

Professional Writing Escape Room

2019 ABC My Favorite Assignment
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Overview

Your company is about to send a proposal to its biggest potential client, MegaCorp. Getting this business would set your organization on a path toward sector domination, but losing the contract might send it into bankruptcy! Because the stakes are so high, your boss has selected your team to conduct a final review of the materials to make sure that everything is rhetorically sound and error-free. The only problem is, the proposal needs to be sent out in 15 minutes! Put your thinking caps on and put your noses to the grindstone. The clock is ticking!

Like many, I do not assign a final exam in my professional writing courses, instead, opting for a large project that takes up half of the semester. This Escape Room assignment can stand in, as a fun alternative, for an end-of-semester exam in order to make sure that, beyond these larger projects, students have fully grasped the writing strategies, rhetorical strategies, and grammar lessons that we have been teaching throughout the semester.

In this version of the Escape Room, I divide my students into 5 groups. Each group is timed and (one group at a time) must collaborate in order to work its way through 5 puzzles (and a number of brief quizzes) before the 15-minute time limit runs out. Students can be graded, can receive extra credit, or this can be completely fun, with treats or awards handed out (from fastest to slowest times).

This assignment takes approximately 90 minutes (easily adjustable by increasing group size or decreasing the number of puzzles).

Instructions

Puzzles are numbered and are printed on sheets of paper, taped to various spots on the classroom walls or placed on various desks around the room. 3 answer envelopes are placed in the same location with each puzzle. The puzzle contents can be anything you want, depending on what you teach in your course: e.g. identifying the primary rhetorical appeal in a short document, identifying the stasis being argued in a short document, figuring out the maximum number of words that can be removed from an overly long sentence without changing its meaning, analyzing/identifying audience characteristics after reading a brief text (expert/technician/executive/nonspecialist, pro/con/neutral, high level of knowledge/low level of knowledge about the subject), identifying how many mistakes there are in the formal characteristics of a document that participates in a particular genre, etc.

Each puzzle has 3 envelopes with an answer written on its front (1 correct, 2 incorrect). Inside each envelope is a card directing students to a particular quiz station. If students select the correct answer for the puzzle, the card inside that envelope will direct them to a quiz that, once

answered correctly, will send them to the next puzzle. If students select an incorrect answer to the puzzle, the card inside that envelope will direct them to a quiz that, once answered correctly, will inform them that they incorrectly answered the previous puzzle and will send them back to the puzzle that they just got wrong. *(See diagram below)

Quizzes are numbered and are written on note cards, taped to various spots on the classroom walls or placed on various desks around the room. 3 answer envelopes are placed in the same location with each quiz. The quiz contents can be anything you want, depending on what you teach in your course: e.g. multiple-choice grammar questions, multiple-choice questions from the semester's readings, etc.

Each quiz for a correctly answered puzzle will consist of a brief question with 3 multiple-choice answers. Each answer will be written on the front of 1 of 3 envelopes (1 correct, 2 incorrect). Inside each envelope is a card that, if it is the correct answer, will direct the students to the next puzzle, or if it is an incorrect answer, will instruct the students to "try the quiz again." *(See diagram below)

Each quiz for an incorrectly answered puzzle will consist of a brief question with 3 multiple-choice answers. Each answer will be written on the front of 1 of 3 envelopes (1 correct, 2 incorrect). Inside each envelope is a card that, if it is the correct answer, will inform the students that they incorrectly answered the previous puzzle and will direct them to return to the puzzle that they just got wrong, or if it is an incorrect answer, will instruct the students to "try the quiz again." *(See diagram below)

This process will continue until all 5 puzzles are completed at which point the stopwatch is stopped and the students' time is recorded. Alternatively, if the 15-minute time limit expires, the students' point of progress will be recorded.

Supplies:

- Stopwatch
- 5 puzzles to solve
 - 15 puzzle answer envelopes with cards inside them (3 envelopes/cards for each puzzle)
- 5 quizzes for correctly solved puzzles
 - 15 quiz answer envelopes with cards inside them (3 envelopes/cards for each quiz)
 - 5 cards (in the correctly answered quiz envelopes) directing students to the next puzzle
 - 10 cards (in the incorrectly answered quiz envelopes) directing students to "try the quiz again"
- 10 quizzes for incorrectly solved puzzles
 - 30 quiz answer envelopes with cards inside them (3 envelopes/cards for each quiz)

- 10 cards (in the correctly answered quiz envelopes) informing students that they incorrectly answered the previous puzzle & directing them to return to the previous puzzle
- 20 cards (in the incorrectly answered quiz envelopes) directing students to "try the quiz again"

