



## The Philosopher's Stone Instructions



The Philosopher's Stone is a smart way to prepare your group's mental muscles before any activity that demands a high level of creativity. Like any good warm up, this tool helps send the brain a signal that it's about to do something challenging. Use it for brainstorming, reframing entrenched beliefs, developing new perspectives, or any other time you want to encourage out of the box thinking.

### How does it work?

Groups of 1-5 people are given a small shape plate with three differently-shaped holes – a circle, a square and a triangle – and asked the question, "What would a shape that fits precisely through all three all look like?" This requires creative thinking and a willingness to try new approaches to problem solving.

The trainer asks the group to draw or describe this shape. They can even use modeling clay or potatoes and a safe carving knife to create the shape.

After a few minutes, the mystery is revealed with the help of the actual Philosopher's Stone – a multidimensional wooden shape.

## What do you need?

**People:** 1-5 per shape plate

**Time for Activity:** 10-20 mins (not including debrief)

**Materials:** 1 plastic shape plate, 1 wooden Philosopher's Stone, 1 set of instructions

**Workspace:** Table for participants to sit / stand around

## Instructions

1. To prepare for the activity, take the plastic shape plate out of the black pouch and keep the wooden Philosopher's Stone out of sight.
2. Explain the goal of the activity and its relevance to your group. For example, you might introduce it as a fun way to activate their creative thinking or as a quick exercise of their imaginations as in 'If you can dream it, you can do it.' The more you customize how you introduce, facilitate and debrief the activity for your group's specific needs, the richer the learning experience will be for everyone.
3. Introduce the activity itself. Say something like, *"Your task is to describe or create a shape that fits precisely through all three holes. What would it look like?"* You can ask the group to describe, draw, or construct the shape (by using clay or carving a potato) – whichever method you prefer.
4. Observe the activity. Watch the group for 10-20 minutes.
5. Reveal the solution. Show everyone the wooden Philosopher's Stone.
6. Lead the debrief. Here are some sample questions to ask:
  - What was the key to this activity?
  - Were you able to think 'outside the box'?
  - Was there something else you could have done to reframe the problem?
  - What other ways can you stretch your brain to tap into your creativity?
  - What are the parallels between this brain stretch and your experience at work?
  - How can you put into practice what you learned from this activity?