



The Balloon Game

What you need to run the game:

- 1 Scenario card, annex 1
- 1 Game card, annex 2
- 5 Labels or a permanent marker pen
- 5 Balloons (in 5 different colours)

Introduction

The 'balloon game' is a simple and fun way to deliver an attention grabbing event that will raise awareness of some of the issues faced by refugees and asylum seekers.

It uses the challenge of simultaneously juggling five balloons to encourage participants to empathise with the situations new arrivals face.

Instructions

Preparation

- ✓ To play the game safely, you will need a playing area approximately 3m x 3m
- ✓ Blow up & label your balloons, with the following words: Food, Accommodation, Education, Freedom, Language. Each of the 5 issues can be represented by a different colour balloon
- ✓ Ensure you have a time keeping device – either a watch or mobile phone would be ideal.

Playing the game

- ✓ One contestant stands in the playing area
- ✓ Read out the scenario card
- ✓ Check the contestant understands the scenario & purpose of the game
- ✓ Start timing 30 seconds
- ✓ Throw the balloons one by one into the area, and the contestant can use their body to keep as many balloons off the ground (note they can't catch the balloons)
- ✓ As the balloons drop to the floor mark them off on the game card
- ✓ Stop the clock after 30 seconds
- ✓ Hand the completed game card to the contestant & give a brief verbal summary.

Some other ideas

- ✓ You may wish to play music during the 30 seconds to attract more people to the game and add some excitement
- ✓ For extra interest, you could set up several games in a row and allow contestants to compete against each other
- ✓ These instruction are for one game only, for more games or players simply increase the amount of scenario cards, game cards and balloons

Annex 1 – Scenario cards for the balloon game

Scenario card to read at start of game

Imagine you are an asylum seeker or refugee trying to juggle all the competing pressures of living in the UK. These balloons represent some of the issues you may face each day. Your challenge is, for 30 seconds, to keep as many balloons in the air as possible. You cannot catch a balloon. When a balloon hits the floor or falls out of the playing area then it is out of play.

Juggling: It's much harder than it looks!

<p>Language <i>As you don't speak English, you caught the wrong bus and ended up in an unfamiliar part of town.</i></p> <p>Many Asylum seekers and refugees struggle to do everyday things like catch a bus or buy food due to language difficulties and unfamiliar customs. "I had no idea what was happening" - 23-year old man from Iraq.</p>	
<p>Accommodation <i>Your heating has broken down again and your landlord is no where to be seen.</i></p> <p>Asylum seekers do not jump the queue for housing, they are often placed in inadequate, hard-to-let properties. "There is no carpet in some rooms. It's so cold" - 36-year old from the DRC.</p>	
<p>Education <i>Congratulations! You have just secured a place at a prestigious University. Unfortunately you won't be going because you can't afford the fees.</i></p> <p>Most Asylum seekers and Refugees are charged international student fees to attend university. This can range from £8,000 to £40,000. "For me, learning is very important. I feel sad for those who can't learn. I want to be a doctor so I can help as many of my people as possible" - Rawth Azad, refugee from Sudan.</p>	
<p>Freedom <i>You have committed no crime, yet you have been detained indefinitely.</i></p> <p>Any person seeking asylum, including families, lives with the fear of detention. "I'm the oldest [child in the detention centre] - there's nobody my age in the family part, and there's nothing for me to do" - 13-year old detained in Harmondsworth.</p>	
<p>Food <i>It is mid week and you have run out of money for food.</i></p> <p>Asylum seekers are not allowed to work and are forced to rely on state support. The amount they receive is just 70% of that received by UK residents on income support. "I used to get food out of the bins outside kebab shops and takeaways" - 34 year-old man from DRC</p>	

All quotations are taken from Refugee Action, 'The Destitution Trap' (2006).



Started by students in 1994, **STAR** is a rapidly expanding youth and student network that raises awareness of refugees and asylum seekers, campaigns with and for the rights of refugees and assists refugees and asylum seekers locally through volunteering.

www.star-network.org.uk