



## The Maze Instructions



Watch an introductory video for this tool at [metalogtools.us](http://metalogtools.us).

The Maze is about finding our way as a team. It's all right to experiment and make mistakes as long as we learn from them – and support each other – along the way. Use this tool to demonstrate the dynamics of a culture that learns from failure and to practice being in a self-organizing team.

### How does it work?

A group must work together to find their way through an invisible maze. There is just one route, and they must experiment by stepping on different squares on the activity mat until they find it. After a brief planning period where they can talk freely, the participants must work in silence and have only 20 minutes.

Each time they step on a wrong square, the trainer blows a whistle to indicate their mistake. First-time mistakes are acceptable, but if anyone in the group steps on the same square again, the group must pay a fine of 1,000 'Metalogs.' They have only 10,000 Metalogs for the entire activity so learning from their mistakes is imperative!

## What do you need?

**People (min / optimal / max):** 6 / 12 / 18

**Time for Activity:** 20-40 minutes

**Materials:** 1 washable activity mat, 1 whistle, wooden currency, 1 wooden clipboard, 1 detailed set of instructions

**Workspace:** A large open space at least 16 x 20 ft

## Instructions

1. To prepare for the activity, place the activity mat on the floor with the black grid pattern facing up. Set out the wooden Metalog money (10,000-20,000 depending on your group size).

Print The Maze Step Guide (download at [metalogtools.us/instructions](http://metalogtools.us/instructions)) for drawing Xs and Os during the activity (see Step 6).

2. Explain the goal of the activity. Say something like, *"Your task is to determine how to cross The Maze from one side to the other. There is just one way to cross, and you must work together and support each other to find it. Plan ahead and make as few mistakes as possible because you are on a limited budget of 10,000 'Metalogs' and each avoidable mistake will cost you 1,000 Metalogs. I will let you know whether you are crossing correctly or not."*
3. Outline the rules (write them on a flip chart in advance, then reveal them):
  - You have five minutes to plan your approach and 20 minutes for the activity.
  - Once the activity starts, you may not talk. There is a 1,000-Metalog fine for talking.
  - If you need an additional five minutes for your planning session, it will cost you 1,000 Metalogs.
  - You must establish the order in which you will each cross The Maze, and this cannot change.
  - Only one person is allowed to cross at a time, and each turn ends when a mistake is made. When they leave The Maze, they must leave the same way they came.
  - You may not skip squares – each step must be to an adjacent square, which may be a diagonal move.
  - Once you start, if someone steps on a wrong square for the first time, I will blow a whistle. If someone steps on the same square again – an avoidable mistake – I will fine you 1,000 Metalogs.
  - No aids are allowed. For example, you may not use pen and paper during the planning phase or leave any visual aides on The Maze itself.
  - If you need additional time to complete the activity, it will cost you 1,000 Metalogs per minute.

4. Start and time the activity.
5. Observe the activity, beginning with the planning phase. The more effectively the group plans now, the easier the activity will be when they can't talk. If you want to give the group some guidance, ask these questions:
  - Who will be in charge of what during the activity?
  - How will you deal with mistakes, both avoidable and unavoidable?
  - How will you learn from each other?
  - How will you support the members of your team who are struggling?
6. Once the activity starts, watch each person carefully. Blow your whistle for first-time mistakes, and collect 1,000 Metalogs for second-time mistakes. In order to make sure you don't miss any mistakes, use The Maze Step Guide (page 4) and write Xs and Os in each square. Write an O for first-time (unavoidable) mistakes and an X for second-time (avoidable) mistakes. This will help you monitor the group and be useful in the debrief when you ask, *"How could you have avoided this mistake?"*
7. Lead the debrief, basing the conversation on your original intent for the activity. After the silent phase, the group will be happy to talk again. Here are some questions you might ask:
  - What was the key to completing this task?
  - What strategies proved most useful?
  - Which stages were the most challenging and how did you overcome them?
  - What role did non-verbal communication play?
  - How did each individual contribute?
  - How did you support each other?
  - What have you learned from this activity that you can apply in real life?

## Variations

### The Flip

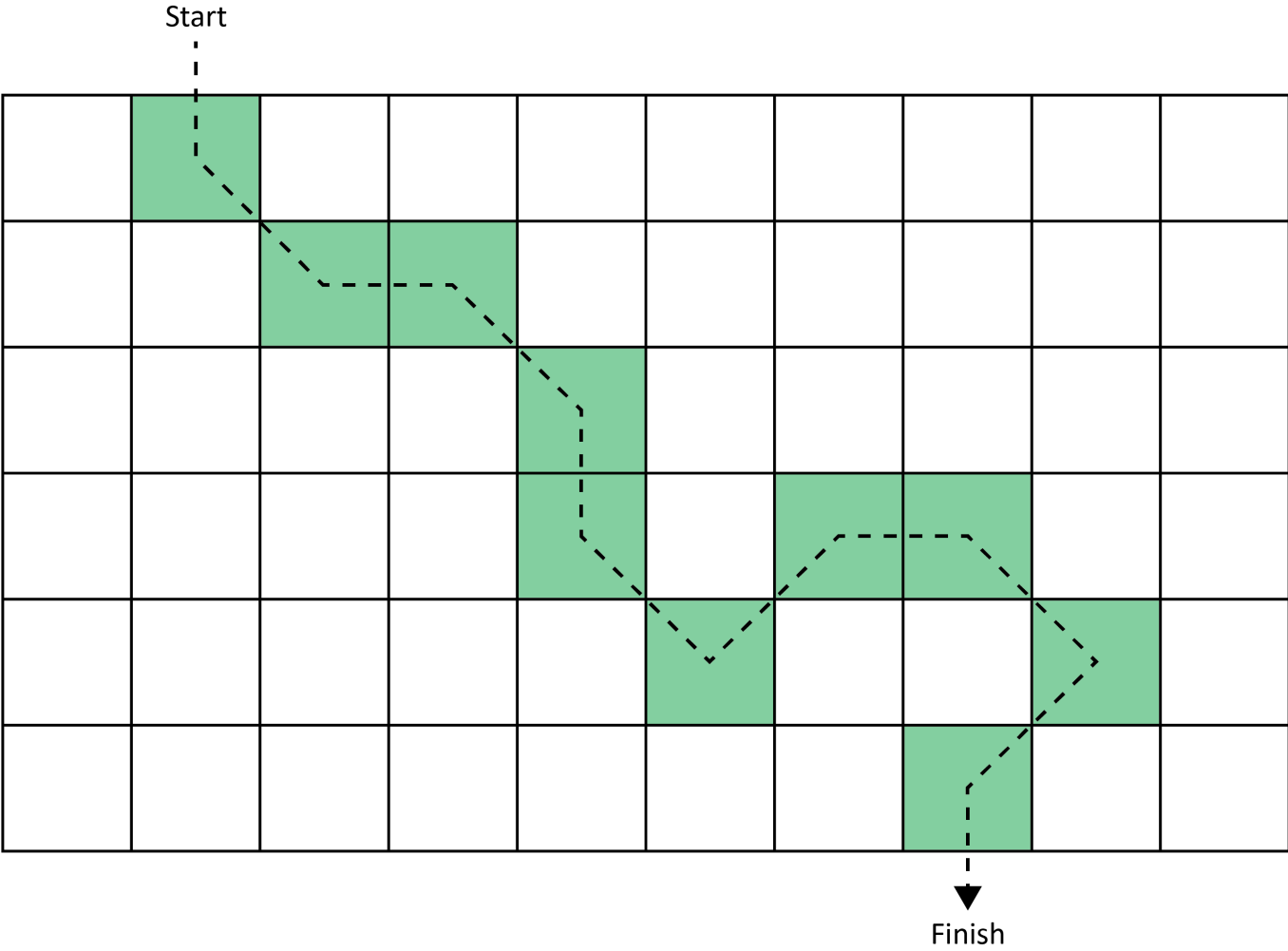
Ask the entire group to stand on The Maze and turn it over without anyone stepping off the mat. This variation involves both strategic planning and very close physical contact. It is a great energizer.

### Origami

Have the group step on The Maze, then say *"Your task is to fold the mat as many times as you can. You will have three minutes to estimate how many times you can fold it, then another three minutes to do the folding."* This variation also requires very close physical contact and is best for groups of 4-10 people.

# The Maze Step Guide

Print copies to draw on at [metallogtools.us/instructions](http://metallogtools.us/instructions).



## **Common Sense Caution**

This activity requires participants to move around on their feet. Some participants may experience dizziness, nausea, vertigo or headaches, and may fall or stumble as a result. If a participant suffers from balance problems, vertigo, dizziness, lightheadedness or orthopedic problems, he or she should refrain from participating in this activity or sit in a chair and observe.

Participants who are pregnant or suffer from back pain or other orthopedic injuries should consider refraining from participating in this activity.

Choose the room or area for this activity carefully. Participants will move around and could lose awareness of their environment as they focus on the exercise. Choose a room or area free of steps, posts, furniture, debris or other potential trip hazards. The floor should be dry, level and stable.