

Spaghetti Marshmallow Challenge

Facilitator guide


30 MIN

Work together to practice several design mindsets:

- Radical Collaboration
- Bias to Action
- Build to Think
- Test to Iterate

1. Set up - 5 min

Form teams of 3-4 learners

In their groups they are going to be building/prototyping a structure using really basic materials: 20 sticks of spaghetti + one yard of tape + one yard of string + one marshmallow. The challenge is to build the tallest freestanding tower they can in 10 minutes using only the materials provided

2. Challenge - 10 min

Observe and encourage participants to work together to form the highest freestanding tower.

• Facilitator tips

- Use online timer to show passage of time
- If they have extra time, have groups try a second iteration
- Measure towers- winners receive a (small) prize!

3. Debrief - 15 min

Discuss the following:

What was the hardest part of this challenge? Easiest? What have you learned?

Why is testing so important? What would you do differently if you had the chance to rebuild the tower?

-What is bias to action? At the d.school we believe in prototyping using cheap and easy-to-find materials. If you build something made out of expensive materials, put a ton of work into it, and then take it to the testing phase you are less likely to accept the constructive feedback and change, or iterate, your design.

Explain this would be iteration - a step all designers take. This activity illustrates the importance of bias to action, building and creating, then testing & iterating! To be a successful designer you must be able to see feedback as a gift to better your design. Take risks, be creative, try new things!

Many people spend most of their time planning and very little time testing. When you work this way, you risk your prototype failing too late to make needed changes.