

Kanban Pizza Online

Facilitator Guide

This guide is for trainers, teachers and agile coaches who want to use the Kanban Pizza Online game as an interactive exercise to teach Kanban and flow concepts. The guide assumes you are running the game with small groups of 3 to 5 people per room.

Game link: _____

Facilitator name: _____

Session date / group: _____

1. Learning goals

By the end of the game and debrief, learners should:

- Understand that limiting work in progress (WIP) improves flow and reduces waste.
- See the difference between local optimisation (one person being busy) and overall flow.
- Recognise queues, bottlenecks and inventory in a simple value stream.
- Experience the impact of policies such as WIP limits and batch sizes.
- Appreciate the role of collaboration and shared ownership of work.
- Make the connection between the pizza board and a real Kanban board.

2. Technical setup

Minimum requirements:

- Stable internet connection for all players.
- One device per player (laptop, desktop or tablet; phones also work but are smaller).
- A shared call or classroom so people can talk (in-person, Teams, Zoom, etc.).
- The Kanban Pizza Online website open in a browser.

Recommended browser: latest Chrome, Edge or Firefox.

Before the session:

- Open the game yourself and play a quick solo test round.
- Check that you can create a room, join it and start a round.
- Check that drag and drop works both with mouse and taps.
- Confirm that the timer, oven and scoring all update as expected.
- Decide how many rounds you will play and how long each debrief will be.

3. Running the game

3.1 Suggested timing (60 to 90 minutes)

- 05 min Introduction and learning goals.
- 05 min Technical setup, explain controls and roles.
- 10 min Round 1 (flow without shared builders) + 5 min debrief.
- 10 min Round 2 (shared builders) + 5 min debrief.
- 10 min Round 3 (customer orders) + 10 to 15 min debrief.
- 05 min Final wrap-up and link to real work.

3.2 Player roles (per room)

Encourage each team to define simple roles before Round 1. They can rotate roles between rounds.

- Ingredient preparer
Focuses on pressing the ingredient buttons to keep the Shared Ingredients box filled.
- Pizza builder
Focuses on dragging ingredients into the Pizza Builder and submitting pizzas.
- Oven manager
Focuses on moving pizzas into the oven, turning the oven on and off, and watching the time.

If you have more than 3 players in a room, extra players can:

- Help double-check recipes and timing.

- Act as "flow observers" who watch the board and call out bottlenecks.

3.3 Round-by-round guidance

Round 1 – Basic flow and WIP

- Ask each room to choose a room name and password.
- Make sure all players are in the same room before anyone clicks "Start Round".
- Explain that only Round 1 recipes are valid:
 - Ham Pizza: 1 Base, 1 Sauce, 4 Ham.
 - Ham and Pineapple Pizza: 1 Base, 1 Sauce, 2 Ham, 2 Pineapple.
- Emphasise: it is better to finish a few pizzas than to start many.
- Let them play the full round, then pause on the debrief screen.

Round 2 – Shared builders and collaboration

- Tell teams they now have access to Shared Pizza Builders.
- Any player can add ingredients to any shared builder and submit pizzas from them.
- Encourage them to experiment with:
 - One person focusing on prep for all builders.
 - Others focusing on finishing pizzas and managing the oven.
- Ask them to notice what happens to queues, idle time and stress.

Round 3 – Customer orders and demand

- Explain that customer orders will now appear over time.
- Emphasise:
 - Build pizzas to match orders exactly.
 - Unmatched pizzas are waste, even if perfectly cooked.
 - Orders that are never fulfilled also cost points.
- This round makes the link to real customer demand and product fit.

4. Debrief questions

The debrief is where most of the learning happens. Use the score breakdown and lead time chart on the debrief screen to anchor the discussion.

Round 1 – Flow and overload

- What did you notice about queues and waiting time?
- Did anyone feel pressured to "just keep producing" ingredients or pizzas?
- Where did work pile up: ingredients, built pizzas or oven?
- How did leftover ingredients and uncooked pizzas affect your score?
- Where do you see similar patterns in your real work?

Round 2 – Collaboration and shared ownership

- What changed when you could use Shared Pizza Builders?
- Did roles stay fixed, or did you swarm to where help was needed?
- How did this affect waiting time and waste?
- What Kanban or Agile principles does this round illustrate?

Round 3 – Demand, fitness for purpose and waste

- How did customer orders change your strategy?
- Did you ever build pizzas "just in case"? What happened to them?
- Which type of waste cost you the most points: wasted pizzas, leftover ingredients or unfulfilled orders?
- How does this map to building features in a product or delivering services to clients?

Closing reflection

- If you could play again, what would you change in your process?
- What one idea from the game would you like to try in your real work within the next week?
- How can you visualise your work so clearly that problems are as visible as on the pizza board?

5. Common patterns and how to highlight them

As facilitator, watch for these behaviours during play and bring them into the debrief:

- Over-production

Players press ingredient buttons continuously, filling the Shared Ingredients box.
Link this to large backlogs or too much work started.

- Local optimisation

One role stays extremely busy while others wait. For example, the oven manager is idle because no pizzas are ready, while builders are overwhelmed.

- Bottlenecks

Work piles up before one step (often the oven). Ask how a WIP limit or better collaboration could reduce this.

- Unclear policies

Teams are not sure which pizzas are valid or how long to bake them. Use this to discuss the importance of explicit policies in Kanban.

- Learning and adaptation

Many teams dramatically improve between rounds once they inspect their flow and change their strategy. Highlight this as continuous improvement.

6. Variations and extensions

Shorter or longer sessions:

- To run a 30 minute taster, play only Round 1 and Round 3 with brief debriefs.
- For a deeper workshop, allow teams to replay a round after the debrief and compare scores.

Extra challenges:

- Ask teams to set their own WIP limits for ingredients, builders and oven.
- Allow one team to act as "improvement coaches" and suggest process changes to others.
- Compare scores between rooms and ask higher-scoring teams to explain their policies.

Linking to real work:

- After the game, ask each team to sketch their own work as a board similar to the pizza board.
- Have them identify their own "ingredients", "builders", "oven" and "customers".
- Encourage them to propose one small experiment to improve flow based on the game.

7. Quick facilitator checklist

Before the session:

- [] Test the game yourself (create room, play at least one round).
- [] Decide on timing and which rounds to play.
- [] Prepare a short introduction about Kanban and flow.
- [] Have your video call or classroom tech ready.

At the start:

- [] Explain the learning goals.
- [] Show the main areas: Shared Ingredients, Pizza Builder, Oven, Completed, Wasted.
- [] Ask each room to choose roles and a room name.

During rounds:

- [] Watch for queues, overload and confusion about rules.
- [] Note interesting patterns or quotes to bring into the debrief.

During debriefs:

- [] Start from the score and lead time chart.
- [] Ask open questions before giving answers.
- [] Always link back to real work and next steps.

After the session:

- [] Ask participants what surprised them.
- [] Capture any experiments they want to try at work.
- [] Reflect on how you might tweak the rules or timing next time.

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Use this guide as a base and adapt to your context, team size and level of experience.