

Objective: Master the Handshake

Everyone thinks they have a great handshake. But do they? This quick training is meant as a supplement to either ImprovPlus Networking or ImprovPlus Business. Can be used in conjunction with other communication trainings as well.

Instructions:

10+ people

This is a 15 to 30 minute exercise.

Have Participants divide into two lines, Line A & Line B

They should be a comfortable distance apart – when their right hand is extended the left shoulder of the person across from them should be just out of reach.

Give them their orders: It's an Academy and you're the Military Instructor!

1. Eye contact with your partner
2. Smile
3. Extend hand while maintaining eye contact
4. Reach for partners hand. Hands should meet "web to web" – web of thumb to web of thumb
5. Shake hands while exchanging greeting/introducing yourself.
6. 3 seconds is pretty standard.
7. Ask the Line A to give feedback to Line B. What did they think of the other's handshake – too firm, too soft, etc. Have B give feedback to A.
8. Have line A step to the right one slot while line B remains still. Everyone should have a new partner.
9. Repeat Handshake and Feedback 3 times.

Facilitation Guide:

A note about Feedback:

Part of this exercise is practicing receiving and giving feedback – but let's just keep that between us.

It is quite possible, even likely, that participants will get conflicting feedback. I leave it up to you on whether to facilitate a conversation about the nature of feedback (it's one person's opinion – up to you to decide if it's valid or useful information!)

If you have time and want to extend the activity you can try these scenarios:

Practice different types of handshakes –

What if A was interviewing B – how does this change?

What if B was CEO of a large company and A was a Manager in that company

What if you are colleagues

What if you good friends?

How does all this change the nature and dynamic of the handshake.

Facilitator Tips!

Responses to common questions/comments.

“What if it goes wrong?” – if the handshake awry – be gracious about it. If it feels appropriate, joke and ask for a redo/a mulligan. If you are the receiver of a bad handshake be gracious. Don't comment. Maintain smile and eye contact!

My hands are sweaty/cold/clammy etc – Call it out or not. Draw attention to it or not. Rub hands lightly together to dry/create warmth. Keep a napkin handy – lots of times there's food and drink around so

What about shaking hands with a woman. Once upon a time it was not common for men and women to shake hands. If you are ever in doubt, wait for the woman to offer her hand first. If she doesn't – there might be a cultural or religious reason or perhaps even medical reasons – then a simple smile and nod is acceptable.

What to do in the case of disability and or medical related issues – Grace and a sense of humor go a long way. If you sense a medical issue (arthritis, etc) then ease the firmness of your grip.

At the end of the day.... Everyone has an awkward social situation now and again. Be gracious. Be forgiving. Smile and move on.

This is a good answer to a lot of questions you'll get about handshakes. Be gracious and move on. (The questions you get will be surprising!)