

GUT Manual

Number of players	2 – 8
Playing time	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 etc. We noticed during a lot of individual conversations that there is hesitance to speak up about certain matters and an underlying fear of asking 'stupid' 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 table', avoided or ignored. With this game we hope to open up a continuous dialogue about how each one of us can make the academic environment a safe, inspiring, healthy place to work, where we all belong and matter.

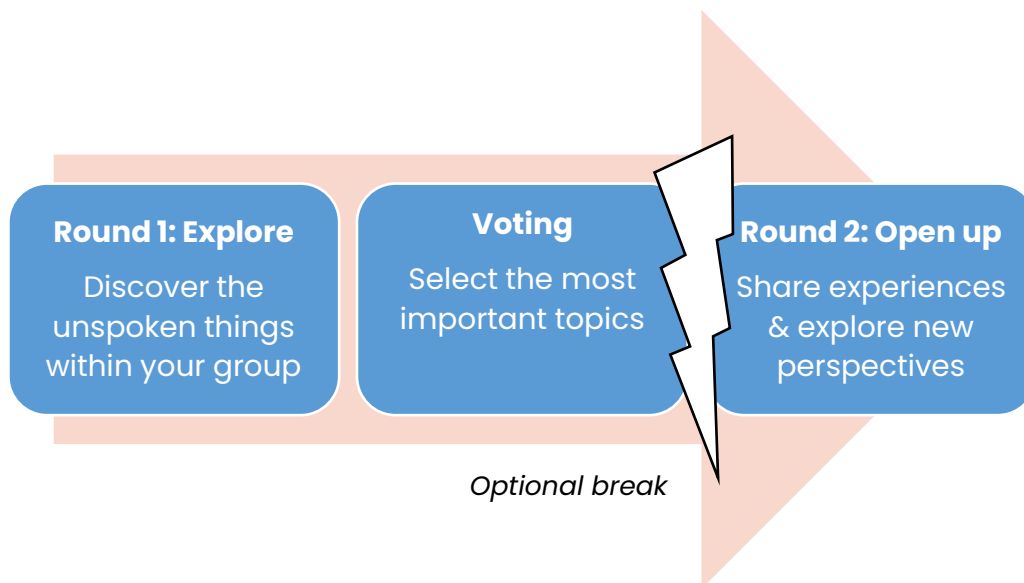
Game overview

The aim of GUT is to bring the unspoken things regarding collaboration out in the open in a safe and transparent way. It makes difficult topics, like inclusivity, hierarchy, motivation, safety or stress accessible and raises awareness about the different experiences that exist within your group.

The structure of the game is based on open sentences that players complete with their experiences or ideas. These sentences can touch upon different topics that influence your collaboration (e.g., motivation, behavior on the work floor, inclusivity, mental health). In two rounds you are going to discover the most important topics that deserve more conscious attention 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 most likely want to have an open follow-up conversation about. After an optional break, the second round consists of a more thorough exploration of

these topics, with the help of perspective cards, challenging you to take a look at these subjects from different 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

- This game is aimed at sharing experiences, not facts. This means that there is no wrong or right answer and every answer or experience is welcomed with curiosity;
- Give everyone the time and space to speak and listen with the same intent as you would like to be heard;
- Everything that is shared during this game is confidential, and can only be brought up in a future conversation by the specific person themselves or with their permission;
- Speak only on your own behalf.

When you notice that people don't stick to these behavioral rules or you observe other signs of unsafety (e.g., people raising their voice, uncomfortable silence) we advise to pause the Game and consider to play a session guided by an experienced trainer.

Gameplay

Preparation

Separate the response cards (orange back) from the statement cards (half orange, half blue back) into two piles. Shuffle the statement cards and place the pile with the backside facing upwards in the middle of the table. Hand the five different response cards to all of the players 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:

- Point out a starting player (randomly)
- The chosen player starts with sharing the first two words of this 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 different topics are touched upon, to see which of them resonate and bring up an important yet unaddressed dialogue within your group.

The player who ended the intention sentence can start this round, by taking the top card of the statement deck. They read the sentence, on the drawn card, out loud to the rest of the group and express how they would complete the sentence. For example: "We can enhance our motivation by... *giving each other compliments more often*". Some sentences might be quite easy or quick to answer, for others you may have to search for your words or are curious about the opinion of other people. That is part of the game. When you notice that you don't feel comfortable expressing your answer to a certain question, 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. In 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; it's their turn.

This round ends when at least everyone has shared one or two experiences and there are enough interesting topics on the table to explore in subgroups. On average, after answering 10 – 16 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 players only answer with their response cards.

Voting

Now it is time to get clarity about which topics you are eager to have a thorough follow-up conversation about.

Collect all the answered statement cards (half orange, half blue back) and place them face up next to each other at the center of the table. All players turn over their response cards and use the numbers (1 to 5) that are now visible, as points to assign to the statements that they would like to explore further in the next round. You give 5 points to the most important statement. Everyone assigns all of the points by placing their number underneath or next to the question cards they find interesting. The topics with the highest (and second highest) total number of points will be explored more in 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. The perspective cards come into play to deepen the conversation and understanding of the existing dynamics.

The subgroups (2-4 players) divide with each other the statement cards that received the highest (and second highest) number(s) of points during the voting. In the end each of the subgroups has a statement card to discuss more in depth. The rest of the statement cards and the response cards can be put back into the box. The perspective cards that were left behind in the box are now shuffled and blindly and equally divided over the subgroups.

This round starts with all players sharing their experiences and insights organically (without a strict structure) with each other regarding the chosen statement card within their subgroup. To deepen the conversation and enhance insight in how to develop in this area participants can draw a card from the perspective pile, whenever they want. The

perspective cards consist of questions challenging you to take a look at the topic from a different angle. You can draw as many cards as you want and switch with the pile of the other subgroup if desired.

This round is concluded, plenary, so the subgroups are merged again. Each of the groups shares with each other their main findings, conclusions, experiences and how or whether they would like to follow-up on these outcomes.

End of the game







At the end of the game all players take turns to share in two sentences:

- What they take from today's session?
- Where they would like to follow up on?

It is recommended to schedule a follow-up meeting to reflect on the topics that are touched upon, possible action points and changes with regard to 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

These categories can be recognized by the symbols shown above, that you will notice top left on all of the statement cards. When you want to use the game in a tailored way regarding a specific topic, you are able to select the suitable cards based on this symbol.

Next to that, there is a second symbol present on most of the cards, referring to an important success factor for effective teamwork, based on the Pyramid of Lencioni.

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

If you want to work on one of these themes specifically, we advise you to select them based on the second symbol. Do notice that there is an important order in working on these topics. You need to start with the top one (trust) and build that foundation before you can effectively focus on the next one.