

LIFE RAFT

BRIEF FOR FACILITATORS

Key Themes	Teamwork, Communication, Decision Making, Influencing others
Participants	Unlimited
Timings	45 minutes for activity + debrief time
Materials Required	One team brief per person

Overview

This activity is aimed at supporting individuals with their own ideas work together to agree a group solution.

Running the activity

- Split the delegates into groups and handout the Delegates Brief. Allow 15 minutes for them to read the instructions and identify their individual ranking for the items listed.
- Then allow a further 30 minutes for the group to agree a group decision to employ the group consensus method in reaching its decision. This means that the prediction for each of the fifteen survival items **must** be agreed upon by each group member before it becomes a part of the group decision.
- Consensus is difficult to reach. Therefore, not every ranking will meet with everyone's complete approval. As a group, try to make each ranking, one with which **all** group members can at least **partially** agree.
- Ask the groups to flipchart their responses (hidden from the other groups) which are revealed at the end.

Suggested Review Questions

- What worked well/what would you do differently?
- How did you reach your group decision?
- Did everyone feel they had the opportunity to share their individual views?
- Was the whole team happy with the final decision?
- Was there any conflict within the team – how was that managed?
- How were differences in opinion handled?

Then reveal the answers/rationale for the rankings.

LIFE RAFT ANSWERS/RATIONALE FOR FACILITATORS

According to the 'experts' the basic supplies needed when a person is stranded in mid ocean are articles to attract attention and articles to aid survival **until rescuers arrive**. Articles for navigation are of little importance: even if a small life raft were capable of reaching land, it would be impossible to store enough food and water to subsist during that period of time. Therefore, of primary importance are the shaving mirror and the two-gallon can of oil-gas mixture. These items could be used for signalling air-sea rescue. Of secondary importance are items such as water and food, e.g. the case of army C rations.

A brief rationale is provided for the ranking of each item. These brief explanations obviously do not represent all of the potential uses for the specified items but, rather, the primary importance of each.

1. **shaving mirror** ~ critical for signalling air-sea rescue.
2. **two-gallon can of petrol** ~ critical for signalling - the oil-gas mixture will float on the water and could be ignited with a dollar bill and a match. (Obviously, outside the raft.)
3. **five-gallon can of water** ~ necessary to replenish loss by perspiring etc.
4. **one case of US Army C rations** ~ provides basic food intake.
5. **twenty square feet of opaque plastic** ~ utilised to collect rain water, provide shelter from the elements.
6. **two boxes of chocolate bars** ~ a reserve food supply.
7. **fishing kit** ~ ranked lower than the chocolate bars because 'one bird in the hand is worth two in the bush'. There is no assurance that you will catch any fish.
8. **fifteen feet of nylon rope** ~ may be used to lash equipment together to prevent it from falling overboard.
9. **floating seat cushion** ~ if someone fell overboard it could function as a life preserver.
10. **shark repellent** ~ obvious.
11. **one litre of 160-proof Puerto Rican Rum** ~ contains 80% alcohol - enough to use as a potential antiseptic for any injuries incurred; of little value otherwise; will cause dehydration if ingested.
12. **small transistor radio** ~ of little value since there is no transmitter.
13. **maps of the Pacific Ocean** ~ worthless without additional navigational equipment - it does not really matter where you are but where the rescuers are.
14. **mosquito netting** ~ there are no mosquitoes in the mid Pacific.
15. **sextant** ~ without tables and a chronometer, relatively useless.

The basic rationale for ranking signalling devices above life-sustaining items (food and water) is that without signalling devices there is almost no chance of being spotted and rescued. Furthermore, most rescues occur during the first thirty-six hours, and one can survive without food and water during that period. (N.B. Officers of the United States Merchant Marines ranked the 15 items and provided the 'correct' solution to the task.)

LIFE RAFT INDIVIDUAL BRIEF

You are adrift on a private yacht in the South Pacific. As a consequence of a fire of unknown origin, much of the yacht and its contents have been destroyed. The yacht is now slowly sinking. Your location is unclear because of the destruction of critical navigational equipment and because you and the crew were distracted trying to bring the fire under control. Your best estimate is that you are approximately one thousand miles south-southwest of the nearest land.

Below is a list of fifteen items that are intact and undamaged after the fire. In addition to these articles, you have a serviceable, rubber life raft with oars large enough to carry yourself, the crew and all the items listed below. The total contents of all survivors' pockets are a package of cigarettes, several books of matches and five one-dollar bills.

Your task is to rank the fifteen items below in terms of their importance to your survival. Place the number 1 by the most important item, the number 2 by the second most important, and so on through to 15, the least important.

Individual Ranking	Items	Group Ranking
	sextant	
	shaving mirror	
	five-gallon can of water	
	mosquito netting	
	one case of US army C rations	
	maps of the Pacific Ocean	
	seat cushion (flotation device approved by the Coast Guard)	
	two-gallon can of oil-gas mixture	
	small transistor radio	
	shark repellent	
	twenty square feet of opaque plastic	
	one quart of 160- proof Puerto rum	
	fifteen feet of nylon rope	
	2 boxes of chocolate bars	
	fishing kit	