

Overview:

Just One and *Codenames* are cooperative board games where you are trying to guess a mystery word from your teammates. In *Just One*, the active player draws a card mysterious to themselves while their teammates write down a one-word clue that cannot be repeated. In *Codenames*, two teams compete with "Spymasters" to give one-word clues that can point to multiple words on the game board. Their teammates try to guess the correct words while avoiding the words that might belong to the opposing team.

Both games challenge players to consider the power that words can hold. As a result of this activity, participants will understand that learning these particular word association game rules can be beneficial to also learning social interactions in their own and different cultures. They will learn aspects of direct and indirect communication styles, mental empathy, working with a team, and navigating cultural context.

Note: This activity could work with other word association games not outlined here.

Objectives:

As a result of this activity, participants will be able to:

1. Recognize different aspects of direct and indirect communication styles.
2. Develop mental empathy and teamwork skills.
3. Navigate cultural context.

Time:

1 hour

Group Size:

Small Group

Materials:

Codenames board game \$15, *Just One* board game \$25 (both in [Links](#)), and Direct and Indirect Communication reading (in [Downloads](#)).

Intercultural Development Continuum Stages:

- Minimization
- Acceptance

AAC&U Intercultural Knowledge and Competence Goals:

Verbal and Nonverbal Communication:

- To articulate a complex understanding of cultural differences in verbal and nonverbal communication (e.g., demonstrates understanding of the degree to which people use physical contact while communicating in different cultures or use direct/indirect and explicit/implicit meanings).
- To skillfully negotiate a shared understanding based on these differences.

Other Skills:

Teamwork

Activity Instructions:

Indirect Communication

Have students read the PDF *The Impact of Direct and Indirect Communication* (in [Downloads](#)) before class and, in class, ask them to define what they believe indirect and direct communication means.

Communication styles are how individuals use language to share information with others. These particular activities focus on indirect communication, when a speaker's true intentions are not easily apparent. Often times, individuals use indirect communication to appear to be polite rather than give an honest response. Generally, the United States and other Western cultures, such as Australians and Germans, prefer direct communication, when an individual's true intentions are at the forefront and their message is very explicit. Cultures that typically use indirect communication include Eastern cultures such as Japanese, Chinese, Indian, and Saudi Arabians. Indirect communication focuses on nonverbal communication cues such as facial expression, eye contact, gestures, and tone of voice. Below are some examples of both indirect and direct communication styles:

Indirect communication styles:

- *Chinese Culture:* Often in Chinese business culture, individuals ask that you engage with them formally in front of their peers, even if you know them well. Chinese people would also rather meet one-on-one than have a telephone or email exchange. Typically, a Chinese person will not want to speak much about themselves.

Source: <https://www.laowaicareer.com/blog/chinese-culture-styles-communication/>

- *Indian Culture:* Generally, in Indian culture, individuals avoid direct refusals such as "no" since it may appear too harsh or aggressive. Indians might answer "maybe" or "I'll do my best" instead of directly responding "no." Not answering the question can also provide an individual's response. Body contact between the genders is often kept at a minimum and only a light touch of the arm might occur between the same gender.

Source: <https://culturalatlas.sbs.com.au/indian-culture/indian-culture-communication>

Direct communication styles:

- *American Culture:* Americans tend to communicate their message almost entirely verbally, which means they can be less attuned to body language. They also often expect others to be direct and "get to the point" when they are discussing something. Americans tend to speak with raised voices while in public, and they are also sometimes uncomfortable with long pauses or silence. Therefore, they will often attempt to fill any gaps in conversation.

Source: <https://culturalatlas.sbs.com.au/american-culture/american-culture-communication>

- *German Culture:* Germans value clear, honest, and explicit language, which often causes individuals outside of the culture to view them as blunt or harsh. They tend to not engage in pleasantries or small talk and would rather get to the point of a conversation. German people are often very literal, meaning that they can sometimes miss sarcasm or

misinterpret self-deprecating humor as a lack of self-confidence. Unlike Americans, they are comfortable with silence and do not feel the need to fill gaps in conversation.

Source: <https://culturalatlas.sbs.com.au/german-culture/german-culture-communication#german-culture-communication>

Students should consider that communication styles are a part of a spectrum. Although a culture might generally be direct or indirect, it still depends on the individual and often the rhetorical situation/context that is occurring. Often, when engaging in communication with others, one considers various language choices depending on one's age, gender, educational background, beliefs, and more.

Consider how Americans use direct language versus Germans. If running late for work, an American might email or call their boss and state, "I am running late for work because traffic was really bad today"—this is direct communication. However, a German might be late for work and simply state, "I will be late for work today" and leave it at that. How close you are with your boss might also affect how you communicate with them—maybe a text instead of an official email? Or perhaps you need to submit an official form through HR for being late?

In-Class Activity

Have students consider if their communication style is more direct or indirect. Based on the reading, ask students to consider the ways that they interact with someone of the opposite communication style from their own. After the discussion, have students act out the following scenarios:

- Come up with an indirect and then a direct way of requesting for someone to lend you a large sum of money—use both dialogue and body language in your request.
- Come up with an indirect and then a direct way of explaining that you did not enjoy a book you borrowed from a friend —use both dialogue and body language in your request.
- Come up with an indirect and then a direct way of asking your boss for a day off—use both dialogue and body language in your request.

Which communication style seems easier between each scenario? What if you consider further rhetorical situations of a scenario—age, gender, beliefs, etc.?

Intercultural Teamwork

Poor teamwork is often a result of a misunderstanding in communication. Often times, this is simply a matter of indirect and direct communication styles butting heads. Different cultures might have different strategies when planning a project, specifically when a project should be completed and what sort of decisions and analysis should occur. Here are some strategies to help with intercultural teamwork:

- Recognize your own communication style and then your teammates.
- Explain and encourage collaboration—make sure everyone is able to share their ideas and views.
- Make well-defined goals and tasks for your team.
- Try not to dismiss any conflicts or moments of ambiguity.
- Check-in with each other during the duration of the project.

Ask students if they have any other strategies to add!

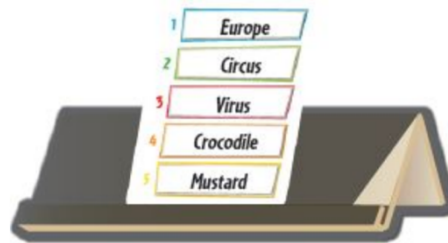
Activity for Just One

Setup

1. Shuffle the cards and randomly draw 13 to create a face-down deck in the middle of the table. Return the remaining cards to the box as they will not be used in this game.
2. Give an easel and an erasable felt marker to each player.
3. Randomly choose a player to be the first active player.

Game Play

1. The game plays out in a succession of turns and ends when the deck of cards is empty.
2. The active player draws the top card of the deck without looking at it and places it on their easel so that all of the other players can see the words (as shown in the image below). The player then chooses a number between 1 and 5 to tell the other players which mystery word they have to provide a clue for (If players don't know the chosen word, they can ask the active player to choose a different number.).



3. Without communicating with each other and without showing it to anyone, each player writes one clue on their easel. The clue must be composed of a single word.
4. Once all players have written their clues, the active player closes their eyes. During this time, the other players turn their easels around and compare their clue with the other players. All identical or invalid clues are cancelled. To cancel a clue, simply tip the easel over to hide the clue (see image below).



5. Once the identical or invalid clues have been cancelled, ask the active player to open their eyes and try to guess the mystery word with the help of the remaining clues. To do this, they're allowed only one guess.
6. The player to the left of the active player becomes the new active player. A new turn begins. The game ends when the deck is empty. Count the number of successfully guessed cards and compare your total with the table on the following page to get your score.

Successful Cards	Score
13	Perfect score! Can you do it again?
12	Incredible! Your friends must be impressed!
11	Awesome! That's a score worth celebrating!
9-10	Wow, not bad at all!
7-8	You're in the average. Can you do better?
4-6	That's a good start. Try again!
0-3	Try again, and again, and again.

Activity for Codenames

Setup

1. Divide players into two roughly equal teams: a red team and a blue team. Each of your groups needs to pick one person to be their Spymaster. The rest are field operatives and should sit down at the opposite side of the table to the two Spymasters.
2. Place the agent, bystander, and assassin cards near the Spymasters so they can reach them quickly. Shuffle and deal the codename cards, arranging them in a five by five grid at the center of the table. Your Spymasters should pick a key card at random, without showing it to either team's field agents, standing it upright in front of them.
3. The key card tells your Spymasters whose codenames are whose, as well as where the innocent bystanders and assassins are. The lights around the edge of the key card show which team starts. The first team will have nine operatives to find whereas the second team only has eight.

Gameplay

1. During each team's turn, the Spymaster gives a single word clue and a number to let you know where you can find your agents. The word associates the meaning of some agents' codenames on the table that belong to their team. The number indicates the number of agents on the table that link to that word.
2. For example, if the team needs to find the two codenames "seal" and "fish," the Spymaster could say "Sea, two" as both fish and seals live in the sea. However, the Spymaster can't say words that are on the table, or words made up of that word. So they can't say "fishing" if "fish" is on the table, or "logs" if "log" is on the table. Each team's Spymaster is not allowed to give any hints aside from the clue, either out loud or with their body. Breaking this rule means the team's turn is immediately over and play passes back to the other team.



3. Each team must try to figure out what the clue means and make a guess by touching one of the codenames. If they find a codename, regardless of whether it relates to the clue or not, one of their agent cards is used to cover the codename, and they can have another go, although they don't have to make more than one guess in any turn.
4. If a team chooses an innocent bystander or the other team's agent, their turn is over, and they must cover the word with the appropriate, corresponding card. Once one team's turn is over, it's the other Spymaster's turn to give a clue.
5. The game ends in one of two ways: either a team uncovers all of their agents to win the game or accidentally uncovers the assassin to lose the game immediately.

Debrief & Reflection

Once the game is complete, have students read the following questions silently for about five minutes and then come together to discuss them. Once complete, answer these questions with the larger class.

- What challenges did you face within the group in regards to communication? How can this relate to communicating across cultural difference?
- What indirect communication strategies did you use?
- What could you have done differently during the activity?
- How did your team dynamic change with each round?
- How did your teammates communicate information before, during, and after the activity?
- How would you explain this activity to a peer?

Note: You might also consider having a mini-debrief with each round of the game. Ask the active player what they were thinking when they picked each word. The more the group plays the game and communicates between each round, learning how their teammates think (mental empathy), the easier the game becomes.

Working with a team and understanding patterns and communication styles can lead to positive conflict resolution. Practicing communicating in new ways allows one to emphasize with other styles and suspend judgment of others.

Related Tools:

Similar tools:

- [Keep It Real Diverse Game](#)
- [Mental Blocks: Understanding Perspectives and Privilege](#)

Tools to use in conjunction with this lesson plan:

- [Direct-Indirect Communication](#)
 - Facilitators can use this tool to introduce communication styles.