LEADERSHIP ACTIVITIES

The following activities can be used with Sports Leadership candidates to develop leadership skills. These have been compiled by Sports Leaders UK to help tutors deliver high quality, active and stimulating courses that teach practical leadership skills.
Shepherd & Sheep

**Aim of the game:** To highlight the importance of listening. To demonstrate how much can be communicated through non-verbal methods

**Equipment required:** Blindfolds, cones optional

**Space required:** A clear flat space large enough for the group to find a space individually.

**How to play:** Nominate one or two members of the group to play the role of the shepherd. Their job will be to communicate to the ‘sheep’ – the rest of the group, to herd them into the ‘pen’ or safe area, marked out by cones. Give the shepherd (s) and the sheep a set time to agree on a method of non-verbal communication. Once the set time is over, blindfold the sheep and place them randomly around the playing area, or ‘field’. The shepherd(s) must then communicate to the sheep to get them into the pen, using non-verbal communication.

**Adjustments:** Place cones on the floor to simulate ‘mines’ which the sheep must then avoid.

**Leadership point:** This activity promotes communication skills for all participants, either through the need for clear non-verbal communication (claps, whistles etc) or listening.
**Mastermind**

**Aim of the game:** To crack the ‘code’ as a team

**Equipment required:** Cones / space markers

**Space required:** A clear flat space with enough room for a shuttle run

**How to play:** Pick the teams and line them up on the Start line. Set the cones up at the far end of the playing area (the destination – you decide how far the teams run). Keep a few cones (you decide how many) and place them on the floor to create a ‘code’, for example, blue, green and red. This code must be hidden from the runners. From each team, take a leader and let them stand where they can see the code. Now, one by one, runners from each team must run to the far end, collect a cone and bring it back to the start line and place it down on the floor. Once a complete line has been placed down (if the code is a three cone code, then once three cones have been placed down), the Leader from each team can tell the team how a) how many cones are the right colour and b) how many cones are in the right place.

Teams must create more lines in order to crack the code – it’s a process of elimination!

**Adjustments:** In its simplest form, you could allow teams to create just one line, and switch the cones around in that line, rather than create additional lines.
Countdown

**Aim of the game:** To work as a team to solve a mathematical problem

**Equipment required:** Laminated number cards, with numbers 1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8,9,10,20,25,50,100,+,-,/,x,=

**Space required:** Enough space for shuttle runs

**How to play:** Set up the laminated cards around the playing area. Pick a random target number, e.g. 477. Each team must one by one pick up number cards from the playing area and return them to the team’s area. The team must ‘spell out’ the sum or equation that arrives at the random target number. So, if the random target number is 183, a team could collect the following cards:

10 x 8 = 80  
80 + 100 = 180  
180 + 3 = 183

Ensure that duplicates of cards available, as teams will require many plus / minus signs etc.

**Adjustments:** Place different cards further away, for example the more helpful cards such as 100 or +. Place emphasis on ‘times tables’ or ‘prime numbers’ with the game.

**Leadership point:** Examine how teams made decisions and encourage feedback on the leaders’ performance. Maybe nominate a leader for one team, but not for the other, and then review the difference between the two teams.
Who can shout the loudest?

**Aim of the game:** To highlight the difference between verbal and non-verbal communication, and to examine communication choices that leaders make

**Equipment required:** None

**Space required:** An area large enough to have people projecting their voice across it

**How to play:** Split the group into pairs and number off player 1 and player two within each pair. All player 1s must stand on a given line, and all player 2s must stand on a line facing their partner. Instruct all player 1s that on the count of three they must shout across to their partner, telling them three things they like to do. They must do this with their voice only, so hands must be behind backs! Once they have communicated, ask player 2 if they understood all of the message. It is likely that they did not. Now ask all of the player 2s to communicate their favourite three things, but this time only using non-verbal communication. This time, the message should be much clearer.

**Adjustments:** Stand the group further apart.

**Leadership point:** This exercise highlights the importance of non-verbal communication. Often using your voice is an important tool for communicating to a group, but there are times when there is too much background noise to compete with – so shouting loudly doesn’t help. Using body language - hand signals or a whistle, is often a much better way of getting a message across. The group will have to make their own decisions on how best to communicate with groups when leading.
Leadership styles

Aim of the game: To get from point A to point B within the allotted time. This exercise looks at different leadership styles and how they can affect a group.

Equipment required: Cones / hoops, leadership style cards.

Space required: Space for a problem solving exercise

How to play: Mark out an area for play. The aim of the game is to get from Point ‘A’ to Point ‘B’ within an allotted time. The area between Points A and B is off limits, e.g. acid river or shark infested. The team must get from A to B using only the equipment given, e.g. cones. (The leader should brief three leaders for the activity away from the team by giving them a leadership style card to role-play). Ask each leader to lead the group for the activity – allow each leader time to lead the group. The three leadership styles are:

1. Democratic – asks people’s opinions, involves people in the decision making process, listens to others, does not make hasty decisions.
2. Autocratic / bossy – does not seek others’ opinions. Makes decisions alone, puts the needs of the group above individuals.
3. Laissez faire – laidback, relaxed, does not ‘rock the boat’, allows people to develop and learn through experience. Can appear indifferent, but in is in fact just ‘letting them get on with it’.

Adjustments: The game highlighted above is the standard ‘acid river challenge’ - substitute this with any problem solving activity that requires leaders to lead teams.

Leadership point: Once the task has finished, invite feedback from the teams. Ask them to give the positives and negatives of each type of leader – if your leaders have led their parts accurately there should be plenty of feedback! Ask the team to work together to choose the best leader. This should create some discussion, and ultimately the statement that ‘it depends on the situation’.
Rope square

**Aim of the game:** To communicate as a team whilst blindfolded to form a square out of a length of rope

**Equipment required:** Length of rope, blindfolds

**Space required:** 20x20 metres

**How to play:** Blindfold the group and stand the group members in random order around the area with their arms outstretched and palms facing up. Take the rope and hand it to individuals. Instruct the group that they must now form a perfect square, with everybody holding on to the rope.

**Adjustments:** To make the activity easier, nominate a speaker who can organise others, and who is not blindfolded. To make the activity harder, ensure that the briefing explains that ALL members of the team must be holding the rope at the end of the task. Start the game as described above, but when giving the rope to the individuals, deliberately leave some members of the group off the rope. The group will then have to realise that several of its members are stranded, and get them to the rope before trying to form the square.

**Leadership points:** Participants will have to communicate clearly to establish how many people there are, and then to organise the group into a straight line. Once this has been done, four players can become the corners of square.
Say what you see

**Aim of the game:** To increase confidence and improve verbal communication skills when leading groups

**Equipment required:** None especially

**Space required:** Enough space for a small sided game

**How to play:** Set up a small sided game. Nominate a leader who will referee or umpire the game. The leader must then referee the game. Simple enough. While the game is being played, the referee must commentate on what they can see, for example

“the ball’s been played to right, this is a chance to score – no! great block by the defender!”

This should help the new leader to speak up when in charge of a group, and be used to communicating whilst play is going on.

**Adjustments:** You could nominate a referee who is in charge of using the whistle, and have a speaker who must communicate on behalf of the referee. The two leaders will therefore have to confer a little on particular decisions, but this will give experience of a) blowing the whistle and b) presenting a rule or enforcing a decision. This exercise could be used as a confidence builder before sports leaders work on their own.

**Leadership points:** Verbal communication