

# Tip Sheet: Debriefing Cooperative Games



Although having fun is definitely one of the reasons to play cooperative games, these types of games have a larger purpose as well—they promote peacemaking by helping your students strengthen and sustain relationships, improve communication skills, and build a strong sense of community. These games may also provide the opportunity to explore issues of friendship, fairness, inclusion/exclusion, and helping others.

In order to reap these benefits of cooperative games, you have to make time to debrief the games you play so that your students have the opportunity to make the connection between the game and their own life experiences.

**Debrief**—Use these three simple questions during your debrief session to guide students in reviewing and evaluating the game:

- **What?**—Ask some questions that provide time and space for your students to think about **what** they learned and experienced (both academically and socially/emotionally) during the game. For example: *What happened during this game? How did it make you feel? What was hard? What was easy?*
- **So What?**—Ask some questions that help your students think about **why** they played the game. For example: *What did this game teach us? Why was it valuable to play this game? Why is it important to practice team building, communication, or inclusion?*



## Dig Deeper

During the course of the debrief, you may become aware of issues that need to be explored more deeply with your class. Here are some suggestions for digging deeper on issues.

**Ask open-ended questions:** "How was that for you? How did you feel?"

**Focus on feelings:** "What is everyone feeling right now? Use one word to summarize your feelings."

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- **Now What?**—Close out the debrief with space to reflect on how what your students learned can be applied outside school. For example: *How can we use what we learned in this game outside school? Are there skills we learned that we can use to build peace on the playground, at home, or on the bus?*

Encourage your students to speak from their own experience and perspective by using I-statements when speaking, and not to make generalizations about what was happening to others. An example of an I-statement is: “I was feeling very bored during this game,” as opposed to: “This game was boring.”

The debrief is a good time to reflect on the effectiveness of the game’s rules. You can also use the debrief to get input and suggestions from your students on the game overall.

**Find additional toolkits, lessons, activities and more at Peace First’s Digital Activity Center**  
(<http://www.peacefirst.org/digitalactivitycenter/>).

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**Monitor verbal and nonverbal cues:** “It seems like people aren’t paying attention here. What is going on?”

**Test out perceptions:** “During this game, it seemed like people were getting frustrated. Is that true?”

**Share your feelings:** “I am confused. How do other people feel?”

