

KEY PAD EXPRESS

The activity Key Punch was shared by Karl Rohnke and Steve Butler in the book *Quicksilver* back in 1998. This “Express” version (I changed the Punch to Pad to avoid the violence), adds a little hot sauce (and a rubber chicken) to the original.

FACILITATED OBJECTIVES:

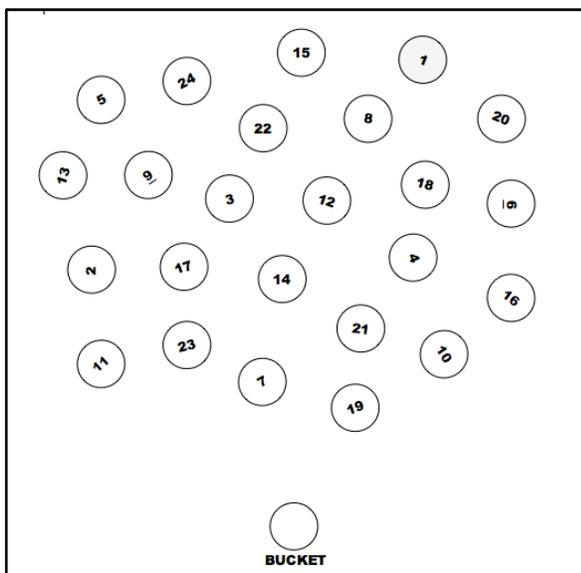
Explore behaviors related to planning, implementation of the plan, delegation, identifying task roles and responsibilities, and leadership. Explore concepts of critical thinking, macro and micro improvements, and success.

NEEDS & NUMBERS:

You will need one bucket/crate (container) and a set of numbered spots (e.g., poly spots, paper plates, index cards) – numbers up to 24 or 30 – for every group of 10 to 12 participants. You will also need one tossable object (e.g., a rubber chicken, dodge ball, flying disc), something to designate a starting line (e.g., an activity rope or two cones), and a timing device for each group in play.

TIME:

15 to 20 minutes



Cooperation/Communication

Activity Objective

The group is challenged to toss and catch a designated object (e.g., a rubber chicken) through a sequence of numbers (e.g., 1 through 24) as fast as possible.

PROCEDURE:

Set Up: The diagram shows the basic set up for the equipment (like Key Punch if you know the activity). The further apart the numbers are set out the more running will take place (this is good for a cardiovascular fitness-related set up). Also, I like to set out the numbers so those in sequence to each other are not very close to one another – notice spot #1 is really far from the bucket (since the group will start behind the bucket) and then spot #2 is pretty far away from #1, and so on. You will also need to set a starting line out in front of the bucket (not shown in the diagram). I like to set down an activity rope or a couple cones about 10 feet away from the bucket. The group will be required to stay behind this starting line before each express

attempt. So, here’s the order: A starting line, 10 feet of space, the bucket, another 10 feet of space, then set down your numbers. When that’s set up, put the “tossable” object of choice – I like to use rubber animals, especially the chicken – inside the container.

Okay, you are ready to introduce the challenge to your group. Gather everyone behind the starting line for the instructions:

KEY PAD EXPRESS

1. This will be a timed activity. Time will start on the word “GO” and stop when the tossable object is back in the container.
2. Everyone is required to stay behind the starting line during the planning stage of each “express” attempt. **PENALTY: If anyone crosses the line before an attempt begins a one-second penalty will be added to your overall time.**
3. Inside the container in front of you is a tossable object. This object must be tossed around from person-to-person in number order.
4. The spots out in front of you are numbered 1 to _____ (ask your facilitator for the highest number in the set).
5. When you are ready to start an express attempt, let your facilitator know. When s/he says, “GO” time will start and you are all free to cross over the starting line.
6. Someone in the group must take the tossable object out of the container and proceed to spot #1. **PENALTY: If the container tips over during the removal of the object a five-second penalty will be added to your overall time.**
7. While standing on spot #1 the first person with the object will toss it to someone else standing on spot #2.
8. The person standing on spot #2 will toss the object to someone else standing on spot #3. This tossing sequence continues through all the numbers up to the highest number in the set.
9. If the object cannot be caught or it is dropped, the person who attempted to obtain the object must gather it up, then return to the number in sequence s/he was standing on before tossing the object to the person standing on the next number. In other words, all tosses must be made from a person standing on the appropriate numbered spot in the sequence.
10. The last person to obtain the object will be standing on the highest number in the sequence. Once the object is obtained (caught or picked up), this person must run to the container and place the object inside. **PENALTY: If the container tips over during the return of the object a five-second penalty will be added to your overall time.**
11. When the object is inside the container the time will stop.
12. After assessing any time penalty (if necessary), the overall time for the express attempt will be shared with you.

SAFETY:

There are some dangers around the tossable hitting someone on the fly. Especially a rubber chicken – the beak can catch an eye! (Really, I've been there – nothing serious, but a close call.) And, getting hit with a plastic flying disc can be a bit startling (and painful). Be sure to make your group aware of the possible dangers and take the necessary precautions to minimize them.

Also, no matter how far the spots are away from each other there is the possibility of person-to-person contact (i.e., collisions), especially because most participants are looking down at the ground for the next number they need to be standing on. I make sure to bring up this issue and encourage the group to be mindful of others as they make their way through the number field. I also make sure to use safety cues (e.g., “watch for others”) during the action to help remind them of the danger.

FACILITATION:

I came up with this variation for Key Punch when I was assigned the activity (traditional version) with groups of 13 to 14 participants that were going to be rotating around stations (Key Punch was one of the stations). I thought there would be too much waiting around, touching one number at a time, so I added a chicken. And there you have it. (Lesson: If something's not working, add a chicken – hey, you never know!)

The no-nonsense way to facilitate this one is simple process improvement. Key Pad Express attempts go quickly, unless you use a flying disc and the spots are really far apart. Use the same tossable object for each attempt. Give your group several attempts to improve their time and stop when they believe they've made their best effort (or, you need to move on to something else, like lunch!).

I like to facilitate Key Punch Express with product and process related goals. Timing the activity will give the group a product – how well they did in the end. Dropping the object during the “process” gives them another standard to measure their success. They can get a good time, but what did it “look” like to get that time? When working with adult groups we might call the drops “lost time injuries” or “breakages” in the process – terms that certain groups can relate to based on their jobs.

I also like to start with a larger round object, like a dodge ball. After a few attempts my groups will see a good product (time), and usually a couple, or maybe even no, drops. Then I introduce a “change” in the process – I add a chicken. The group learns (skill development) how to work with this change and gets better over time. Then I provide another change – I add a flying disc. The skill development might take longer for this change, but the group sees improvement (usually), over time. (I had one group that imploded with the flying disc, but we had a great discussion. It's where they were at as a group.)

One last thing you'll want to consider. Who will time the activity? You can take on the task or assign it to a participant in the group (role and responsibility). Work with the objectives and goals they bring with them to determine the best course of action.

OBSERVATIONS/QUESTIONS:

- What did the planning look like for your group – at the beginning, before the first round, after the first round, and then again before your last attempt? Did your planning process change? If so, why? And, what changed? Who lead the planning sessions? The same people, or did different people take the lead when planning?
- If you had a plan, did it help? Were you able to implement the plan you had? Did your plan work? Did you have to change the plan during an attempt? If so, why? What sorts of things do you find yourself planning during your life? How does planning help you? What sorts of things do you like to leave unplanned? Why do you think you like things to be unplanned? How do those things work out for you?
- What roles and responsibilities were needed during the challenge? How were these roles delegated? Were you okay with the role you had/were given? If you didn't feel comfortable with your role what did you do about it? If you spoke up, how did the other people in the group accept your concerns? What prevents you from speaking up when you are given a role you believe is not within your "skill set"? If you could, what would you change about this situation in the future?
- Think back on the activity and the idea of leadership. Was there a particular leader in the group? Was there shared leadership? What did you like about the leadership that took place? What would you change about the leadership? What do you know about "collaborative" leadership? What would that look like in this group? If you had the opportunity to lead another Express round, what would you do?
- What problems did you face during the activity? These were things that took up time and things that caused drops. How did you overcome/solve these problems? Who knows any of the steps/parts in the critical thinking process? Did you cover any of these steps? Which ones did you miss? If you could go back and cover all the steps in the process, how might this change the results of the task? How does critical thinking play a part in your life at school/work? How has the critical thinking process helped you? Has it ever caused more problems for you? Tell us the story.
- As you were working through the challenge, how did you measure your success? Did you see improvement? Did you see macro or micro improvements (or both)? Are you able to identify and verbalize what factors lead to each level of success? How do you know when you have done your absolute best? When do you say, "It's good enough"? How do you know when it's good enough? Are there people in your life that tell you you're successful or unsuccessful? How do you accept this? What can you do about it? What can you change about these situations?
- What does success feel like for you? What do you hope to be successful with in the future?

VARIATIONS:

- Provide your group with a copy of the directions and have them work the challenge on their own. You, of course, can clarify the requirements if needed and monitor fouls (unless the group is assigned to monitor).
- Using different tossable objects will change the dynamics of the challenge. A dodge ball is a fairly easy challenge (if your participants have well developed catching skills). A tennis ball makes it a little more challenging because the ball is smaller. A rubber animal, in my experience, is a pretty moderate challenge since most people don't toss around rubber animals – if you have good catchers in the group it will make up for the odd-shaped tossable. Now, if you use a flying disc (a.k.a., a Frisbee) this increases the challenge because of the inconsistent flight path of the disc – fewer participants will have disc-tossing skills.
- This variation deserves its own space. I've tried this once with a group of nine participants and 20 numbered spots. They had to roll a bowling ball through the sequence (it was one of those spur-of-the-moment things. I saw the ball in the cabinet and just had to try). It worked for this group. They rose to the challenge. I'm not sure if a bowling ball would be good for a bigger group with more people in the way. (I'm assuming you can identify, and share with your group, the safety issues related to this variation.)
- I've lead Key Pad Express several times during competitive "Olympic" themed programs. I had several teams at my "Key Pad" station at once. Each team had a timer – I trained them on the timing rules. Then, I ran three Express rounds, rotating areas before each round so teams would have to navigate different sets of numbers. I added all the three times together for each team that came to my station to come up with places for the event – lowest overall time took home the Gold.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION GRADE LEVEL OUTCOMES:

(www.shapeamerica.org/standards/pe/)

- Middle School: S4.M5 – Cooperates and problem-solves with a small group of classmates.
- High School: S4.H2 – Uses communication skills and strategies that promote team/group dynamics

21st CENTURY LEARNING:

(www.p21.org)

- Creativity and Innovation: Incorporate group input and feedback into the work. View failure as an opportunity to learn.
- Critical Thinking and Problem Solving: Analyze how parts of the whole interact with each other. Reflect critically on learning experiences and processes.
- Communication and Collaboration: Demonstrate the ability to work effectively and respectfully with diverse teams.
- Flexibility and Adaptability: Deal positively with setbacks.
- Initiative and Self-Direction: Set goals with tangible and intangible success criteria.

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- Social and Cross-Cultural Skills: Respond open-mindedly to different ideas.
- Productivity and Accountability: Set and meet goals. Collaborate and cooperate effectively with teams.
- Leadership and Responsibility: Act responsibly with the interest of the larger community in mind.

ADDITIONAL IDEAS: