

TeamSTEPPS Exercise Instructions

Overview

TeamSTEPPS trainers use a number of exercises to introduce TeamSTEPPS and begin their trainings. This exercise has been created to support onsite trainings, entirely virtual trainings, or trainings with a blend of onsite and virtual participants. Team members do not have to be in the same physical location to participate.

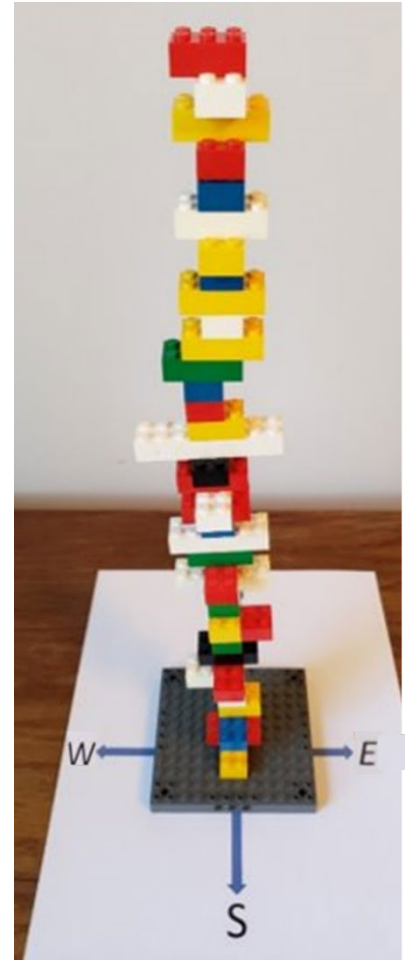
Each round of the exercise is a competition in which each team will construct a tower of building blocks following defined patterns based on building block color, length, and direction. Team members will have distinct roles, all of which are needed to build the tower correctly. Every team member must fulfill their role correctly and communicate effectively for their team to win.

In addition to using this exercise at the start of a TeamSTEPPS training, it can be adapted for use when teaching a specific module or a specific tool (e.g., briefs and debriefs).

Exercise Goals

This exercise can be used to achieve multiple teaching goals related to the importance of effective teamwork and communication and the roles TeamSTEPPS tools can play in fostering these goals. Exercise objectives include:

1. Demonstrating the importance of working collaboratively to achieve team aims. Teams have different aims and collaborating is essential to achieve them.
2. Providing a safe context to confront common teamwork and communication challenges such as insufficient planning, lack of a shared mental model, failure to share key information, and misunderstood messages from others.
3. Exposing the additional challenges posed by working in virtual teams, as well as the ability for a virtual team to succeed with careful planning and an understanding of potential risks.
4. Introducing relevant TeamSTEPPS tools and demonstrating their relevance to common communication and teamwork challenges.



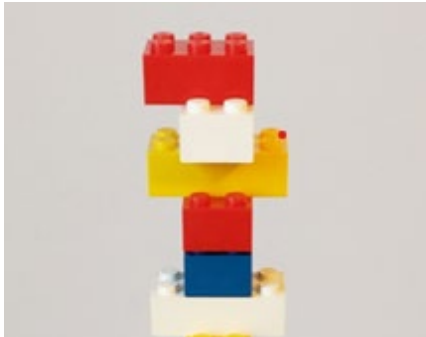
Exercise Process

Step One: Assemble Needed Materials

Round one of the exercise assumes each group will create towers from a set of building blocks you have given them. Each group will need:

- The Tower Exercise Construction Guide (included at the end of this document). This guide should be provided to every training participant in advance, with instructions to either print it or be able to view it on their screen during the exercise. Verify that everyone has the Construction Guide during registration to avoid any delays in conducting the activity (e.g., waiting for participants to print it during the training).
- For the Facilitator, a phone or other timer that can be set at 2 minutes to limit the exercise length.
- A building block base to construct their tower on (photo on page 1).
- A paper underneath the base that specifies the directions to guide block placement (photo on page 1). A template is provided at the end of the instructions; print the template and use tape to attach the base to the center of the paper.
- 40 building blocks of the lengths and colors shown in the grid below.

Color	Rows of Knobs	Number Needed
Blue	3	2
Blue	4	4
Red	3	2
Red	4	6
Red	6	1
Green	3	1
Green	4	3
Yellow	3	2
Yellow	4	6
Yellow	6	1
White	3	2
White	4	6
White	6	3
White	8	1



The top block has three rows of knobs; the yellow block below has four rows.

Optional: To make the task more challenging, give the teams more building blocks than their towers require. You can adjust the number of building blocks but ensure that the Construction Guide instructions do not require the use of blocks that the groups don't have enough of.

One person in each group will need to have access to these building blocks for the exercise. You can meet this requirement in one of three ways:

1. An onsite participant or the group Facilitator you provide the building blocks to,
2. Someone you've delivered the building blocks to in advance, or
3. Someone you can get to assemble the specified building blocks from their own collection.

Step Two: Advance Preparation

Each small group needs a Facilitator you have trained in advance; they need to understand the exercise and have experience participating in it. These Facilitators might be the training faculty or training support staff. Knowledge of TeamSTEPPS is not essential for this role, but an understanding of the exercise and comfort with the technology involved are essential.

The Facilitator training for this exercise requires only 20-30 minutes but is essential to avoid confusion. If some groups are doing the exercise in virtual breakout rooms, include an information technology specialist or the person responsible for transferring trainees into the breakout rooms in this training. That way, they will fully understand the exercise and how your virtual meeting platform will need to support it.

At a minimum, the platform will need to accommodate breakout sessions in which all team members can talk, exchange chat messages, and observe a camera that displays the tower as it is being built. These functionalities are also needed to support small group discussions in virtual or blended TeamSTEPPS trainings.

For your advance training you should:

- Have the Facilitators read the instructions in advance and then provide a short explanation of the exercise and its purpose.
- Review the steps in the exercise and answer any questions about them.
- Have Facilitators assume exercise roles and actually do the exercise together as a group.
- Debrief the group to answer questions, refine your processes, and discuss contingencies for addressing problems that may arise.

Step Three: Prepare the Group Spaces

- If the training is being conducted in person, each group will need a table on which to build their tower.
- If some or all groups will be virtual, each virtual group should be supported by a Facilitator in a separate physical location with a camera pointed on the place where the tower will be built. Instruct the groups to either use a standalone camera or a laptop camera. In either case, arrange the camera and tower base in advance to avoid any training delay. If using a laptop, position it around 6 inches above the surface of the tower to provide a clear view.

Step Four: Assign Participants to Groups

For this exercise, assign training participants into groups of five. Participants can be all physically present, all participating remotely, or a mix of both.

- If groups have fewer than five individuals, combine some of the needed roles. For example, the Facilitator can also be the Assembler if they are the person with the building blocks.
- In a blended training, assign an onsite participant to each virtual group and have them be the Assembler, since it will be easier to provide them with the building blocks.
- If a group has more than five people, either have two people share the same role or have one person function as an observer.

Other tips for assigning participants include:

- Assign people to breakout groups in advance. If virtual breakout groups are being used, whoever is responsible for creating and managing them should be told in advance which people should be placed into which breakout groups.
- You may need to adjust the assignment of individuals to groups if someone who registered does not show up.
- Each virtual breakout group should be supported by a Facilitator in a separate room with a camera pointed on the place where the tower will be built.

Step Five: Introduce the Exercise and Its Goals

Teamwork Exercise: Build the Tallest Tower

Introduction

Rules:

- Each block must be the right **color**, **length** (based on rows of knobs), and **direction** (N-S or E-W).
- Each team member should have one role:
 - **Assembler:** Builds the tower based on instructions from three Guides.
 - **Color, Length, and Direction Guides:** Share information with the Assembler:
 - Each Guide can ONLY share one type of information—color, length, or direction.
 - **Checker:** Confirms correct color, length, and direction of each block before the next can be assembled:
 - Can ONLY say "correct" or "incorrect."
- Each group will have 1 minute to organize and 2 minutes to build their tower.



1. Using Slide 3, “Teamwork Exercise: Build the Tallest Tower,” the trainer should inform the participants that they’re going to practice teamwork in a contest to correctly assemble a tower of building blocks as quickly as possible. Each building block must be the correct color and length and be aligned in the correct direction. Each team member will have a defined role with information that others in the group do not have.
2. Each Facilitator should convene their group in their assigned onsite or virtual breakout room space. Each small group’s Facilitator should review the remainder of the instructions. These include:
 - a. Ensure that group members (except the Assembler) have the Construction Guide available either in print form or on their screen.
 - b. Assign one person to each of five roles:
 - A person with access to the building blocks and in the location with the camera should be the Assembler. The Assembler will build the tower based on guidance from other team members. They should NOT be looking at the Construction Guide. If groups are smaller, the Facilitator can be the Assembler.
 - The Length Guide: Will share information on the correct building block length needed for each building block in the stack.
 - The Color Guide: Will share information on the correct building block color needed for each block in the stack.
 - The Direction Guide: Will share information on the correct alignment for each building block in the stack—either north-south or east-west.
 - The Checker: This person can only speak after each building block has been placed and can only indicate whether the placement was correct or incorrect. If they say the placement is correct, the group can place the next building block. If they say the placement is incorrect, then the group members must identify and correct the problem before they proceed.
 - If a group has more than five people, either two people can share the same role or have one person function as an observer.
 - c. Illustrate the process. Have the group’s Color Guide give the color for the first building block, the Length Guide provide the length, the Direction Guide provide the alignment, and the Assembler locate the building block and place it on the base. Confirm with the Checker that the building block is correctly chosen and placed.
 - d. Answer any questions from the group members.

Step Six: Perform Rounds 1 and 2 of the Exercise

1. Tell the group they have 2 minutes to assemble as many building blocks on their stack as possible. Then have them begin.
2. The Facilitator should set their timer for 2 minutes and stop the group when the timer goes off.

3. Record how many blocks high the group's tower was and tell the group they have 1 minute to plan before Round 2 begins. The Facilitator should allow group members to lead this discussion about what changes they can make to build faster and with fewer errors. During this minute, the Facilitator or Assembler should disassemble the first tower in preparation for Round 2.
4. Tell the group they have another 2 minutes to assemble as many building blocks on their stack as possible. Remind them to use the instructions in the Construction Guide for Round 2. Then have them begin.
5. The Facilitator should set their timer for 2 minutes and stop the group when the timer goes off.
6. At the end of Round 2, the groups should rejoin the main training group for a discussion of the exercise.

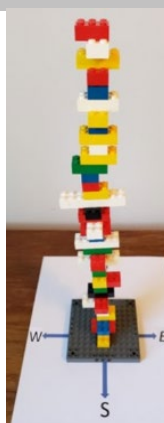
Step Seven: Discuss Rounds 1 and 2



Teamwork Exercise: Discussing Rounds 1 and 2

Introduction

Discussion:

- Which team had the highest tower in Rounds 1 and 2?
- What allowed the winning teams to go fast?
- What communication strategies helped groups get faster in Round 2?
- What made doing the exercise as part of a virtual team more challenging?




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Using the discussion questions shown on Slide 4, “Teamwork Exercise: Discussing Rounds 1 and 2,” have trainees discuss their strategies for success and lessons they learned about effective teamwork. You may want to acknowledge specific TeamSTEPPS concepts and tools that surface in the discussion, including:

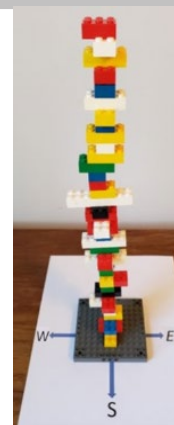
- The importance of clearly defined roles.
- The use of check-backs.
- The value of the initial brief and the debrief between Rounds 1 and 2.
- The special challenges associated with working in a virtual team.
- The concept of feedback and its role in correcting mistakes.

Teamwork Exercise: Conclusions

Introduction

Conclusions:

- All complex activities (especially patient care) depend on teams whose members have unique knowledge and skills.
- Teamwork can be fun, improve with practice, and benefit from specific strategies covered in the TeamSTEPPS training.



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Use Slide 5, “Teamwork Exercise: Conclusions,” to transition into the Introduction to TeamSTEPPS, about the importance of the concepts and tools the participants will learn about during the training.

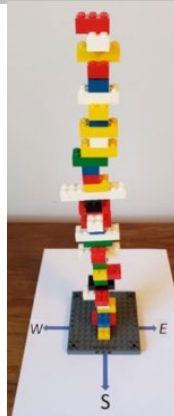
At the beginning of Module 3, another group building block exercise is introduced, using the slides that follow.

Situation Monitoring Exercise: Rebuild Your Tower

Situation Monitoring

Rules:

- Same goals and rules as the earlier tower building exercise except one **BIG** change:
 - The Color Guide cannot speak or write the name of any color.
 - The Length Guide cannot speak or write any number.
 - The Direction Guide cannot speak or write “north,” “south,” “east,” or “west.”
- Your group will have 1 minute to plan and 2 minutes to build your tower.



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Step Eight: In the Situation Monitoring Module, Perform Round 3 of the Exercise

1. Using Slide 2, "Situation Monitoring Exercise: Rebuild Your Tower," the Module 3 trainer should introduce Round 3 of the exercise and note that it's the same as in the earlier rounds except for the key change noted on the slide. The groups should then be dismissed to their breakout session spaces.
2. Once the group has joined the breakout space, the Facilitator should:
 - a. Confirm that everyone has the Construction Guide and remind them to use the guidance for Round 3.
 - b. Reassign roles if people have left or if a group member didn't have a role in the first two rounds.
 - c. Explain to the group they have 1 minute to plan their strategy for building the next tower.
 - d. After the minute of planning, instruct the group that they have 2 minutes to assemble as many building blocks on their stack as possible, and have them begin.
 - e. The Facilitator should set their timer for 2 minutes and stop the group when the timer goes off.
 - f. At the end of Round 3, the groups should rejoin the main training group for a discussion of the exercise.


Step Nine: Discuss Round 3

Situation Monitoring Exercise: Discuss Rebuilding Your Tower


Situation Monitoring

Discussion:


- Why was this round harder?
- What strategies did you use to communicate effectively as a group?
- What challenges confronting people with limited English proficiency does this exercise highlight?
- What situation monitoring concepts and tools does this exercise illustrate?



Rectangular Snip



3



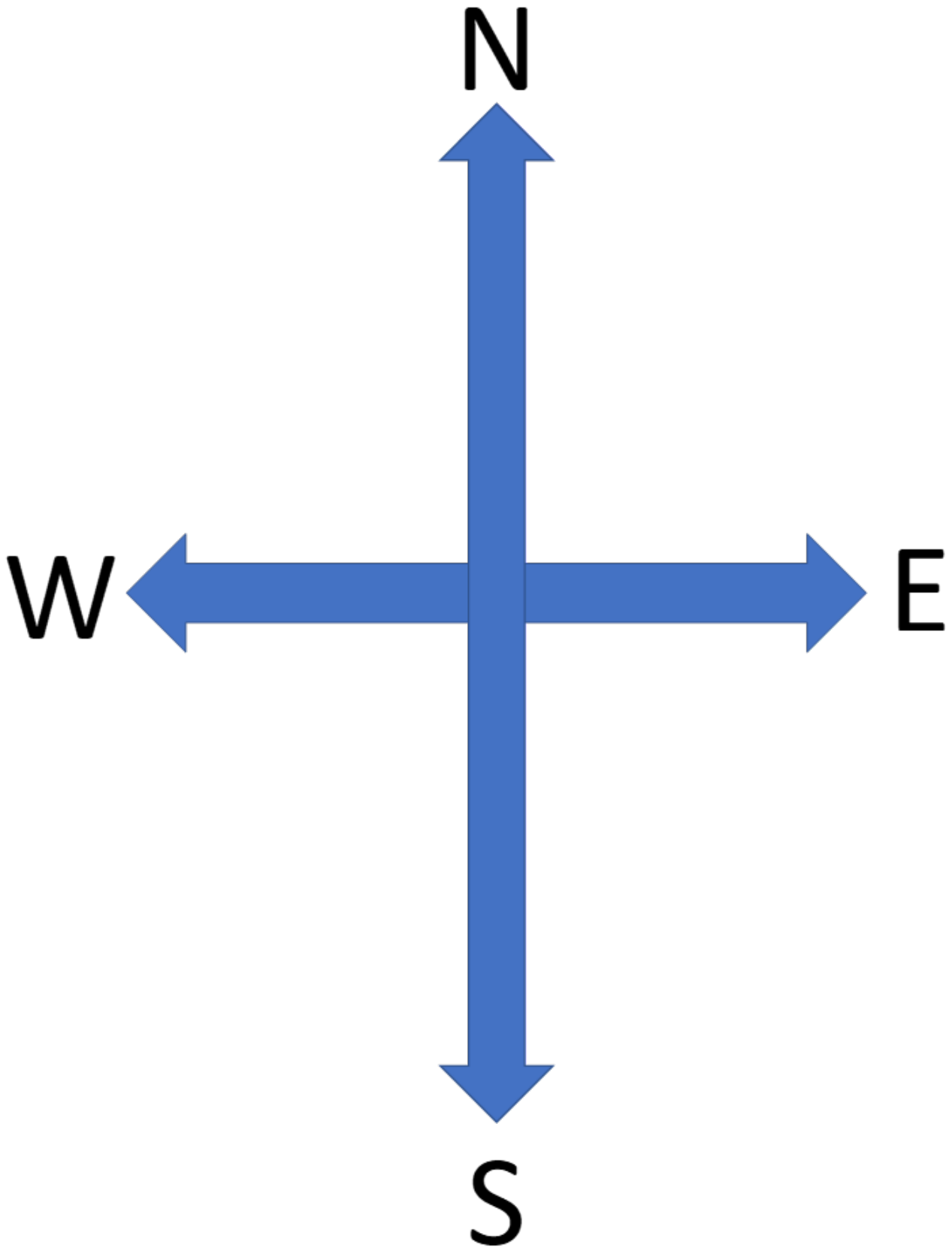
Using the discussion questions shown on Slide 3, “Situation Monitoring Exercise: Discuss Rebuilding Your Tower,” have participants discuss their strategies for success and lessons learned about effective teamwork. Use the discussion to call attention to key concepts such as the value of a common language and the need for a shared mental model. Use Round 3 to call attention to the challenges facing patients or family caregivers who may not share the same vocabulary as healthcare staff of their care teams.

If training participants are unfamiliar with TeamSTEPPS, they may be unable to answer the last discussion question; ask this question rhetorically and transition to the situation monitoring training.

Exercise Materials

The next page should be printed and then the building block base should be taped onto its center to help make clear in which direction each block should be placed.

The last page is the Tower Exercise Construction Guide.



Tower Exercise Construction Guide

Round 1				Round 2				Round 3			
Block #	Color	Rows of Knobs	Direction	Block #	Color	Rows of Knobs	Direction	Block #	Color	Rows of Knobs	Direction
1	White	4	North-South	1	Blue	3	North-South	1	Blue	4	North-South
2	Red	4	East-West	2	Green	3	North-South	2	Green	4	North-South
3	Yellow	3	East-West	3	Red	4	East-West	3	Red	6	East-West
4	Green	4	North-South	4	Red	4	East-West	4	Red	3	North-South
5	Yellow	4	East-West	5	White	6	East-West	5	Red	4	East-West
6	White	3	East-West	6	Yellow	6	North-South	6	Yellow	4	East-West
7	White	4	North-South	7	Yellow	4	North-South	7	Yellow	3	North-South
8	Blue	4	North-South	8	Red	4	East-West	8	White	8	East-West
9	Green	4	North-South	9	White	4	North-South	9	Blue	3	North-South
10	Red	6	East-West	10	Blue	4	East-West	10	Green	3	North-South
11	Red	3	North-South	11	White	3	East-West	11	Red	4	East-West
12	Red	4	East-West	12	Red	4	North-South	12	Red	4	East-West
13	Yellow	4	East-West	13	White	6	East-West	13	White	6	East-West
14	Yellow	3	North-South	14	Yellow	4	East-West	14	Yellow	6	North-South
15	White	8	East-West	15	Red	3	North-South	15	Yellow	4	North-South
16	Blue	3	North-South	16	White	4	North-South	16	Red	4	East-West
17	Green	3	North-South	17	Red	4	East-West	17	White	4	North-South
18	Red	4	East-West	18	Yellow	3	East-West	18	Blue	4	East-West
19	Red	4	East-West	19	Green	4	North-South	19	White	3	East-West
20	White	6	East-West	20	Yellow	4	East-West	20	Red	4	North-South