

The Maze

Because publications courses are so different from any other courses, the following activity is designed to help you acclimate students to the way the publication course will function throughout the year.

Materials:

- a roll (or 2) of white masking tape
- about 150 square feet of space
- a buzzer or bell (Taboo buzzer works well)
- a stop watch
- a note pad and pen

Time: Game play can take anywhere from 10-30 minutes. Debriefing can take 15-30 minutes.

Objective: The entire group must navigate a maze successfully from one side to the other in 30 minutes or less.

Rules:

- Students have and must use 3 full minutes of preparation time for strategizing.
- After the 3 minute planning time, there is to be no vocalized communication of any kind.
- Every student must take a turn before any student can take his/her next turn.
- Only one student may be physically touching the maze at any given time.
- Moves may be made in any direction to an adjacent square: forward, backward, sideways, or diagonally.
- Squares may be used in the maze more than once, but no one square will be used twice consecutively.
- Both feet must be completely planted inside a square before the player will be notified if he/she is correct.
- The adviser will indicate incorrect moves to the player by buzzing and correct moves with silence or praise. No other interaction from the adviser can take place.
- In the event of an incorrect move, players are to exit the maze in the same order in which they entered it, committing both feet to each square on the way out in reverse.
- Each player must begin at the beginning and progress through the maze with each turn. No player may take a second turn until all other players have attempted the maze.
- Every student must complete the entire maze within 30 minutes.

Procedure:

- Prior to class, create a scotch tape grid on the floor approximately 6 squares wide and 10 squares long. Each square should be about 12 inches square.
- Prior to class, the adviser should draw a map of the grid and establish a path on from one side to the other using numbers. The path should include 15-19 total moves in all directions, should use at least one square more than once, and preferably have 3-4 steps backward / horizontal near the end of sequence.
- When you're ready to begin the activity, explain the rules and provide clarification.
- Begin the timer and allow the game to begin.
- During the game, pay very close attention to and take notes on each student's behavior.
- If students have not completed the maze at the end of 30 minutes, stop the game.

Application:

Most of the application from the ball toss game applies to the maze as well, but with a little more depth. Keeping those applications fresh in your mind, discuss these additional things with your staff.

- NUMBER ONE REASON I LOVE USING THIS GAME: How you show up in the game is how you'll show up on staff.

Who were the leaders? *How* did they lead? Who couldn't follow the rules (talking, taking turns, committing both feet, not touching the maze out of turn, etc.) Who tried to "cut corners" (exiting the maze without going back through the same path)? Who got frustrated? Who came up with a plan? Who helped others remember the path? Who only looked out for number one? Who saw the path demonstrated 30 times and still messed it up? Who just waited for others to point out the path for them? Who couldn't make a decision without someone else's input? How did people treat one another when they failed or succeeded?

A student's behavior during this game is a HUGE indicator of what kind of staff member he / she will be. (Disallowing vocal communication during the game helps accentuate these behaviors / characteristics.)

- Other applications *in addition to the applications from the ball toss game:*

- **Strategizing:** Journalism assignments take TONS of planning, and there are a hundred plans that could make this game easier for everyone. How did you use your planning time? Often times players want to skip the planning and go straight to the game (and later wish they had planned)...doesn't THAT sound like the way students sometimes approach journalism?

- **Making moves in any direction/reusing the same square twice/getting so close to the end only to go back again:** sometimes progress in journalism does not always resemble forward progress. You might even feel like you're moving backwards in your work (redesigning a page for the third time, going to *another* game trying to get the same picture that didn't turn out quite right at the last one, rewriting a lead 10 times, etc.) but if the end product is better as a result, **all progress is really forward progress.**

- **Committing both feet:** in journalism this might mean designing a page completely before deciding whether it will work or not. It might mean taking 200 pictures at a game that may or may not be used. It might mean doing 20 interviews only to find out there is no story. It might mean looking something up in the stylebook three times to be sure it's right. It might mean looking up the spelling of someone's name even if you think you know it's right already. It might mean confirming a fact 5 times from 5 different sources before trusting that it is true. **NOTHING you do in journalism can be done half way!** Commit both feet to everything you do! You will feel awesome when you've finally got both feet planted on the right square!!!

- **The silent adviser:** you'll have to learn to depend primarily on your peers, particularly your editors, to help you. It's a student publication – you students need to be making the decisions yourself. The adviser will redirect you during the year when you get off track but should not be telling you what to do all the time.

- **Exiting the maze in the same direction you entered it:** By demonstrating (forward and backward) the path, you helped solidify the path for yourself and for your classmates. You and they learn from your mistakes. We're a team, and you should do everything you can do to help others succeed. Also, retracing your steps exactly will help you determine exactly where you went wrong – giving up and walking off the maze doesn't help you or anyone else. Also, journalism has rules to follow. If you can't follow the rules of a simple game...

- **Beginning at the beginning every time:** There's no way to cut corners in journalism. You have to do all the work, every time: you plan, you report, you talk, you photograph, etc. Also, beginning at the beginning helped you solidify your knowledge of the maze one more time just like practicing journalism skills repeatedly will help you remember and master them.

- **Every student completing the maze in 30 minutes:** There is *no such thing* as a yearbook or newspaper with only some of the work completed. Every student must complete every task in order to get our job done. Also, in journalism, we **must** think of deadlines seriously. If you weren't done in 30 minutes, you failed. Plain and simple. If our pages aren't done on time, we fail. We must meet deadlines!!! This is not like other classes – there are REAL consequences to not getting your work done on time that will drastically and negatively affect your publication AND your audience's perception of your publication.

- **Celebrating success:** when someone got a move right, it felt good! Creating our publication will feel good!

Let the experienced staffers talk as much as possible about these things and others, but help them all understand that (yes, I'm going to say it again) publication classes are simply not like other classes!