

Frequently Asked Questions: Communication Square Dancing: Developing a Pitch

What if I cannot dance or the thought of having to do so makes me nervous?

While we call this “square dancing,” we do not have to do the footwork that you may have seen in traditional square dancing. In fact, we keep it very simple. While we are replicating the large circles and some of the movement associated with this art, all the movements are simple like moving to the right in a circle or staying place, and the instructions are easy to follow. This exercise will also help to alleviate nervousness by building confidence in a safe classroom environment.

If I have a different persuasive model other than Monroe’s sequence to use for my pitch, is that OK?

Yes. While Monroe’s sequence works extremely well for this exercise, you can feel free to substitute any other persuasive mode you like best. You can even change the nature of the assignment to have students relay information to each other in an exchange that is not strictly limited to persuasion. Regardless of the subject, this exercise gets participants talking to each other while offering and incorporating feedback.

I am a little concerned that COVID-19 precautions will prevent me from using this exercise. What should I do?

The safety of all participants should be our foremost concern every day. Thankfully, certain classroom sizes, reduced number of students in a classroom, and general spaces will allow you to use this same format by simply separating students even further and by taking advantage of more distance as overall space guidelines allow. If weather permits, you might even consider this as an outdoor activity with some obvious adaption away from electrical outlets that power traditional slides or the playing of music. Finally, in a purely online environment, Zoom breakout rooms would permit you to assign students to various “rooms” to offer pitches and then you could reassign manually or even through Zoom’s automatic feature. It is also sufficient to create a pitch breakout room with more than 2 students if all do pitches and receive feedback.

Do participants like this exercise?

Yes! They will often appear to have minor trepidation at first, but once it gets going, participants will really get into the “dance.” Feedback after feedback has indicated that students appreciate the chance to develop their pitch quickly while getting positive affirmation towards the uncertainty they have for their overall idea.