

HOW TO TEACH INSTANT CHALLENGE (IC) TO NEW TEAMS The Basics

Thinking On Your Feet With Instant Challenges

In a world with growing cultural connections, increased types of communication, and a need for teamwork and problem solving, the ability to solve problems quickly as a group is becoming increasingly important. Destination Imagination Instant Challenges are designed to help give children the confidence that they can approach any problem with creativity and tenacity.

Wow! That sounds great but how are you supposed to teach these kids? The key is to teach the team teamwork and problem solving skills while having FUN! FUN is key! If your team isn't having fun they won't master the skills! Be enthusiastic and crazy, help your team relax. You are their Cheerleader. Promote a sense of comradery, and collaboration. Praise the kids when they take risks even if it doesn't work. Teach them to learn from failure, embrace it and improve. Enjoy the time you spend with your team. It really is time well spent and will be life changing for you all!

What is IC?

General Information

See a real IC in action. - Apollo 13 movie –(*watch this Apollo 13 video clip! A real IC in action!*
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1cYzkyXp0jg>)

What is Instant Challenge?

The Instant Challenge portion of the DI competition is a chance for your team to show off its creative problem solving skills as they work together and "think on their feet" in a very short time frame to solve a problem. ICs are usually 5-10 minutes long.

- There are 3 types of IC

PERFORMANCE	COMBINATION	TASK
With Props	Any combination of Performance and Task-Based Instant Challenges	To Build: Height, Width or to Hold Weight
Without Props		To Move
With Imaginary Props		To Protect
With Team-Made Props		To Communicate
		To Change

- The best part about Instant Challenge is that non-team members may teach IC skills to the team throughout the season.
- There is **NO INTERFERENCE** in Instant Challenge practice.

Why practice Instant Challenge (IC)?

- IC teaches kids important skills for life!
- Instant Challenges are **FUN! FUN! FUN!**
- Instant challenges are intended to give students opportunities to develop collaboration skills in an engaging way.
- Shy or timid students will often participate and engage in Instant Challenge even when they don't in other areas.
- Instant Challenges help students to improve their mental agility, intuition, and communication and apply what they know to solve a problem.
- Instant Challenges spark a student's creativity and ability to use available materials in creative ways.
- ICs improve time management skills.
- ICs can be used to understand problems they are experiencing in their central challenge. **This is really important!** Ex. If the kids are having trouble figuring out how to make a prop stand up, create an IC to make something (not prop related) stand up. You can teach them ways to do it in the IC debrief. Beware you don't make it so Obvious! It is up to the team to realize what they just figured out and translate it to their prop problem.
- ICs are worth a 100 points at a tournament, or 25% of the team's total score.

When do you Practice Instant Challenge? – When you can. People will tell you as many as you can each meeting but instead make ICs a teaching opportunity. Don't just do ICs to do them. Train for them!

- Every team meeting, especially for new teams.

- At the beginning of team meetings - IC is a great warm up to get the kids to focus on their solutions for the main challenge
- At the end of meetings - ICs are a great way to end a meeting and cool down.
- In the middle of a meeting - ICs are useful when the kids need to take a break from working on the central challenge
- When the team is stuck - ICs can be used as a means to try out hypotheses the team has brainstormed as possible solutions to the central challenge.

TM Preparation

Get help

- Have a parent responsible for the IC portion of every meeting. One less thing for you to have to do. If no one will commit to the whole task break it down:
 - Ask a Parent to help with Instant Challenge at meetings.
 - Have someone prepare the IC materials ahead of time – Ziplock bags work well. Make sure there are a variety of ICs for the teams to attempt. Don't get stuck on just one type because they like it more.
 - Have a parent help with the debrief portion of the IC. Perhaps they can video the practice so the kids can critique themselves?
 - Get help in setting up and cleaning up ICs

How to teach IC to a new team?

No one starts off as an Instant Challenge genius. For many, the ability to think critically as a team in very short period takes a lot of practice.

Depending on the Team dynamics you may need to spend more time in some areas than others and repeat several sections until the kids get it. New teams usually have an average of 16-22 meetings in which to practice IC. As the tournament nears try and fit IC practice in even when the team is in panic building mode. (Don't worry whatever they get done and bring to the TOURNAMENT WILL BE GREAT!) IC practice also helps the kids FOCUS, have FUN and relieves some of the pretournament stress. Don't be discouraged! The team will eventually get it and learn to work together! You will be amazed at what they will accomplish at the Tournament!

Create an IC box of materials

it is a good idea to have a bunch of the common Instant Challenge materials in one place. This will make it much faster and less frustrating when preparing for the next team meeting.

The most basic materials are:

- Mailing Labels
- Chenille Sticks
- Straws
- Rubber Bands
- String
- Paper Clips
- Index Cards
- Paper Envelopes
- Binder clips
- Twist ties
- Plain White Paper
- Pencils
- Craft Sticks
- Styrofoam Cups – or paper cups
- Foil (Pre-cut sheets from Smart & Final)
- Blue Painter’s Tape (for boundaries)
- Toothpicks
- Wire hangers
- Spaghetti
- Markers

Team work

Teamwork Skills

A **team** is a group of people, united by a common culture and purpose, who are cooperating to achieve quality results.

The challenge we have as Team Managers – helping kids develop healthy and effective interpersonal skills and processes so they can work cooperatively. A Team Manager needs to work on Teamwork with their new team before anything else. Teamwork skills will help the team in both the Central challenge and in IC.

Teamwork consists of Team Bonding, Trust and Listening skills. You need to get the kids to trust each other and to develop some common experiences to help them bond as a team and work towards a common goal. Teach them to listen to each other and to the challenge so they can achieve success. **Games seem to be the best way to teach kids these skills and promote teamwork while having FUN.**

Team members who trust each other:

- Feel part of the group
- Are concerned about the well-being of other members
- Believe that other team members are capable
- Feel competent with tasks and roles
- Are open and honest with each other

The Team Manager’s role in facilitating trust among the team:

- Focus on relationships—your relationships with each team member and relationships between team members

- Help the team set guidelines around respectful behavior
- Create opportunities for success
- Help the team avoid destructive conflict.

Teamwork Activities for the first few meetings

Some great ideas for team bonding are field trips, outings and games. As the Team Manager try and come up with a few activities that help the kids become a team.

Field trip suggestions – The more you join in the fun the better it is for the team. So act silly and interact with all of the kids.

- **Home Depot** – Scavenger hunt activity Pair the kids up and have them hunt down screws, lumber, zip ties, card board boxes and paint. Ask the Home Depot guy to help too! He/she will lead them all over the store and suggest things you won't have thought of. Get parental help for group supervision. Keep the kids safe!
- **Michaels** – walk thru the store and discuss all the materials. Can they come up with ways they could use tissue paper or dried flowers ect as decorations.
- **Airport** - Watch the planes and have a snack at a smaller airport. Ask the kids to make up stories about where the planes are headed.
- **Bowling** – Join in the fun too! Bowling is a great way for a team to bond.
- **Pool Party** – Invite the parents too. Just remember to add team bonding activities.

Games

- **Group Knot** – Team members stand in a circle facing inward with their eyes closed. Each team member reaches into the circle and grabs a hand. Repeat with the other hand. Have them open their eyes and work to untangle the knot without dropping hands.
- **Ring Around the Circle** – The team stands in a circle and holds hands. Place a hula hoop between two members. The team moves the hoop around the circle without dropping hands.
- **Tag** – A good old-fashioned game of tag gets blood moving and laughter flowing. Be sure to play along. Nothing gets a team feeling like a team faster than the common target of the Team Manager.
- **Blindfold Walk** – Break the team up into pairs or groups of three. One member of the small group wears a blindfold. The small group walks with the blind-folded team member across the room or somewhere safe. Group members take turns wearing the blindfold. To demonstrate your trust in the team, wear a blindfold and have the team work together to guide you physically around a room. When trust is strong, you can venture

outside. Repeat the activity using verbal commands to guide each other, including you as the Team Manager, safely around the room or through obstacles.

- **3-D Human Sculptures** – Team members work together to use their bodies to create shapes, designs and objects, including all team members in the sculpture. Start with easier sculptures, such as triangles, rectangles, diamonds, squares, etc., and work toward more complex objects, such as flowers, a book, elephants, helicopters, eating utensils, etc. As the team becomes experienced at moving from one shape to another, have them add movement to their sculptures (e.g., snake that moves across the room, airplane that flies, roller coaster, etc.).

- **IDEAS Activity**

Team members need to learn to assess ideas based on the best interest of the team. Use this activity to promote open discussion and consideration of others ideas. First, place a cardboard box somewhere in front of the team. Ask the team to generate as many ideas as possible for how the box might be used in their Team Challenge solution. Each team member must generate at least three ideas.

After the team is done generating, each team member selects two of his or her favorite ideas from the list. Team members **may not select their own ideas**. They must say why they like about the ideas they chose.

Questions to ask the team about ideas and team work:

- Why is it important for team members to compromise?
- What can they gain by making sure that everyone is involved?
- What are some ways they can make sure that everyone is heard?
- What are some ways they can voice their concerns if they don't feel they're being listened to?
- **Tip** – My team had a secret word 'TIDDLYWINKS' that they used to signal team members to move on, quit arguing or to signal that someone was too dominating. When they heard someone say the secret word the rest of the group would high five and move on.
- **Tip:** Joining in on the play will build trust and help you connect with your team. If you show you are having Fun, then the kids will have fun!

Listening skills

Listening is the foundation for learning and interacting. Adults tell children to listen, but few teach the skill to students. Part of the problem with listening stems from the fact that we think faster than we speak. Words arrive slowly, and our brains have opportunities to

wander and think of other things. If we think something is too hard to understand or are turned off by the speaker's choice of words, we don't pay attention. Explain to your team that listening well and listening for information are important skills they need to do well in solving instant challenges.

The Team Manager's role in facilitating communication among the team

- Teach listening skills
- Ensure two-way dialogue
- Help the team leave judgment out of idea generating
- Keep interactions positive and exciting

Incorporate some active listening games into Instant Challenge practice so the team can learn to listen and be actively engaged.

Games

- **Mindbender challenges** —frame games, eyeball benders and following directions quizzes. Another great activity is to read directions and the team members have to draw what they hear... or what they think they hear. This has been an excellent lesson in listening to what the IC is asking for and enforcing how everyone hears and thinks differently.
- **Drawing Game**
Active listening occurs when listeners engage the material they are listening to, with questions, comments and thought. By telling the team how to draw a picture without allowing them to ask questions, you can show them how difficult it can be to listen accurately. In this game, you tell team members to draw, for example, "a circle intersected by a line on top of a square to the left of a diamond." They will likely all have different results. This will give them a sense of how hard it is to listen accurately without asking questions.
- **What Were My Words**
One person reads a story or an incident for everyone else to listen. Once he is done with it, any other person from the group is asked to repeat it. The one who can retell the story as accurately as possible, wins!
- **Simultaneous Talking**
Have the group break off into smaller groups of 3. Place 1 of the 3 in the center and the remaining 2 will be to either side. Give one person on the outside a mundane topic and the other a different mundane topic like helicopters or how to clean your room. Instruct the people on the outside to talk NONSTOP about their given topic to the person in the middle. The person in the middle is to try to maintain both

conversations as best they can. Make sure that, when the person in the middle is addressing one conversation, he/she turns toward that person.

Continue for a minute or 2 and place a new member of the 3 in the middle.

- **Line Story**

A suggestion for a title of the story is generated by the team. The team manager points at one person in the line. That person must start telling the story. When the TM points at another person in the line that person must continue the story. Not only must they continue the story but they must begin exactly where the other person left off mid word or mid-sentence. If the new person does not continue where they should, they sit down. If a player keeps speaking after the TM points at a new person, the player sits. If a player hesitates for two seconds before speaking they must sit. If the player makes no sense at all they must sit. The TM calls the players out just like they do in baseball. TM, "You're out!" Then everyone claps as the ousted player sits. After each elimination a new chapter number is given to the story. The leader reminds all what chapter they are up to and what the title of the story is.

How to Deal with CONFLICT

Your team will encounter conflict as it works toward a solution. Conflict is often a necessary step toward progress. Therefore, it is important for your team to learn how to deal with conflict as it arises. As a Team Manager, remember to play the role of facilitator. You should help the team process conflict as it happens, but you should avoid making decisions and judgments for the team. In other words, stay out of the conflict as much as possible; your team will thank you later.

Sometimes there is one kid that only wants to use his ideas!
Sometimes it is the Team Manager's kid sometimes it is the loudest kid. The best way to address this is to play games where everyone has to build upon the other's ideas. Have the bossy person go last. Encourage the bossy one to try and round up everyone else ideas and tie them all together creatively.

Tip: One of the best ways for the bossy kid to become a Team player is to limit the brainstorming to the first 3 ideas and then have the rest of the team build upon one of those ideas into an AMAZING TEAM idea. The bossy kid comes last and has to use everyone else's idea making it their idea.