

“Freshman Frenzy” – Escape Room

Daniel Ward
EDTC813
Summer II 2018

A “Freshman Frenzy” themed escape room will provide incoming undergraduate students with an introduction and overview of general processes and requirements which they will encounter during their academic careers. The creation and implementation of the escape room will provide an interactive, social and hands-on approach to orient students on important components of being an undergraduate student.

Immersing students in an escape room, encourages participants to expose their creativity in a social and challenging environment. As Bers (2012) explains, “for creativity to flourish, there are several requirements: working hard and engaging in a conscious activity that requires training and skills” (p. 82). Each of the students participating in the escape room activity will share their strengths and weaknesses to help the group. Students who do not excel in certain areas (technology, mathematics, reading, etc.) may learn from others who are proficient in those areas. Bers (2012) describes creative environments, such as escape rooms, as scenarios which allow participants to “imagine what they want to do... play with materials and their creations, share their ideas and creations with others, [and] reflect on their experiences” (p. 84).

Participants in the activity will exhibit authenticity in the environment. Naturally, individuals will work together or alone in an effort to advance to the next area of the exercise. Communication will ensue as individuals discover relevant information that may aid the group in completing each of the rooms’ objectives (Schwan et al., 2014, p.76).

By completing the escape room activity, students will: demonstrate an understanding of college procedures, exhibit communication and creative skills and apply previous knowledge in an unfamiliar scenario.

Participants will be introduced to specific scenarios and artifacts which they will encounter in their first year as a college student. This will include videos of academic advisors,

academic transcripts, program prerequisites, general education requirements, and examinations. Interacting with these components will provide the students with helpful information which may increase the likelihood of success and act as an institutional tool to address retention rates.

The cost of the materials needed for the creation of the escape room is relatively low. The institution will be able to utilize existing tables, monitors, projectors, paper and physical space. Raspberry Pi's (programmed to release combination codes upon specific actions with sensors) can be purchased for \$35 per unit.

In Room 1 of the escape room, participants will find a pamphlet with required General Education courses for all undergraduate majors. Various documents with built-in sensors are scattered around and inside a desk. The appropriate and required general education courses will be within the group of documents. The required documents with each required general education course must be placed into the corresponding wall file folder which is labeled by discipline (Math, Science, English, etc.). Once each document for each of the General Education courses are inserted into the correct wall file folder, a code will be released on a monitor. This code will be entered into the combination lock which will grant access to Room 2.

Figure 1.0. Room 1

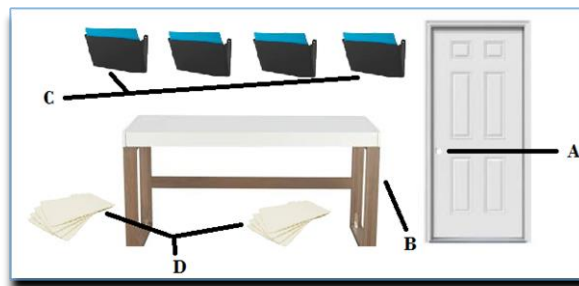


Figure 1.0. Drawing of the first room of the escape room. The figure includes a door with a combination lock (A), a desk (B), wall file folders with sensors (C), and papers including some with sensors (D).

In Room 2, participants will listen and playback (as necessary) the academic advisor videos posted in the room. The shared information will provide information on four colleges at the university (Colleges of Education, Professional Studies, Business and Arts/ Sciences). Participants will throw foam balls at a set of fifteen posters which advertise different colleges. Selecting and throwing the foam balls at the correct set of four colleges will release a key to the next room. A throw into an incorrect poster will reset the activity.

Figure 2.0. Room 2

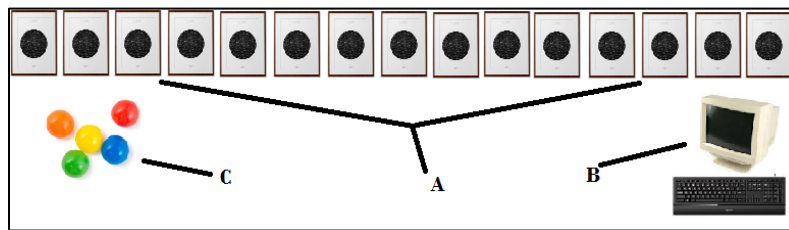


Figure 2.0. Drawing of the second room of the escape room. The figure includes a set of fifteen posters with holes (A), a monitor and keyboard (B), and foam balls (C).

In Room 3, three multiple choice exams will be projected on the wall with a keyboard and mouse in front of each projected image. Relevant reading/study material will be available on a bookshelf in the room. The exams will be 5 sections long and will not be difficult to complete without prior knowledge of the subject/discipline. Receiving 100% on each of the multiple choice exams will release a combination code for the combination lock for the next room.

Figure 3.0. Room 3

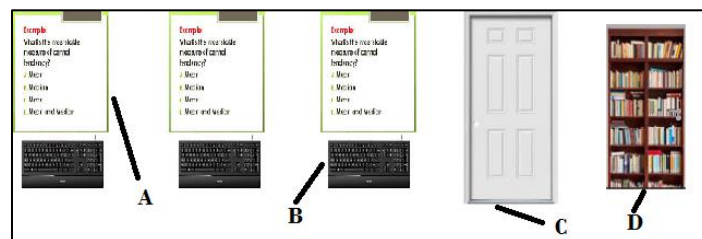


Figure 3.0. Drawing of the third room of the escape room. The figure includes three projected multiple choice exams (A), keyboards for each of the

exams (B), a door with a combination lock (C) and a book shelf with materials for the exams (D).

In Room 4, participants will find the code printed on the completed transcript hidden among various filing cabinets of unrelated materials such as brochures and fliers for campus events, athletics, and student services. The code will open the combination lock to the summer break room.

Figure 4.0. Room 4

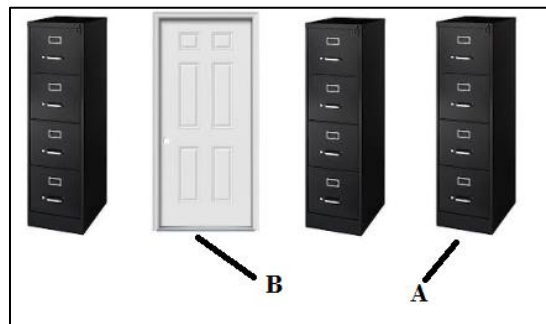


Figure 4.0. Drawing of the fourth room of the escape room. The figure includes three filing cabinets with documents (A) and a door with a combination lock (B).

Sample Case

As part of freshmen orientation at a university, incoming students will be randomly placed into groups of ten. The activity coordinator will guide the participants into the first room and provide guidelines and tips which will assist them when completing the activities. A sixty-minute timer will count down and be visible in each of the rooms. Students will be provided with artifacts in each room which provide information on retrieving a combination to unlock the locks on the doors which grant access to the next room. Sensors will be integrated into the artifacts which will trigger a programmed Raspberry Pi to release combinations and important information that will help participants progress. Participants will succeed if and when they open the last door to the summer break room within the sixty-minute time limit.

References

- Bers, M. U. (2012). *Designing digital experiences for positive youth development: From playpen to playground*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.
- Schwan, S., Grajal, A., & Lewalter, D. (2014). Understanding and engagement in places of science experience: Science museums, science centers, zoos, and aquariums. *Educational Psychologist*, 49(2), 70-85.