

Games for the Future:

Silly Sustainability Stories

Sustainability is protecting people, planet, and prosperity.

Games for the Future: Silly Sustainability Stories

GENERAL DESCRIPTION

Type of program

Short activity

Overview

In the *Silly Sustainability Stories* activity, participants roll six cubes to create a silly story, then discuss serious ways to make the future a better place. This game is one of three related Games for the Future, a set of activities designed to engage participants in futures thinking and learning about the UN's Global Goals for sustainable development. Check out the *Cards for Humanity* and *Seeing Sustainability* games for other ways to engage your audience in futures thinking.

Audience

Silly Sustainability Stories can be adapted for different audiences and program formats. For example, the activity can be used during camps, school programs, as a drop-in activity on the museum floor, or as an ice breaker at a meeting or workshop. Play the game to determine how it will best work for you!

Big ideas

- Sustainability means healthy people, communities, and environments, now and in the future.
- We can work together to create a sustainable future. Everyone has a part to play.

Learning objectives

As a result of participating in this program, learners will increase their:

- Understanding of big ideas related to sustainable futures.
- Awareness of the ways that sustainability is relevant to their lives and issues they care about.
- Sense of self-efficacy related to sustainability, including their ability to take sustainable actions and participate in conversations about sustainable futures.
- Critical thinking and problem-solving skills that support sustainable choices in daily life.

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BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Sustainability

Sustainability is a big concept. According to the United Nations (UN), a sustainable way of living “meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs” (Brundtland, 1987). People’s needs include food, water, shelter, work, happiness, and respect. This definition of sustainability prioritizes equity, because it recognizes that people all over the world have needs that are equally important. This view of sustainability also emphasizes the importance of considering how our actions today will affect society, the economy, and the environment in the future.

In 2015, UN countries adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its 17 Global Goals (also called the Sustainable Development Goals, or SDGs). The Global Goals outline a pathway to a better and more sustainable future for all. They address the interconnected challenges we face, and recognize that ending poverty must go hand-in-hand with strategies that build economic growth, address social needs, and tackle climate change and environmental protection (United Nations, n.d. and 2015).

Quality education is one of the societal (or “people”) priorities of sustainability. *Education for sustainability* “cultivates individual and collective potential...to increase the possibility that humans and other life can flourish on Earth now and into the future” (Cloud, 2017). Arizona State University’s Sustainability Science Education program provides a brief introduction to education for sustainability (Arizona State University, 2014).



An international group of collaborators have created a companion set of Good Life Goals that explain how everyone can do their part to create a better future. These include 85 ways anyone can contribute toward the Global Goals for sustainable development (SDG Business Hub, n.d.). The Good Life Goals are

more oriented toward individual (personal) action, whereas the Global Goals are more oriented toward collective (government) action.

Futures thinking

Futures thinking is a set of skills and ideas that help us to understand what might happen in the future, how we can get ready for it, and how each one of us can affect it (West, 2017). Futures thinking doesn't attempt to predict the future, but it does consider different ways the future might unfold. People have different ideas about what might happen and what they would like to see happen in the future, so it's important to consider multiple perspectives.

References

Arizona State University. (2014). Sustainability Science Education. Sustainability education framework for teachers: <https://sse.asu.edu/ways-of-thinking/>

Brundtland, G.H. (1987) Our common future: Report of the World Commission on Environment and Development. Geneva, UN-Dokument A/42/427. <http://www.un-documents.net/ocf-ov.htm>

Cloud, J., ed. (2017). Education for a sustainable future: Benchmarks for individual and social learning. *Journal of Sustainability Education*, pp. 1-66.

SDG Business Hub. (n.d.) Good life goals. <https://sdghub.com/goodlifegoals/>

United Nations. (n.d.) The sustainable development agenda. <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/development-agenda/>

United Nations. (2015). Sustainable Development Goals. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3WODX8fyRHA>

West, J.R. (2017). Futures thinking playbook. <https://library.teachthefuture.org/product/futures-thinking-playbook-supplementary-materials/>

MATERIALS & ADVANCE PREPARATION

Materials

- Set of 6 story blocks, made from cubes with custom graphics attached (see instructions below)
- Blank paper (optional)
- Markers or crayons (optional)

Graphic files for the story block cubes can be downloaded from the NISE Network website (nisenet.org).

Advance preparation

This game is played with a set of six blocks. To make the blocks, you will need:

- Six cubes made of wood, foam, or another material that you can stick paper to
- Graphics printed out in color
- Tape or glue to attach the graphics to the cubes

The suggested size for the blocks is at least 1.5", so the graphics are legible and the cubes are not a choking hazard for small children. Blocks that are 2"– 3" work well. You can find a variety of options for online or at local craft or teacher supply stores, sold as craft cubes or large dice. Alternatively, to do the program as a floor or lawn game, you can use large inflatable dice. You can find these at party stores or online retailers (search for "inflatable dice").

The graphic files come in two sizes, small and large:

- The small graphics are sized for 1.5" cubes and can be scaled up for cubes up to 4". The small graphics have all six faces for each cube on one page, for a total of six pages to print.
- The large graphics are sized for 5" cubes and can be scaled up and down to whatever size you need (depending on what your printer can handle). The large graphics have one cube face per page, for a total of 36 pages to print.

Once printed, cut out the squares and attach them to each side of the blocks. Be sure each block has sides that are all the same color (i.e. do not mix the colors up—you should have one pink block, one orange block, and so forth, not a set of multicolored blocks). Depending on what material your cubes are made from, you can use double-sided tape or glue to attach the graphics to the cubes. To protect the graphics and help them adhere to the cubes, you can cover them with clear tape (such as packing tape).



SET UP

Time needed

5 minutes

Steps

Set the cubes on your selected surface before inviting participants to play. Depending on the size of your blocks, this can be a tabletop game or floor/lawn game.

PROGRAM DELIVERY

Time

5–20 minutes, depending on how many rounds are played.

Safety

Be sure to choose blocks that are at least 1.5" so they are not a choking hazard. Avoid blocks with very sharp edges.

Encourage participants to roll the blocks gently. Do not allow them to throw the blocks at other people or roll them so hard that they bounce and hit others.

Talking points and procedure

The six cubes can be combined in different ways to make a silly story. To lay out a story, participants roll the blocks and you help them arrange the blocks in rainbow order:

WHO: pink
WHAT: orange
WHEN: yellow
WHERE: green
WHY: blue
HOW: lavender

In the optional extension, participants can write out or draw a picture about their story.

Introduction

- Would you like to play a game where we make up a story about the future?
- Your job is to roll the dice. That's going to help us create a silly story about possible ways people might try to make the future a better place.
- As we go, we'll see if we can think of better ways to go about it than the people and things in this story.
- Ok, gently roll the dice!

Creating the story

- Line up the first three blocks in order: [WHO] + [WHAT] + [WHEN] (pink, orange, yellow)
 - What is the [WHO] trying to do? [WHAT]
 - Ok, this is taking place [WHEN]
 - Why do you think the [WHO] might be doing that?
 - Let's find out more!
- Add the last three blocks to line, in order: [WHERE] + [WHY] + [HOW] (green, blue, lavender)
 - Why do you think the [WHO] is using a [HOW]?
 - Can you think of a better way to try to solve that problem?
 - Why is the [WHO] in [WHERE]? What is that place like?
 - If you were trying to [WHY], is there anything you'd do differently?
 - How could you or other people help?

Connecting the story to sustainability

- Why is the [WHY] (blue block) important for creating a better future?
- What are others sustainable ways the [WHO] (pink block) could do the [WHAT] (orange block)?

Wrapping up

- If you were going to write a new story about how we could [WHY] (blue block), what would you say?
- Thanks for playing! It was fun to talk to you about how we could build a better future.

Optional extension

- If you want, you can write down your or draw a picture of your new story!

Going further...

Here are some resources you can share with program participants:

"The lazy person's guide to saving the world":

<https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/takeaction/>

"Goodlife goals pack of actions":

https://docs.wbcsd.org/2018/09/Good_Life_Goals/Pack_of_Actions.pdf

CLEAN UP

Time

Less than 5 minutes

Steps

Gather and store the materials.

UNIVERSAL DESIGN

This program has been designed to be inclusive of visitors, including visitors of different ages, backgrounds, and different physical and cognitive abilities. The following features of the program's design make it accessible:

- Repeat and reinforce main ideas and concepts
- Provide multiple entry points and multiple ways of engagement

LICENSE AND CREDITS

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