ON-ROUTE/OFF-ROUTE

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This activity links to: Understanding behavior and response to stressful situations

There are two general ways to give and take directions: on-route (creating directions in real-time as you are walking the route) and off-route (creating directions from memory without leaving your seat). Each of these exercises requires a different cognitive process.

In this exercise two ways of providing visual directions will be created: 1) Off-route (from memory) and 2) On-route (drawing as you are going). Through this activity, we will gain empathy in how it feels to follow someone else's instructions as well as creating instructions for someone else to follow.

Number of participants

12 is optimal for a productive discussion at the end but it can be as little as 2 people or as many as 24. Make sure there is an even number in the group.
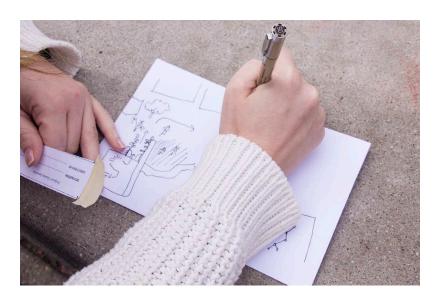
Materials

· Pencils or pens
· Paper
· Hard surface to write on
· Scissors
· Masking tape

How to play

1. Divide participants in two groups (A and B). Provide paper and masking tape to each person in Group A so they can tape their name to their destination for the other person to find.

2. Group A: Make ON-ROUTE directions **using only graphic/ visual images**—symbols are okay as long as they don't include letters or numbers. You will be drawing a map to a place near by as you are walking (this could be a major office, building, tree, fountain, restrooms, etc.—somewhere you can get by foot). This map will show someone how to get there. The destination can be 5-10 minutes from your location and can be inside or outside. Each person in this group takes a pencil, paper and something hard to write on and draws their map along the way. You can use lines, texture, shading, symbols, pictures, and shapes. When you arrive, you stick your name to the final destination so it can be found. Do not use words, letters or numbers. Do not state the destination on the drawing.

3. Group B: Make OFF-ROUTE directions **using only written language** (**words, numbers, letters only**). Without leaving your seat, think of a known landmark in the area. This can include restaurants, parks, museums, etc. that many people may know. Starting from your seat (and using your memory), write directions for some else to follow. They too have to stay in their seat and find the place in their minds. The other person will need to guess where the directions lead them. Do not state the destination in the drawing. Do not use any symbols, graphic variables, pictorial elements or proper names (such as Starbucks, Cedar Park, etc), but you may 'describe' these places.

4. READY, SET, GO! Set a time (10-15 minutes) for both groups to create their drawings. Return to the room at the designated time. Exchange maps.

5. Group A will stay in the room and try and figure out the destination from the maps that were drawn from memory.

6. Group B will leave the room and use the maps drawn from Group A and try and find the taped piece of paper.

7. Both groups have a max of 10 minutes to identify their destinations and/or return to the classroom. The timing constraint is very important because it places pressure on cognition.

8. Share each person's destination to see if you got it right!

If participants do not find the intended destinations it's OK. This exercise is to raise awareness of the challenges involved in the process of providing directions.

Questions to discuss

- What was your experience?

- Did you get lost?

- How did you self-correct?

- What role did the 'trust' factor play, if any?

- Is it easier to give directions or receive directions?

- Is it easier to map-out directions as you went or recall them from memory?

- Which strategy (on-route or off-route) do you think was more accurate?

- What style of drawing did you prefer, literal or abstract drawings of maps?

- How was information hierarchy communicated?

- Was there biased information?

- Importance in sense of accomplishment?

- Did your map have a clear starting point, such as indicated by use of arrows, stars, or other symbols?