

# GUT Manual

<b>Number of players</b>	2 – 8
<b>Playing time</b>	30 – 150 minutes

## Materials

The Game of Unspoken Things (GUT) consists of 80 playing cards:

- 40 response cards (marked by the orange back of the card)
- 30 statement cards & 2 additional blank cards (marked by the half orange, half blue back of the card)
- 8 perspective cards (marked by the blue back of the card)

## DownSideUp

DownSideUp is a training and coaching agency for researchers, with the mission to make the academic world a healthy, happy, creative, diverse, and inclusive environment to work in. So, our attention is focused on the human side of academia. Each month we train hundreds of academics, ranging from PhD candidates to Associate Professors, in skills that are related to teamwork, leadership, social safety, dealing with stress, feeling control over your job, motivation and much more. Through numerous individual conversations, we've observed a common reluctance among individuals to share their thoughts on certain matters, often driven by an underlying fear of being perceived as unintelligent or foolish for asking questions. For this reason, we developed the Game of Unspoken Things. A tool to guide you through unexplored territory and bring up conversations that otherwise would have been swept under the rug, avoided or ignored. With this game we encourage an ongoing dialogue about how each one of us can make the academic environment a safe, inspiring, and healthy place to work where everyone feels valued and included.

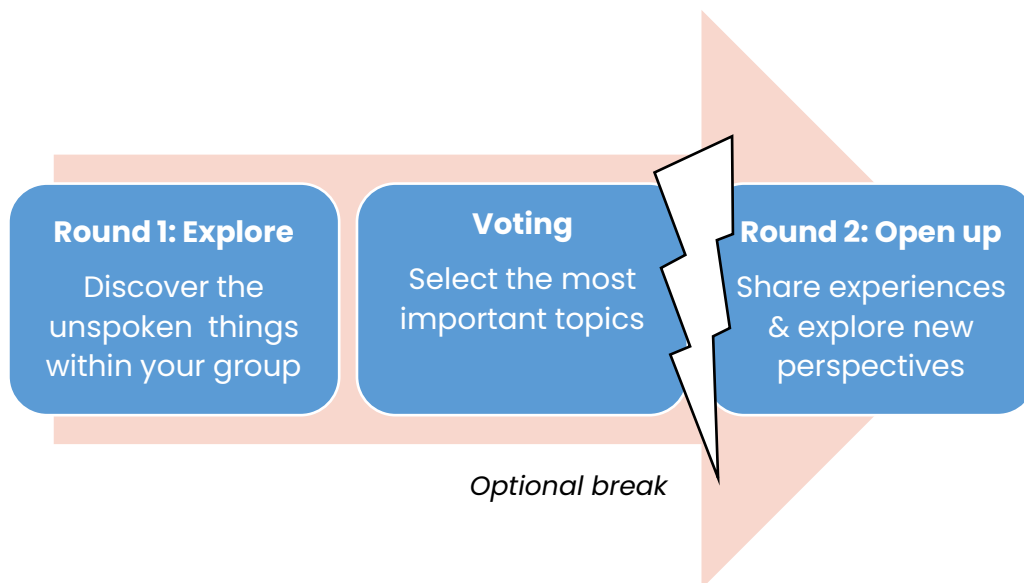
## Game overview

The aim of GUT is to bring the unspoken things regarding collaboration to light in a safe and transparent way. It encourages you to explore difficult and important topics such as inclusivity, hierarchy, motivation, safety and stress, and to raise awareness for the different experiences that individuals within your group have.

The structure of the game is based upon open-ended sentences that encourage players to share their personal experiences and ideas. These sentences cover a range of topics that impact collaboration (e.g., motivation, behavior on the work floor, inclusivity, mental health). In two rounds you'll uncover the most important topics that require greater awareness within your group. During the first round, each player will share their experience regarding a topic that is stated on a statement card. This round ends with a voting for the topics you'd most like to follow up on in the second round. After an optional

break, you're going to delve deeper into the chosen topics in the second round. Perspective cards will challenge you to examine each topic from various angles.

This game may touch upon personal or vulnerable topics. When you experience a lack of safety or a (hidden) conflict in your team or collaboration, it is recommended to have a guided session of this game, with an experienced trainer leading the session.



## Etiquette

- Only speak on your own behalf.
- This game is aimed at sharing experiences, not facts. This means that there are no wrong or right answers and every answer or experience is welcomed with curiosity.
- Allow everyone to express themselves and actively listen with the same intention as you would desire for yourself.
- Everything shared during this game is confidential and can only be brought up in a future conversation by the specific player itself or their permission.

If you notice that people don't stick to these behavioral rules or you observe any unsafe signals within your group (e.g., people raising their voice, uncomfortable silence) we advise to pause the game and consider following up with a facilitator.

# Gameplay

## Preparation

Separate the response cards (orange back) from the statement cards (half orange, half blue back). Shuffle the pile of statement cards and place the pile face down in the center of the table. Next, distribute the five different response cards to each player so that everyone has an 'I understand', 'I relate', 'Surprised', 'Tell me more' and 'Thank you' card. You can leave the perspective cards (blue back) in the box, for now.

## Icebreaker

Together, share your collective intention of playing this game in one sentence, taking the following rules into account:

- Select a starting player randomly
- The starting player starts with sharing the first two words of this unfolding sentence
- In turn (clockwise) each player adds two words to this sentence
- The intention is complete when the sentence ends, with the condition that everyone contributed at least two words

Result: each player gets the chance to put their own spin on the budding story of the intention of this group to play the Game of Unspoken Things.

*Alternative option: In turn, everyone shares what connects them as a group in three words.*

## Round 1

The first round is an explorative round where various topics are touched upon. The aim of this first round is to discover which of these topics resonate within the group and trigger essential but yet previously unaddressed conversations.

The player who ended the intention sentence can start this round, by taking the top card of the statement deck. The player reads the sentence on the drawn card aloud to the group and shares their own response to how they would complete the sentence. For example: "We can enhance our motivation by... *giving each other compliments more often*". While some sentences may be straightforward and quick to answer, others may require more thoughts, prompting players to search for their words. That is part of the game. When you notice that you don't feel comfortable expressing your answer to a certain statement card, you place the card at the bottom of the pile and draw a new card.

The rest of the players respond to your answer by holding up, face forward, the most fitting response card (for example, 'I relate'), in such a way that everyone is able to read it. During this first round, we don't examine everyone's experiences yet and it is up to the person who has shared their experience whether they ask a few other people (1 to 3) for an explanation of the chosen reaction card (for example, 'what part is relatable?') and have a brief conversation. When the questions are answered, the sentence is placed face up on the table and the deck with questions is passed to the next person.

This round ends when everyone shared at least has one or two experiences in response to at least one or two statement cards. This ensures that there are enough interesting topics on the table to explore in subgroups. On average, after answering 10 – 20 cards, players will be ready to finish this round.

*Optional: you can add a speed round to cover more topics in a shorter amount of time. In this case, leave out the short conversation part and let players only answer with their response cards.*

### **Voting**

Now it is time to get clarity about which topics you'd most like to follow up on.

Collect all the answered statement cards (half orange, half blue back) and place them face up next to each other in the center of the table. All players turn over their response cards and use the numbers (1 to 5) as points to assign to the topics that you would like to explore further in the next round. You give 5 points to the most important statement. Everyone assigns all points by placing their number underneath or next to the question cards you find interesting. The topics with the highest (and second highest) total number of points will be explored in greater depth in the second round. The group size determines how many questions will be taken to the next round.

If your group consists of:

- 2 to 4 players: you only pick the most popular question with the highest votes to explore in the second round
- 5 to 8 players: take the two most voted questions, create two subgroups (2 -4 players) and divide the two most voted questions over these subgroups

If you notice the need of a break, it is recommended to take it before starting with the second round.

### **Round 2**

The second round is aimed at discovering everyone's experiences and thoughts regarding the chosen topic(s). The perspective cards come into play to deepen the conversation and gain more insights into the existing dynamics.

The formed subgroups (of 2-4 players) divide the statement cards with the highest (and second-highest) numbers of points. So that each subgroup has a statement card to explore in more detail. The remaining statement cards and response cards are returned to the box. The perspective cards are then shuffled and blindly and equally distributed among the subgroups.

This round starts with all players sharing their experiences and thoughts organically (without a strict structure) with each other regarding the chosen statement card within their subgroup. To deepen the conversation and gain more insight in how to develop in this area, players can draw a card from the perspective pile whenever they want. The perspective cards consist of questions that challenge you to explore the topic from

different viewpoints. You can draw as many cards as you want and switch with the pile of the other subgroup if desired.

This round concludes plenary, so the subgroups come together again. Each group shares their main findings, conclusions, experiences, and ideas for potential follow-up actions.

### End of the game







At the end of the game, all players take turns in sharing the following:

- What have I taken away from today's session?
- Where would I like to follow up on?

It is recommended to schedule a follow-up meeting to reflect on the topics discussed during the game, potential action points, and changes based on the outcomes of the game.






### Categories

The Game of Unspoken Things consist of six categories:

-  Behavior in the workplace
-  Motivation
-  Diversity & Inclusivity
-  Stress & Mental Health
-  Culture & Collaboration
-  Strengths & Qualities

You can recognize the categories by the symbols displayed in the top left corner of each statement card. If you want to customize the game to a specific topic, you can select the appropriate cards based on their symbol.

In addition, most cards contain a second symbol that corresponds to one of the five key elements of effective teamwork, based on the Pyramid of Lencioni.

-  Trust – psychological safety
-  Conflict – healthy disagreements
-  Commitment – engaged action
-  Accountability – taking responsibility
-  Results – effectiveness & efficiency

If you want to work on these themes specifically, we recommend selecting cards based on the second symbol. However, it's important to note that there is a specific order in which to address these topics. Starting with the top element (trust) is crucial in establishing a strong foundation before moving on to the next element.