**The Egg Game**

**by Sally Brown,** [**http://sally-brown.net/**](http://sally-brown.net/)

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**Task**: to make a container to hold an egg that is capable of being dropped from a height without breaking. To do this properly you need about two hours in a large flat room big enough to enable groups to work independently.

**Purpose of task**: This is a practice task to familiarise students with the concepts of meaningful assessment criteria, weighting and agency and is particularly useful during the first six weeks of the first semester of the first year. It is presented as **serious fun** which improves students’ assessment literacy. It’s also a good staff development exercise to get staff to think hard about assessment issues.

**Materials** Supermarket carrier bag per group in which you place a pair of scissors and a small roll of sellotape plus a selection of about 4 items from the following: a newspaper, a plastic cup, paper plate, tissue paper (or a tissue), length of string (about 2 metres seems to work well), cocktail sticks, wooden clothes pegs, square of bubble wrap (if you want to make it really easy for them) or whatever, plus one uncooked egg in shell.

**Activity**:

1. Break the student group into small teams (groups of about 5-7 work well). This activity can be done by a couple of hundred students at a time if you have microphones available for instructions and oral feedback., but still works pretty well with three groups of three students.
2. Advise the students of the purpose of the task, emphasising that it is competitive but essentially fun, and that actually the discussion around the task is much more important to their understanding of university assessment conventions than the task itself.
3. Issue the materials, instructing them that no other items may be used, including waste paper bins, people and furniture. Insist no one handles the materials and egg before the start signal. You may need to be very strict about this. You may also wish to ham up the rawness of the egg by chucking them to the students or ‘accidentally’ dropping one. Get them to check their egg is not cracked when they receive it.
4. Ask students to brainstorm up to 5 **criteria** on which they should be judged (5 mins)
5. Collate the criteria on a flip chart or white board, and telling them that the egg not breaking is the non-negotiable criterion, get them to collectively prioritise the four further criteria. Ask them to include both product and process in the criteria. Typical criteria include effective planning, aesthetic beauty, sustainability (all items could be reused), using all items provided or smallest number of items, team all worked together well, everyone contributed to the task in some way, achieving the task within the set time etc. (You shouldn’t need to spend more than 10 mins on this but if you get into discussing how you judge aesthetic beauty it could take 15).
6. Explain the concept of **weighting**. Tell them that the egg not breaking is worth 40% and ask them to propose weightings for the other four criteria that add up to 100% with the most important things being given the highest weighting. (5 mins).
7. Negotiate agreed weightings for the criteria for the whole group and put on flip chart/white board. (5 mins).
8. Get them to think up who will actually do the assessmenti.e. **agency** for 5 mins**.** Forexample, most product items could be assessed by the tutor or the students acting as peers rating other groups (**inter-peer assessment**). If they are judging items like how well they worked as a team, this will have to be rated within the group by four peers each rating the fifth, i.e. **intra peer assessment**. **Self assessment** might be used for example if a negotiated criteria is something like individuals contributing to the best of their capabilities or enjoyment. Even if you only use a couple of agents, its helpful to discuss the full range and mention that other possibilities on future group work might include employers, placement managers and clients. (10 mins).
9. Get the groups to talk for 5 mins about what they plan to do and insist no one touches the materials until you start the task.
10. Start the task advising them they have say 8 minutes in which to complete it. You may wish to add to the sense of fun by blowing a whistle, setting a kitchen timer or whatever.
11. Watch students in action, talking no part in the activity but you may wish to record any breach of the rules which you can bring up in your moderation/summing up.
12. Stopthe task exactly on time. Blowing your whistle loudly is fun! Notice any students who choose to carry on regardless and decide whether to penalise them totally by giving no marks at all (this gives you a chance to mention things like plagiarism policies and rules on issues like mitigation) and the risks they run by ignoring the detail of assignment brief.
13. Mustering a sense of drama, stand on a table or chair and drop the eggs to the floor, carrying out the assessment using tutors, peers etc as appropriate. If you have a lot of groups, this can take quite a while. Discuss the assessment of the first six or so in detail, and then tell students that to do every one in detail would take ages and this is after all a game about assessment etc etc (but do drop every egg and check the egg isn’t broken or else students will feel cheated.
14. It is really important to get the students back into small groups after the assessment to discuss the assessment issues for at least five minutes (try to stop them having endless discussions about whether their design was actually best or whether they were fairly treated etc.) and then have 5-10 minutes yourself in plenary summing up the learning points.
15. You might then wish to issue to them the assignment brief for the actual assessment task that follows and get them to bring along to the next session any queries they have about criteria, weighting, agency or anything else.

Have (serious) fun!