

## Introduction:

BARNGA is a simulation game originally created by Sivasailam “Thiagi” Thiagarajan. It is a card game that participants must play silently, all the while being unaware that they are using different rules. The goal of the game is to help participants interrogate their understanding of communication and group norms and how norms may differ across cultural contexts.

This activity is an adaptation of the original game that includes some changes to the rules and gameplay. Namely, participants are asked to switch groups after the first round and every person in the second round group will have different instructions. It also “stretches” resources by dividing card decks strategically, so you don’t need one deck of cards per four people.

## Materials:

Cards, rules sheets (all on one color of paper).

*Note:* You can make your card decks go twice as far one (one deck for each 8 learners) by dividing them - one “deck” includes 2 Aces and all cards 2-7 with other cards removed; another “deck” can include the remaining Aces and all other cards including face cards Jack, Queen and King.

## Facilitator Instructions:

1. Divide participants into groups. For this first round of gameplay, the number of people in each group could be 4 or the total number of participants divided by 4, but groups should not be large (i.e., no more than 6 people per group). You just want to make sure that when you move to the 2<sup>nd</sup> group arrangement you will have 4 in each group and each person will have gotten used to playing with a different set of rules. It works well to make the size of groups in the first round the same as the number of groups you will have in the second round. Example: with 30 people, you could have 4 groups of 7-8 people in the first round, which would give you 7 groups in the second round, some with 4 and some with 5 players.
2. Before handing out any materials, tell participants that they are about to play a game to practice nonverbal communication. Warn them that they need to get really comfortable with the rules of the game in the first round because after that they will be “going silent.”
3. Provide each group a deck of cards and each participant a rule sheet. For this round, everyone in the group should have the same set of instructions. Note: Do not give any indication to learners that the rules are different from group to group.
4. Participants will get a few minutes to learn the rules and play a practice round with their group members. Then, the facilitator should collect their rule sheets, and they will play the first official round of the game. The round is over when one group member loses all their cards. When each group declares a winner, reward them in some way (food, extra credit, stand and applaud, etc.).
5. After all groups have finished the first round, the facilitator should then switch up the groups. This time, it is important that each group have at least four members, with four per group being the ideal number. If there is an unbalanced number of participants, then several groups will have one extra person (for example, if there are 22 participants, three groups will have four members and two groups will have five). Alternatively, you could

have “left-over” players after you form groups of 4 be observers placed around the room. If possible, the facilitator should also ensure that every person in the same group was assigned a different set of instructions in the first round. An easy way to do this is to have participants “number off” in each group –counting 1-4 or 5. Then all 1s will get together, all 2s, etc. forming new groups comprised of one member each from previous groups.

*Note:* If this is not possible because there are a larger number of participants, the facilitator should make sure that there is not a group where the majority of players have one set of rules because the minority group is likely to give in to the majority. Having a variety of rules within each group is key.

6. Hand out Round 2 rules and remind participants that there should still be no written or spoken communication of any kind. They can only use gestures to make declarations, ask or answer questions, and negotiate conflict.
7. Participants should then play another round with their new group members. The facilitator should expect some frustration and conflict as they play, and again at the end of the round when each group needs to declare a winner for their reward.
8. After each group has finished their round, allow them some time to calm down and then begin a debriefing/discussion on what they just experienced. The facilitator should ask the following questions:
  - How did you feel at different points in the game (e.g., when the rules were first explained, when the rule sheets were taken away, in your first group, in your second group)? Did your feelings change throughout the different stages?
  - What were some successes and, conversely, some frustrations/problems that occurred as you were playing?
  - Why do you think those frustrations/problems occurred while you were playing? What were the underlying causes?
  - What did you value as you were playing the game? How did it seem to differ from your group members?
  - What did you learn about your conflict style as you played this game? How do you deal with conflict? How did that compare to how others in your group dealt with conflict?
  - What sorts of “real life” situations does this game simulate?
  - Have you ever been in a “real life” situation where differing norms and values created conflict?
  - What did you learn about communication and conflict after playing this game?

### **Participant Instructions:**

*Note:* You'll notice that each set of Round 1 Rules is slightly different. After printing out the instructions on the following pages, cut them into slips. Ensure that there are enough slips for each participant to have one, and for each person in the same group in Round 1 to have the same set of instructions. Do not use different colors of paper to distinguish different sets of rules. The easiest way to handle the different rules is to together like with like with paper clips.

## BARNGA Round 1 Rules:

- Pass out all cards evenly.
- One at a time, each player turns over one card in the center. Whoever has the highest card wins that hand. The winning player gives away all the cards from the center to another player.
- Play until someone is out of cards. Whoever gets rid of all their cards first wins.
- The Ace is the highest card in this game and the 2 is the lowest. Black cards are higher than red ones.

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- Play until someone runs out of cards. The winner of the game is the one with the most cards when play stops.
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- Play until someone is out of cards. Whoever gets rid of all their cards first wins.
- The King is the highest card in this game and the Ace is the lowest. Red cards are higher than black ones.

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BARNGA Round 2 Rules:

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