

Want to Facilitate Role Playing in *Your Class*?

Role-playing is an opportunity for students to grapple with material in simulated real-world environments. It forces students to apply their knowledge, reflect on key issues, and consider alternate view-points.

Why should you Facilitate Role Playing in *Your Class*?

Possible learning goals: Have students acknowledge multiple sides of an argument. Have students face concepts they might disagree with. Bring life and personality to key figures/concepts from course material.

Role-Play At-A-Glance	
Prep	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ensure students have required background information to complete the task• Establish classrooms norms that promote community and inclusivity• If needed, distribute prompt and determine student groups
During	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Create a “real-world” environment (physical location, attire, tone)• Clearly define the each student’s role• Ensure students have required information (or change the information as the role-play evolves)• Keep track of time
After	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Reflection

Prep

Ensure students have required background information to complete the task

- Role-playing requires students to have a basal understanding of some information. Assigned reading, attendance of lecture, or guided research may be required for students before they are ready to take on a new role.

Establish classrooms norms that promote community and inclusivity

- Role-playing requires students to commit to an unfamiliar role and can push them past their comfort zone. It is important before the activity begins to talk about classroom etiquette and establish rules that promote student involvement and enthusiasm. You may consider having a longer explicit discussion in which you write out class rules on a board or you may just mention your expectations of student behavior briefly before the class begins.

If needed, distribute prompt and determine student groups

- Some role-playing activities require students to prepare ahead of class as an individual or group. If this is the case, assign students their groups before class begins and give them the assignment with clear instructions on how they should prepare – Do they need to do research on a character or time? Do they need to understand specifics of a topic? Do they need to bring props or a costume?

During

Create a “real-world” environment

- Simulations and role-playing work best when it is as close to the real-world as possible. This may mean having a particular classroom set-up or alternate location. Students may also need to wear particular clothing (costume, business attire, etc.) or refer to each other in a different tone (casual, formal, singing, etc.)
- Really commit to the setting! Students are more likely to buy into an uncomfortable situation and role if they see you are enthusiastic.

Clearly define the role each student should portray

- Make sure each student has a clearly defined task. If students are working in groups, establish how they should work together. Are they a team? Competitors? Debating? Is there a hierarchy to roles? Do individual roles have different rules they should follow?

Ensure students have required information (or change the information as the role-play evolves)

- If necessary, pose questions to the class or have a review before starting the simulation to ensure everyone is on the same page
- If the task evolves with time, the information students need may change. Prepare how the information might change throughout the course of the role-playing and how the students will learn this information. Will the instructor give it to them? Will different students have to communicate with each other? Etc.

Keep track of time

- Often, role-playing requires strict time constraints to be effective. Limit student's time depending on the role/task

After

Reflection

- Have a moment for the student to get feedback on their performance, either from the class as a whole, their partner/group, or from the instructor directly.
- Allow students to reflect on their role-playing. Some potential questions to ask:
 - What challenges did you face taking on these new roles? What was harder or easier than expected?
 - If you had to do it again, what would you change?
 - How did you plan for your role? What led to the decisions you made in your role?

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