



# Barrier Games

*Barrier Games* are interactive activities for practicing the giving and receiving of instructions. They provide oral practice for the writing of instructions and directions, and help build capacity in beginning readers and writers for using descriptive language to create a more detailed visual image.

## Teaching the Activity

1. Face student partnerships at a table or desk, across from each other with a barrier between them. Barriers can be an open briefcase, a blanket strung on a line, or a file folder. The barrier is to ensure that communication is entirely verbal.
2. One student (Partner A) creates a 3D structure with a few linking cubes or coloured blocks. The other student (Partner B) tries to create the same structure by listening to Partner A's instructions. Partner B may ask clarifying questions during the process.
3. After three or four minutes, Partner A reveals structure to Partner B, and student partnerships reflect on success of the activity. Conversations may include:  
*"I missed the direction words. I needed to listen more carefully to left and right."*  
*"I should have asked you if it was lying down or standing up."*
4. Reverse roles and repeat activity.

## Variations/Extensions

- Introduce an 'I Spy' barrier game in which both participants have the same picture. Partners take turns describing something they see, and guessing what is being described.
- Partner A has a picture, and tries to send the image in words to Partner B; Partner B may ask questions to clarify the image.
- Beading activity – each partner has a bag of beads and a string. Partners take turns giving and receiving directions to create identical necklaces.
- Mapping a Route – both partners have the same map, and one partner explains how to get to a specific place. The listener draws the route.

