

Jumping Your Hurdles

1. 15 Pencils

Spatial Requirements: Regular classroom setup: little or no space required

Activity Type: Object lesson

Grades: 3-12

Group Size: Any

Time: 20-30 minutes

Introduction: When we use lucky guesses to get through life, it can become difficult to overcome problems and reach our goals. Successful people, on the other hand, follow a “model of success” that makes it easier for them to consistently jump the hurdles of life. This activity will demonstrate that knowing the “pattern” or formula for success makes jumping hurdles possible.

Materials:

- Any combination of pencils, pens, or markers – 15 total
- 1 overhead projector, Elmo, or table.

Activity:

Before you begin, spread the writing utensils across your display surface so they are visible to all. Two people play this game at a time, taking turns picking up one, two, or three writing utensils. To win, the other player must be the last one to pick up a utensil.

There is a secret to winning this game. You, the instructor, will go first, taking two writing utensils. The other player will take one, two, or three. On your next turn, take enough to equal six utensils between the two of you. When the opposite player goes again, take enough to equal ten between the two of you, and on your final turn, take enough utensils to leave the opposite player with one.

Be boastful and confident in your ability to win this game before explaining the rules and beginning play. The other player may begin, as long as you adhere to the “two, six, and ten” rule. For example, if the other player goes first and takes one, you need to take one to meet the “two” rule. You may play several rounds, challenging a different member of the class each time.

If someone does beat you once, explain that they were lucky, but that true achievement means repeating success again and again. Give examples of this principle, like Tiger Woods or Michael Jordan. Then challenge the player to see if they are LUCKY enough to win again.

Once they understand the pattern or are sufficiently frustrated, ask them, “How do you win this activity?” Explain that there is a system or pattern for everything. Let them explain the rules to you, or walk them through the pattern so they understand.

Processing the Experience:

- What made this game difficult?
- Were you able to figure out the pattern? If so, how?
- How did you feel when class members continued to lose?
- How does the pattern in this game apply to the formula for jumping hurdles?
- Which will give us more success in life: playing our luck or following the formula? Why?
- What does this statement mean: “You only lose (fail) if you give up.”
- What behaviors can you change to help you be successful? What behaviors can you keep in your life to help you achieve success?