

# 100 CREATIVE LANGUAGE GAMES

composed by Dominique Collet for vzw Roeland

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## Colophon

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## Origin of pictures

All pictures were downloaded from the websites [www.sxc.hu](http://www.sxc.hu) en [www.istockphoto.com](http://www.istockphoto.com).



Vzw Roeland is recognized by the Flemish Community, the province of East Flanders and the city of Ghent.

# CONTENTS

Preface

Explanation of the symbols

## **Icebreakers**

**1-30**

Name games and get-to-know-you exercises

1-15

Energizers

16-30

## **Expression games**

**31-55**

Physical games

31-46

Verbal games

47-55

## **Concentration and focus games**

**56-66**

## **Drama games**

**67-87**

Improvisation games

67-79

Acting games

80-87

## **Teambuilding/trust**

**88-100**

## **Appendix**

**I-VII**

## **PREFACE**

Roeland is turning 40 and that calls for a celebration and a festive publication!

Everyone who ever participated in one of the many Roeland projects and activities knows that Roeland always combines language acquisition with creativity and fun. I haven't seen this unique formula work so well anywhere else.

My experience as a workshop leader taught me that you often spend a lot of time preparing and looking for fun activities. This work could be far more efficient if there was a way to share all the material that has been collected and drawn up by the many Roeland language animators over and over again. And this is exactly what this publication hopes to do. The book consists of 100 exercises that have been collected over the years. They come from three different sources: ideas and activities based on my own experience as a workshop leader, ideas and activities inspired by the many enthusiastic Roeland language animators and famous exercises inspired by Keith Johnstone and Augusto Boal.

Some exercises might seem very simple or straightforward, but will offer a fun challenge when applied in a different linguistic context. You can use this book in many different contexts: during summer courses, Junior camps, workshops and language training sessions, but it can also be useful in a school context. Anyone who wants to entertain young people in a fun and useful way will hopefully benefit from this publication as these activities also aim to stimulate the group atmosphere and the well-being of the participants.

The book consists of 5 categories. Every category starts with the easiest exercises and moves on to the more difficult ones. My experience has taught me that the level of a group doesn't necessarily depend on the age or language ability. You always have to explore which exercises are most suited for a particular group.

*100 x creative language games* hopes to be a good starting point and a source of inspiration for anyone who wants to work with young people in a creative way - whether that is in French, English, Russian or Chinese. Feel free to use this book as you like: add, change and leave out whatever you want. At the back you will find a few blank pages where you can add your own comments and thoughts.

I would like to thank everyone who inspired me when collecting these activities and everyone who helped creating this book.

Have fun with it!  
Dominique Collet.

## **ABOUT VZW ROELAND**

Since 1971 VZW Roeland, a non-profit youth service, organizes high quality language courses in French, English and Dutch. Each year about 3000 youngsters participate in our stays that take place in Flanders, Wallonia and Great Britain. Our main target group are 12- to 18-year-olds, but since a few years we are also organizing more and more initiatives for 7- to 12-year-olds. Since 2008 we offer courses for non-native newcomers (7- to 15-year-olds) that want to learn Dutch.

Besides language courses, we also organize youth theatre in French, English and Dutch and we offer communicative and interactive city visits in Liège, Namur and Lille. Through these activities we reach another 10 000 youngsters during the school year.

For more information concerning our activities, visit our website [www.roeland.be](http://www.roeland.be).

## EXPLANATION OF THE SYMBOLS



Icebreakers

Expression games



Concentration and focus games



Drama games



Teambuilding/trust



These symbols and their matching colour indicate the kind of game concerned.

A  next to the title of the exercise indicates that you find extra materials in the appendix.



These three symbols indicate whether the participants have to stand in pairs, in a circle or in a row for the exercise. When the exercise requires an even number of participants and the group is uneven, the animator can join in. Various exercises that have been designed for two persons can also be played in groups of three or more.

Next to some of the exercises you will find pictures showing what props are necessary in order to play, such as balls, chairs, balloons, shoes, music, ...

# Icebreakers

## *Objectives*

- to create a positive group atmosphere
- to help to relax
- to break down social barriers
- to energize & motivate
- to help to think outside the box
- to get to know one another

# Icebreakers

## Name games & getting-to-know-you games

1. Group juggle
2. Name circle
3. I'm sexy Sarah
4. Balloon catch!
5. How do I look?
6. Circle of friends
7. What a shoe can do!
8. Categories
9. Catch me if you can...
10. Smile!
11. Have you ever...?
12. What's in a name?
13. Confusion!
14. Gossip
15. Truth, truth, lies



## Energizers

16. One, two, three rabbit!
17. Balloon juggle challenge
18. Balloon finger balance
19. Chair game
20. Shoe factory
21. The instigator
22. Face lift
23. Shake your body!
24. Close contact
25. Stinger
26. Bang, bang! You're dead!
27. Who am I?
28. What are you doing?
29. What's in the box?
30. The imaginary box

# 1. Group juggle



*Material: 4 or more small (soft) balls*

- Have the participants form a circle.
- Toss a ball to someone, using his/her name.
- This participant tosses it to someone else, using the next person's name.
- Keep it going for a while.

At a certain moment, more balls are introduced and it starts getting crazy. It will become more difficult to remember everybody's names and to catch the ball(s) in time.

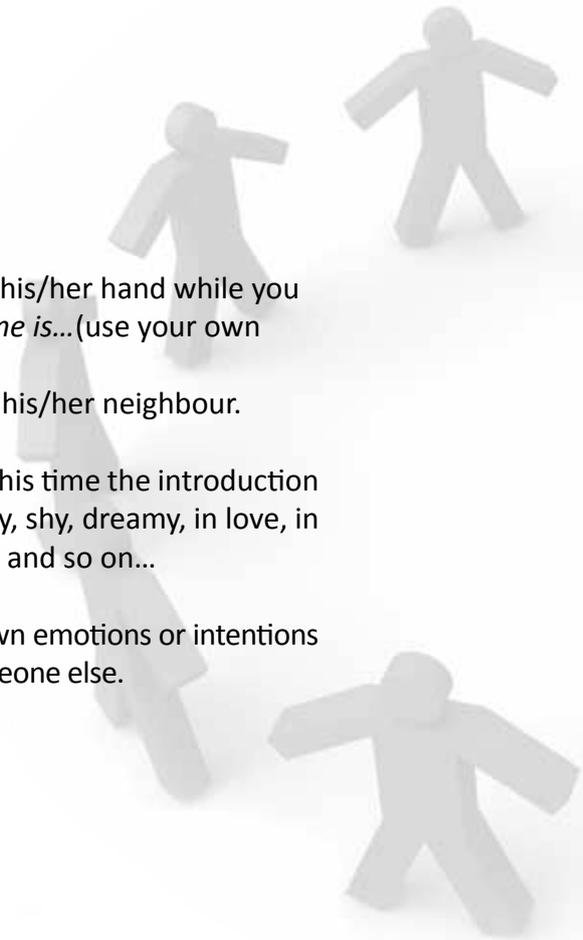


## 2. Name circle ★

- Have the participants form a circle.
- Address the participant standing next to you and shake his/her hand while you introduce yourself in an enthusiastic way: *Hello, my name is...* (use your own name). *Nice to meet you!*
- One by one every participant introduces him/herself to his/her neighbour.

Ask the participants to go around the circle once again but this time the introduction has to be expressed in a specific emotion or intention: angry, shy, dreamy, in love, in tears, fake, like an animal or a cartoon character or an alien and so on...

After a while you could ask the participants to choose their own emotions or intentions and to change it every time they introduce themselves to someone else.



# 3. I'm sexy Sarah

Ask the participants to choose an adjective that begins with the first letter of their first name and one that really matches their personality.

The first participant in the circle introduces him/herself by saying e.g. *I am sexy Sarah!*. Then the next participant introduces him/herself and also the person who has just introduced him/herself, and so on, e.g. *I am creepy Cindy and that is sexy Sarah!*.

This means that as they go round the circle it will become more and more difficult to remember all the names.

*Variation:*

- *The participants add a gesture to their introduction.*
- *The participants add a motto to their introduction.*
- *The participants introduce themselves and add a positive characteristic, using the sentence the most fantastic thing about me is... (this doesn't have to be true!)*
- *Everybody repeats what the participants before them have said.*



# Expression games

## *Objectives*

- to stimulate creativity
- to enhance the power of observation
- to enhance freedom of movement
- to train linguistic fluency
- to train social skills
- to increase self-confidence
- to train communicative skills

# Expression games

## Physical games

31. Back to back
32. Hypnosis
33. Mirror mirror on the wall...
34. Multitasking
35. Emotional roller coaster
36. Big is beautiful!
37. The bear of Poitiers
38. Catwalk
39. Dancing chairs
40. Moving chairs
41. Gangs
42. Choirboys
43. Walking in patterns
44. Where am I?
45. Imaginary space
46. Funny ride



## Verbal games

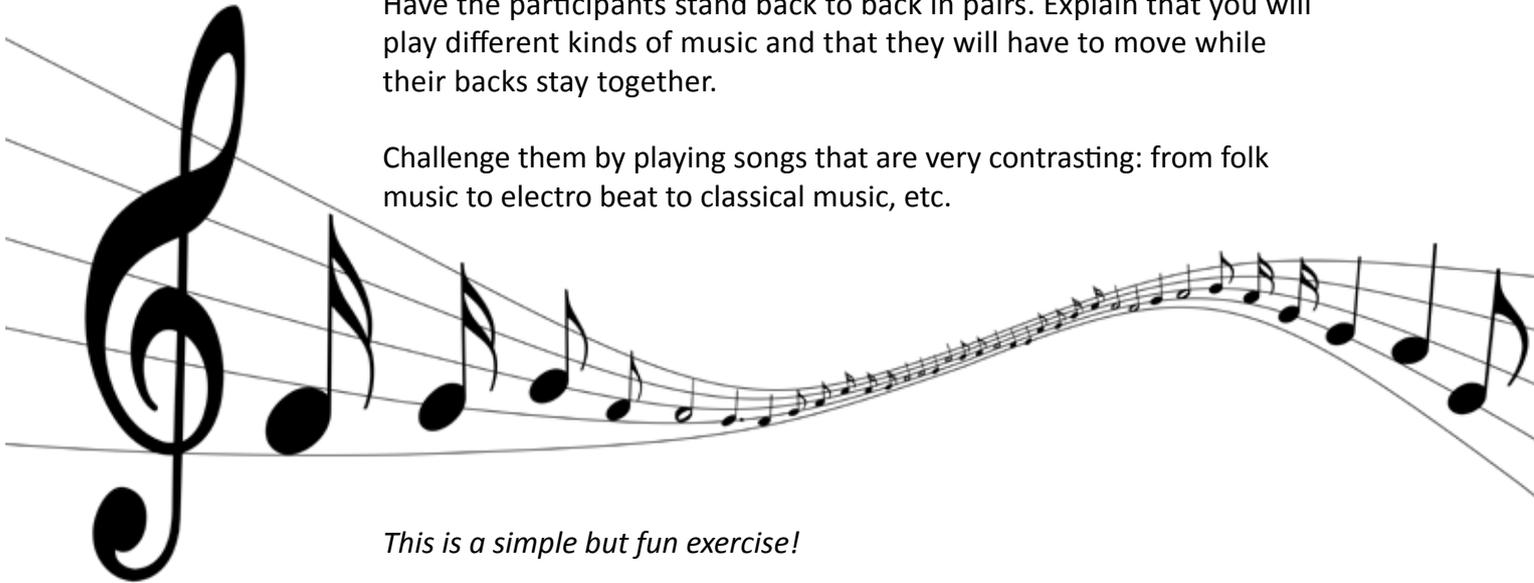
47. Yes, let's!
48. The two-headed professor
49. Calling names
50. Telling a story
51. Tongue twisters
52. The news for the deaf
53. Trio
54. Same time story
55. Get up, sit, on the floor!

# 31. Back to back

*Material: cd player*

Have the participants stand back to back in pairs. Explain that you will play different kinds of music and that they will have to move while their backs stay together.

Challenge them by playing songs that are very contrasting: from folk music to electro beat to classical music, etc.



*This is a simple but fun exercise!*



# 32. Hypnosis

- Ask the participants to pair up.
- One of the two holds his/her hand palm forward, fingers upright, a few centimetres away from the face of the other, who is then 'hypnotised' and must keep his/her face constantly at the same distance from the hand of the hypnotist. The hypnotist starts a number of movements with his/her hand, up and down, right and left, backwards and forwards, vertical, horizontal, diagonal, and so on. The hypnotised participant follows every movement and tries to maintain the same distance between face and hand.
- The hypnotist should move slowly and try to force the other into all sorts of crazy and uncomfortable positions.
- Afterwards the hypnotist becomes the hypnotised.

*Variation:*

*Play the game with one hypnotist and two hypnotised participants. Make sure that the two hypnotised do not touch each other.*



# 33. Mirror mirror on the wall...



- Ask the participants to form two rows, each participant looking directly into the eyes of the one in front of him/her.
- Those in row A are the 'subjects' and those in row B are the 'images'.
- The 'subjects' start making all sorts of movements and changes of expression (slow motion works best here), which the 'images' have to copy. Ask them to copy it right down to the smallest detail.
- Afterwards, the 'subject' and 'image' change roles.

After a while you can also give the participants specific situations they have to act out and copy e.g. you just woke up and are (not) happy with what you see in the mirror, you're getting ready to go to a party, you're doing your daily work-out, and so on.



# Concentration and focus games

## *Objectives*

- to learn to concentrate
- to learn to be selective
- to create group awareness
- to create individual awareness

# Concentration and focus games

- 56. To pass a clap
- 57. Screamer
- 58. Count to 20!
- 59. The forbidden number
- 60. One, two, three!
- 61. Soft and loud
- 62. Can you hear me?
- 63. Tapestry of sounds
- 64. Story time
- 65. Blablaba
- 66. How long can you keep going?



# 56. To pass a clap

Have the participants stand in a circle. One player starts by clapping his hands. This gesture is repeated by his/her right neighbour, and so on. Play this until the clap really flows nicely around the circle.

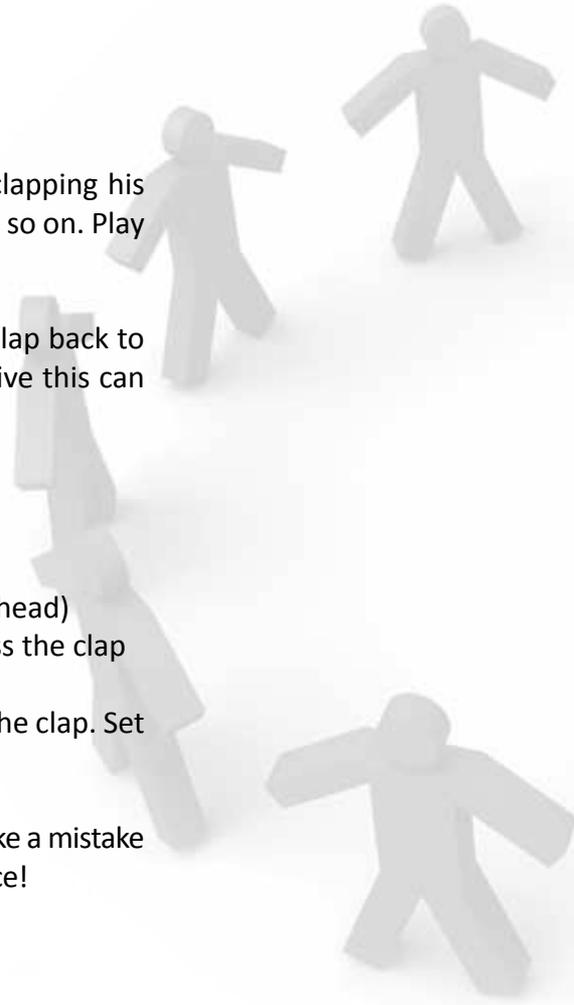
Next, you tell the group that players may decide to pass the clap back to the neighbour they got it from. Try it and notice how disruptive this can be.

Variations within the same game are possible:

- when receiving a clap, clap back to the sender
- pass a clap across the circle
- pass claps either low (bending down) or high (above your head)
- try clapping twice, three times or four times when you pass the clap

Ask the participants to make eye contact before they pass on the clap. Set the pace.

Add a competitive element to the exercise: participants who make a mistake or fail to react in time are out. Whip them up to speed up the pace!



## 57. Screamer

Have the group form a circle. It is important that everyone is able to see the eyes of the others. Explain that you will be calling out two sets of instructions repeatedly, namely 'heads down' and 'heads up'. When you say 'heads down', everyone has to look down. When you say 'heads up', everyone has to look up, straight into the eyes of someone else.

There are two possible consequences: if they are looking at someone who is looking at someone else, nothing happens; if they are looking at someone who is looking right back at them, they have to point at each other in a very exaggerated manner and scream loudly. They are then 'out' and take their places outside the circle to observe.

Once the 'screamers' have left the circle, the circle closes in and you continue playing until there are only two participants left. The one who can scream the loudest, wins the game. When there is doubt, let the group decide.

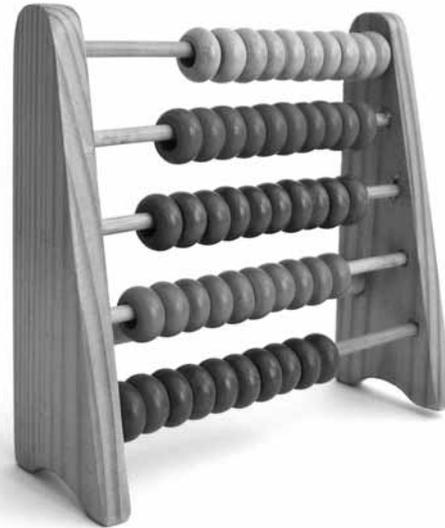


# 58. Count to 20!

- Ask the participants to form a circle.
- Call out number 1.
- Then someone else in the circle has to call out number 2, someone else number 3, and so on.
- The idea is to count to 20.
- If two participants call out the same number at the same time, the game starts back at number 1.
- This seems simple, but the participants are not allowed to make agreements or to make gestures to each other.

*This game asks for a lot of group concentration.*

*TIP: You can also ask the participants to look down at the floor. This increases the concentration.*



# Drama games

## *Objectives*

- to stimulate creativity
- to learn how to act energetically
- to learn how to follow one's impulses
- to learn how to analyze texts
- to enhance speaking skills
- to create body and voice awareness

# Drama games



## Improvisation games

- 67. Impro impulse game
- 68. Stepping game
- 69. Association
- 70. Screaming Viking
- 71. Freeze
- 72. Where am I?
- 73. Start with a sentence
- 74. Short scenes
- 75. Common mistakes
- 76. Playing cards
- 77. Bartender
- 78. Blind Date
- 79. Change your status

## Acting games

- 80. Emotional dialogues
- 81. Put on your wig
- 82. Reading the newspaper
- 83. Nursery rhymes
- 84. Stop word
- 85. Seen on radio and tv!
- 86. A different ending!
- 87. Over and over and over again...

# 67. Impro impulse game

*This is a very basic improvisation game that can be played with any group at any time. It triggers creative and dramatic impulses.*

Ask the participants to walk around the room freely and in different directions. Call out different objects, persons, situations, sounds, and so on that they have to act out immediately.

Ask the participants to react freely to their first impulse(s). Start with simple things and gradually make it more complicated. You will find that participants will become more inventive after a while and will let go of any inhibitions they might have had before.

Examples: aggressive dog, penguin, tango dancer, train, explosion, monkey, crying baby, top model, storm, car crash, father, mother, washing machine, spaghetti, boiling water, gold fish, piano, criminal, melting snow, rotten apple, death by drowning, a Spaniard, ballerina, drunkard, sparkling water, and so on.



# 68. Stepping game

Ask the participants to walk around the room freely and in different directions. Tell them that you will name different actions or feelings that they will have to act out immediately, for example:

- frustration (because of bad school results, because you lost a football match, ...)
- act out the 'YES!' feeling (because you won the lottery, ...)
- pretend you are drunk
- and so on.

Make a list beforehand. Stress that they have to follow their first impulses.



# 69. Association

- Ask the participants to form a circle.
- You will introduce a simple word like 'forest'.
- The participant standing next to you has to react by saying a word he/she associates with 'forest', e.g. 'tree' or 'woodcutter' or 'Little Red Riding Hood'.
- The next player will react by saying another word he/she associates with the word that has just been said, and so on.
- Ask the participants not to think too much, but to react with the first thing that crosses their mind. They don't have to try to be original.
- E.g. if someone says 'grass', what is their first and honest impulse? This will probably be very different for every individual. Some might associate it with 'summer' or 'flowers', others with 'hate' or 'mud', and so on.



# Teambuilding/trust

## *Objectives*

- to create group awareness and group confidence
- to achieve effective communication
- to achieve co-operation
- to achieve a problem solving attitude
- to have fun with a large group

# Teambuilding/trust

88. Human shapes
89. The human knot
90. Blind lead
91. Alphabet soup
92. The mob
93. The sun shines on...
94. The human machine
95. Animal sounds
96. Blindfolded
97. Alien, tiger, cow?
98. Body hide
99. Ha-ha
100. Pokerface



# 88. Human shapes

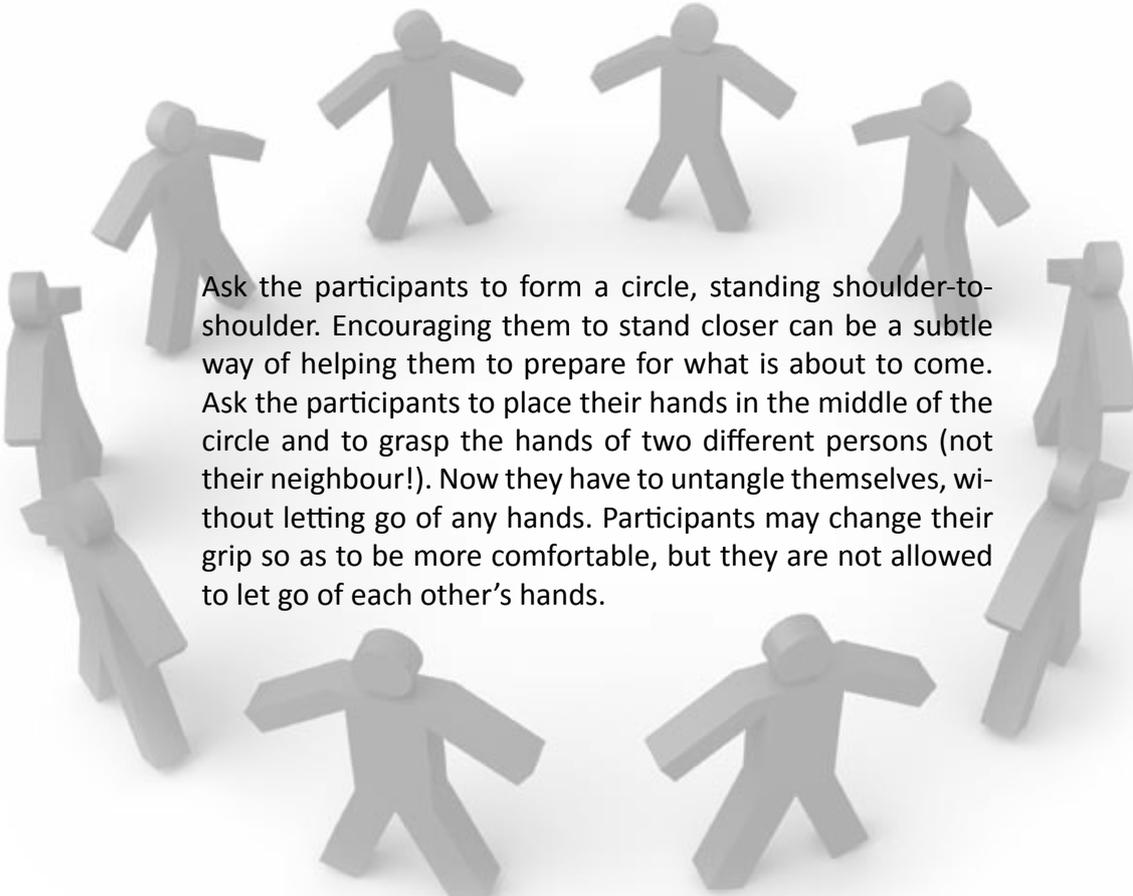
Ask the participants to work together the best they can as if they were all parts of one body.

Ask them to create:

- the smallest shape possible
  - the largest shape possible
  - the most twisted shape possible
  - the squarest shape possible
  - the roundest shape possible
- This has to be done with the entire group!



# 89. The human knot



Ask the participants to form a circle, standing shoulder-to-shoulder. Encouraging them to stand closer can be a subtle way of helping them to prepare for what is about to come. Ask the participants to place their hands in the middle of the circle and to grasp the hands of two different persons (not their neighbour!). Now they have to untangle themselves, without letting go of any hands. Participants may change their grip so as to be more comfortable, but they are not allowed to let go of each other's hands.



# 90. Blind lead

*Number of participants: 2*

Ask the participants to pair up. One of them should blindfold the other by holding his/her hands in front of the other one's eyes. He/she will now be in charge. Ask them to guide their partners through the room and to stop five times, open their hands to show their partner something (an object, a fly on the wall, a scratch on the table, the window, and so on) and close them after about five seconds.

Afterwards, the 'blind' participant has to tell the others what he/she has seen (in the right order!). They then take turns.



## *Variation:*

*One participant closes his/her eyes. The other one leads the 'blind' participant by giving directions on the back or shoulder:*

- *walking = finger on the back*
- *to stop = loosening the finger*
- *to turn left = a tap on the left shoulder*
- ...

