

The Marshmallow Challenge - Teamwork

Peter Skillman introduced this teamwork challenge at TED talks about 20 years ago. It has one challenge:

BUILD A TOWER OUT OF SPAGHETTI WITH A MARSHMALLOW ON TOP AND THE TALLEST TOWER WINS!

This sounds simple, but instead it is difficult once a team tackles this together and tries to decide which design to pick and how to make the best one. The process helps you discover what makes a good team when it comes to problem-solving and design.

YOU NEED :

20 pieces of dried spaghetti , one yard of tape , one yard of string, and one very large marshmallow. A table for each group, and a timer set to 18 minutes.



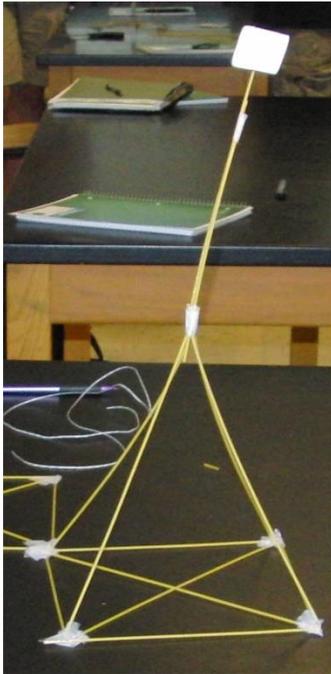
THE RULES:

1. You can't eat the marshmallow, but it has to sit on the very top of the structure.
2. The structure must rest on top of the table.
3. You have 18 minutes to design and execute your plan. The winning structure must be standing at the end of the time allowed.

INSTRUCTIONS:

1. Distribute the supplies and allow the students to self-group into teams with a flat worksurface area for each team.
2. DON'T give any hints about the purpose of this task except to say the tallest structure wins and they must follow the rules (above).
3. After the task is over and you've decided the top three structures, show the explanation video at https://www.ted.com/talks/tom_wujec_build_a_tower_build_a_team/transcript?language=en#t-174537

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Fun facts:

The worst teams at this task? CEO's

The best teams at this task? Kindergarteners!

The reason kids are better:

- They aren't busy trying to be the boss
- They try several designs, not just one
- They don't wait until the very end to put the marshmallow on top!

TIPS to give participants: GEOMETRY HELPS

REFLECTION:

1. Have the students document how they can compare this experience to a team in healthcare. What if their team was tasked with completing a surgery? Would the patient survive? Not if their structure collapsed!
2. Consider repeating this task after completion of the Unit on Teamwork to see if the students can do any better. Encourage them to research potential structures for the second round.

