

# Tearing Off Your Labels

## 10. Profiler

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

**Activity Type:** Movement/group

**Grades:** 3-12

**Group Size:** 6 or more

**Time:** 20-30 minutes

**Introduction:** Labels are frequently given based on first impressions or outward appearances. Doing this reduces complex individuals with real personalities into their one-dimensional stereotype. This activity will show students that outward clues and appearances cannot give us a full understanding of “the real you.” It will also show that our outward actions and appearances can sometimes produce negative labels from others, inspiring the question, “Am I making the impression I want to make?”

### Materials:

- 3 Profiler worksheets for each team (These can be found at [www.whytry.org/activities](http://www.whytry.org/activities).)
- 1 pen or pencil for each team
- Variety of objects that could belong to a fictional character (see below)
- Descriptions of 3 different people
- 3 grocery bags

### Activity:

Prior to the activity, gather a number of items from your house that could belong to a fictional person you are going to create. For example, my fictional person is a female teenager. She likes to go camping and fishing with her dad. She has lots of friends. She is religious and has a boyfriend named Will. She wears glasses when she reads. She is planning on attending a state university in the fall. The items collected would be a school pennant, a fishing bobber, a pocketknife, a key chain with the name Will on it, a compass, an address book with a religious symbol on the front, and a pair of reading glasses. Since the items don't always reflect something specifically about the person, you can create anything that fits the items you have collected. Collect enough items to make a list of characteristics for three different fictional characters.

The items you collect should be vague, allowing for many different interpretations. After you have gathered some items, you will make a list of characteristics that match your fictional characters.

Put the items for each person into three separate bags so no one can see them until you are ready. Have everyone get with a partner. Explain that they are going to be detectives. You are going to show them items that you found in a person's bedroom. Their job is to try to figure out as many things about the person as they can, based on the items you are going to show them. Distribute three “Profiler” worksheets to each team, and tell them to be as specific in their characteristics as possible. You would like for them to decide the person's gender, their age, their likes or dislikes, what they do with their free time, any physical characteristics they can determine, etc.

Start with one bag and bring one item out at a time, naming the item so they are sure what it is. Let them look at it, but do not let them ask any questions. Once you have brought everything out and placed it on the table, give each team about two minutes to fill out as much of the Profiler worksheet as possible. When the time is up, ask for ten to twelve samples of the characteristics they have written down. After hearing the characteristics, read your list of characteristics and give them one point for each characteristic that matches one you listed. The team with the most points is the winner of that round. Repeat with the next bag of items and the next fictional character. Have them write their responses on the second “Profiler” worksheet.

On the third round, after showing the items, allow the class to ask you ten “yes” or “no” questions before they begin their worksheet. Anything they find out during the question time can be used to make up their list of characteristics, so encourage note taking.

**Processing the Experience:**

- How hard was it to think of characteristics in the first two rounds? The third?
- How close were you in the first two rounds compared to the third round?
- Why was it easier to list characteristics after first asking questions?
- How well do you know a person when you first meet them?
- What kind of mistakes can we make when we judge a person based on first impressions?
- What is the best way to get to know someone?
- What is wrong with drawing conclusions about a person or labeling them using just a few bits of information?