

That's Not Fair!

Students explore the idea of fairness by participating in a sequence of short games that distribute rewards in different ways. Through direct experience, learners compare unfair systems, random systems, effort-based systems, and Proof of Work. Emotional responses are welcomed and used to support structured reflection. The activity builds a foundational understanding of fairness, reward, and equal opportunity.

 ACTIVITY TYPE Game · Discussion · Experiential learning	 DURATION 60 min	 PARTICIPATION Whole class · Small groups · Pairs · Individual
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OBJECTIVES

By the end of this activity, learners will:

- Experience and identify unfair, random, effort-based, and fair systems
- Understand that not all rewards are earned equally
- Recognize that fairness requires equal rules and equal opportunity
- Build vocabulary and emotional awareness around effort, reward, and fairness
- Prepare conceptually for Proof of Work

MATERIALS

- Beads or small tokens to represent rewards (“My Stack”)
- Flashcards or images showing qualities or attributes (hair colour, clothing, birthdays, etc.)
- Drawing paper and pencils
- Dice
- Deck of playing cards
- Visual support (See Appendix A), Labels for each round (Unfair, Random, Work, Proof of Work) — [A · Visual Aid](#) (*nice to have*)
- Timer or stopwatch
- Central table or container to act as the “bank”
- Open space for movement-based games

PROCEDURE

OPENING

1. Clear a suitably sized area for physical challenges.
2. Prepare a central “bank” with all beads.
3. Set up space for movement and ensure safety.
4. Prepare labels for each game round.
5. Lay out materials so transitions between rounds are quick.

PRE-ACTIVITY

5 minutes

1. Welcome students and set the tone with enthusiasm.
2. **Explain:** “Today we are going to play games, but not all of them will be fair.”
3. Introduce the idea of **My Stack**: students try to earn beads, but only keep beads from games the class agrees are fair.

4. **Ask** students: “What does fair mean to you?” “Can you think of a time when something felt unfair?” “How did it make you feel?”
5. **Set expectations** clearly: “We will play four short games. After each one, you will decide if it was fair.”

Objective In Student’s Words

- “Test out which games are fair and which ones aren’t, and why.”

ACTIVITY

45 minutes

Setup

1. Explain that the goal is to grow ‘My Stack’ by earning beads.
2. Explain that after each round the class will vote on whether the game was fair.
3. Explain that beads from unfair games must be returned to the bank.
4. Explain that once a fair game is identified, it may be repeated so students can keep their rewards.

Model

1. Demonstrate how beads are earned and returned to the bank.
2. Model respectful reactions to winning, losing, and disagreement.

Round 1: Unfair

10 minutes

1. Choose one unfair method such as a drawing competition judged by teacher preference, a biased game based on arbitrary traits, or unequal distribution based on attributes like height or name order.
2. Award beads according to the chosen method.
3. Ask: “Was that fair?” “Did everyone have the same chance?” “Did effort matter?”
4. Return all beads to the bank.

Round 2: Random

10 minutes

1. Choose a random reward method such as dice rolling or card drawing.
2. Distribute beads based on luck.
3. Ask: “Was this fair?” “Did effort decide the winner?”
4. If the class agrees it was unfair, return all beads to the bank.

Round 3: Work

10 minutes

1. Present physical or mental challenges such as jumping jacks, push-ups, staring contests, or arm wrestling.
2. Award beads for completing or winning tasks.
3. Ask: “Was this fair for everyone?” “Could everyone participate equally?”
4. Return beads unless the class agrees the system was fair.

Round 4: Proof of Work

10 minutes

1. Give each student five dice.
2. Set a clear target outcome such as rolling three matching numbers.
3. Students roll repeatedly until they succeed, re-rolling each time they fail.
4. Ask: “Can anyone win this game?” “Did everyone have the same chance?” “Does this feel fairer than the others?”
5. If agreed fair, allow students to keep beads and add them to **My Stack**.

Optional: assign a rotating student to verify results before rewards are confirmed.

KEY POINTS

1. Pause briefly after each round to collect student judgments.
2. Record which systems were rejected and which were accepted as fair.
 - Ask students how each game made them feel.
 - Ask what made the final game feel different.
 - Reinforce that fairness is about rules, opportunity, and verification.

FOLLOW-UP

10 minutes

1. Review the four systems experienced: unfair, random, work-based, Proof of Work.
2. Discuss why Proof of Work allowed everyone the same chance.
3. Connect the experience to real-world systems where rewards are earned.

Optional story or creative reflection: students draw or write about a time something felt unfair or a system they think is fair.

CLOSE

5 minutes

1. Collect beads and materials.
2. Clear the activity space.
3. Thank students for engaging respectfully.
4. Final message to students: “Fair systems give everyone the same rules and the same chance.”

NOTES

Classroom management

- Acknowledge emotions openly and normalize frustration.
- Maintain calm control of bead distribution.
- Rotate roles to ensure inclusivity.

Extensions & Sponge Activities

- Retell the activity as a story or fable.
- Compare fairness in games vs fairness in real life.

Differentiation

- Younger students: fewer dice or shared rolls.
- ELL/Accessibility: visual cues, modeling, buddy system.
- Safety: supervise physical challenges and allow alternatives.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- **B** • [Example unfair games](https://cdn.sanity.io/files/vje9ehw2/staging/4bf1ba35cc836a7567a6bfaf77a624a4251442e.pdf)
<https://cdn.sanity.io/files/vje9ehw2/staging/4bf1ba35cc836a7567a6bfaf77a624a4251442e.pdf>
- **C** • [Examples of Random Games](https://cdn.sanity.io/files/vje9ehw2/staging/01e3a2e3b8119a2f7cfe1f2e97dc6374f082742c.pdf)
<https://cdn.sanity.io/files/vje9ehw2/staging/01e3a2e3b8119a2f7cfe1f2e97dc6374f082742c.pdf>