



EARTHE

Activity 2

Digital toolkit for innovative curriculum and methodological development

Module – Problem solving

Method – Educational Escape Rooms

Class activities

Module 4 – Problem Solving

Class activity 1. - The Locked Briefcase

Related method: Educational Escape Room

Target group

Age: Adults (20+)

Gender: All genders

Level of studies: Various – from vocational to postgraduate

Status: Employed, unemployed, or in transition

Fewer opportunities: Possible inclusion of participants from disadvantaged backgrounds. The activity might be useful to adult educators (coaches, trainers, facilitators) working in diverse contexts, who need to develop problem-solving, collaboration, and adaptability under time pressure.

Learning outcomes

After finalising the activity, participants will be able to:

- Apply logical thinking to solve interconnected puzzles under time constraints.
- Collaborate effectively, distributing roles and responsibilities.
- Adapt strategies in response to new information or unexpected developments.

Duration

60 – 75 minutes

Materials and resources

A lockable briefcase or box (real or simulated with combination locks), 3–5 puzzles or clues (printed riddles, coded messages, matching tasks, hidden objects), Combination locks (physical or digital alternatives), Timer, Classroom or meeting space with movable furniture



Activity description

In this immersive activity, participants work against the clock to solve a series of connected puzzles that lead to opening a locked briefcase. The challenges require critical thinking, communication, and resourcefulness — exactly the skills educators need when adapting to unforeseen situations in teaching.

Detailed Implementation Steps

Introduction

Welcome participants and set the narrative: “Inside this locked briefcase is the missing training plan for tomorrow’s high-stakes workshop. You have 40 minutes to recover it before the workshop begins.”

Explain that clues are hidden in the room and puzzles must be solved in sequence to obtain the lock combination.

Stress collaboration and effective role division.

Main activity

Start the Clock: Reveal the first clue.

Puzzle Solving: Groups tackle each puzzle in turn. Examples: A coded message using a substitution cipher. A logic puzzle whose solution gives a number for the combination lock. A physical matching game that, when completed, reveals part of the code.

Unexpected Twist (optional): Halfway through, introduce a “curveball” — a clue is missing and must be “earned” through a mini-task (e.g., a quick memory challenge).

Unlock the Briefcase: Final code is entered; success is celebrated.

Conclusion and reflection

What strategies worked best? Where did teams get stuck?

Discuss parallels to real-world problem-solving in education — working with incomplete information, tight deadlines, and high stakes.

Assessment / Evaluation Method

Note teamwork quality, communication style, and adaptability.

Group Reflection Questions:

Which puzzle was most challenging, and why?



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How did your team decide on roles?

Did you change your approach at any point?

Adaptation Tips

For online settings, use a virtual escape room platform (e.g., Google Forms with password-protected stages).

Adjust complexity to suit time and participant experience.

For very large groups, run parallel teams with identical puzzles and compare results.



Module 4 – Problem Solving

Class activity 2. - Mission: Policy Rescue

Related method: Educational Escape Room

Target group

Age: Adults (20+)

Gender: All genders

Level of studies: Various – from vocational to postgraduate

Status: Employed, unemployed, or in transition

Fewer opportunities: Possible inclusion of participants from disadvantaged backgrounds. The activity might be interesting to adult educators (coaches, trainers, facilitators) working in diverse contexts, who need to develop problem-solving, collaboration, and adaptability under time pressure. It is particularly suited for educators engaged in policy advocacy, curriculum reform, or community project planning.

Learning outcomes

After finalising the activity, participants will be able to:

- Decode and synthesise complex information quickly.
- Work collaboratively under pressure to achieve a common goal.
- Demonstrate resilience when initial solutions fail.

Duration

75-90 minutes

Materials and resources

Prepared storyline linking to education or community challenges, Puzzle envelopes containing documents, statistics, and misleading information, Large whiteboard or table for organising clues, Timer, Access to a “fact database” (either printed sheets or controlled internet search)



Activity description

Participants are tasked with “rescuing” a policy document that will ensure funding for an important community education initiative. The document is locked behind a series of data-based puzzles, each requiring accurate analysis and elimination of false leads.

Detailed Implementation Steps

Introduction

Present the storyline: “Your community’s adult learning programme is under threat. To secure funding, you must retrieve the finalised policy document before the virtual deadline expires.”

Explain rules, available resources, and the winning condition.

Main activity

Solve a statistical puzzle to find the key contact name.

Match quotes to stakeholders to unlock the next puzzle.

Decode a map-based riddle to locate the “document” in the room.

Crack the final code to access the document.

Introduce a “fake” clue to test critical thinking.

Conclusion and reflection

Review which strategies led to success.

Connect skills used (data interpretation, collaboration, filtering misinformation) to participants’ work in education.

Assessment / Evaluation Method

Observation checklist for problem-solving strategies.

Discussion questions:

How did you verify information under time pressure?

Did misinformation slow you down?

What team roles emerged naturally?

Adaptation Tips



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Adjust storyline to match participants' sectors (e.g., corporate training, NGO project management).

For online delivery, present puzzles via shared files and video conferencing with breakout rooms.

Module 4 – Problem Solving

Class activity 3. - The Virtual Escape

Related method: Educational Escape Room

Target group

Age: Adults (20+)

Gender: All genders

Level of studies: Various – from vocational to postgraduate

Status: Employed, unemployed, or in transition

Fewer opportunities: Possible inclusion of participants from disadvantaged backgrounds. The activity could especially be interesting to adult educators (coaches, trainers, facilitators) working in diverse contexts, who need to develop problem-solving, collaboration, and adaptability under time pressure. It is especially useful for trainers who deliver content online and want to simulate teamwork in virtual environments.

Learning outcomes

After finalising the activity, participants will be able to:

- Navigate and solve problems in a fully online collaborative environment.
- Communicate effectively using digital tools.
- Adapt physical escape room principles to virtual contexts.

Duration

60 minutes

Materials and resources

Virtual escape room platform (e.g., Google Forms, Genially, or Escape Room Maker),
Prepared puzzles adapted for digital solving (crosswords, drag-and-drop, coded images)
Video conferencing platform with breakout rooms, Shared digital workspace (Google Docs, Miro)



Activity description

Participants experience a fully virtual escape challenge. Working in small teams in breakout rooms, they solve a chain of digital puzzles to “unlock” the final password.

Detailed Implementation Steps

Introduction

Welcome participants to the virtual meeting and explain the challenge.

Demonstrate how to navigate the platform and submit answers.

Assign breakout rooms.

Main activity

Unlock the first clue via a word riddle.

Spot hidden numbers in an image to form part of the code.

A short digital Sudoku or grid puzzle that reveals the next keyword.

A multi-step puzzle combining elements from all previous challenges to get the final password.

Conclusion and reflection

Return to the main room for debrief.

Discuss which communication strategies worked best in a digital setting.

Explore how this could be adapted for their own online learners.

Assessment / Evaluation Method

Track completion time and puzzle accuracy.

Reflection questions:

What tools helped your team coordinate online?

How did working remotely affect problem-solving?

Adaptation Tips

For mixed in-person/online groups, assign one facilitator to bridge communication.

Use free online platforms to reduce setup costs.

Ensure accessibility by testing puzzles on multiple devices.