are essential for the project or creative task the teams are about to solve. The example given here was from a course on social media communication and asset design. Also, you can add a field to enter a free-form “super power”. The super power may be something funny or something special, see it as a conversation starter for the teamwork and something the students can add to emphasize some skills they deem important, but neglected by the 4 pre-selected skill categories.

All students have to distribute 20 points between those skills. Be sure they distribute exactly 20 points. They shall give a relative assessment of their strength, not an estimate how they consider their experience compared to their prospective teammates. This is important avoid modesty or bragging capturing the spirit of the game.





Team 1 - Crane-ish - SixSteps
Tampere: 4 Magdeburg: 6

Player	Word Wizard	Strategic Mastermind	Team Player	Design Skills	Super Power
Hansol Shin	5	7	3	5	Scrupulous
Anja Schwarzer	5	5	7	3	Series Junkie
Sophie Tummescheit	3	5	6	6	Has knowledge on statistics

Playing the matchmaking game

Prepare a playing field on an online pinboard service, below is an example using padlet.com.

Tampere People | Playing Field | Magdeburg People

Team 1 - Crane-ish - SixSteps
Tampere: 4 Magdeburg: 6

Player	Word Wizard	Strategic Mastermind	Team Player	Design Skills	Super Power
Alisa Jefimova	7	3	7	3	Teleporting (physical and like travelling)
Hansol Shin	5	7	3	5	Scrupulous
Anja Schwarzer	5	5	7	3	Series Junkie
Sophie Tummescheit	3	5	6	6	Has knowledge on statistics

Team 2 - A-Team - Velocate
Magdeburg: 2 Tampere: 4

Player	Word Wizard	Strategist	Team player	Design skills	
Katrin Wildt	4	6	3	7	Super-fast content wizard on Adobe
Velocate	6	4	5	5	Can do all kinds of Air productions





We used to play it often when matching people from different universities or countries into teams. Team A will play with the profile cards of team B and vice versa.

Turn-taking game

- Team A agrees on the first card to play.
- Team B looks for a fitting profile and plays the card.
- Team A looks for a third complementary profile and completes the team.
- Next turn, this time starting with Team B
- You can build larger teams, just be sure that teams start alternating

Calculating the score

The ideal value for each skill on team level is 15. The score is calculated against the ideal value.

- When the second card is played, skills are added. Each point of deviation from the perfect value of 10 in each of the skills (for two members) gives one penalty point.
- When the third card is played, skill points are added again. Each point of deviation from the perfect value of 15 in each of the skills (for three members) gives one penalty point.
- Whoever has less penalty points at the end of the game wins.

Tips and Problems

- The game works well with around 20 participants. You can play it with up to 40 participants, but then each group should name a group leader who is allowed to decide after consulting his team and give a time limit per decision (e.g. 15-30 seconds) — otherwise the game can be pretty exhausting.
- You can use two separate breakout-sessions of an online meeting tool, e.g. Adobe Connect, WebEx or BigBluebutton, to provide a space for team communication.
- If you can, as a moderator use the broadcast message feature to comment on the game.





- You can also play it with two teams at two separate sites.
- You can play it with more teams, three teams can be fun as well.
- You might want to invent other rules of playing the game and matching the cards. E.g. you could make it a quartet game where you can exchange cards (“I need a 9 in team skills and could provide an 8 in creative writing!”)

This game is not a guarantee that teams will work, but it is a good start. Be sure to bring the teams on track quickly and help them with further teambuilding exercise.

