



**Time  
Required:**  
30 minutes

**Grade Level:**  
6-8th grades

Skills for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Marketplace Activity

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## “Fold the Paper” Activity

Infusionomics Themes, Keystone Economic Principles, and Skills for the 21st Century Marketplace:

- **THEME: CHOICES**

- **Keystone Economic Principle™ #3:** All choices have consequences

- **THEME: COSTS**

- **Skills:** 7. Critical Thinking; d. Solve Problems; i. Solve different kinds of non-familiar problems in both conventional and innovative ways
- **Skills:** 8. Contextual Learning; b. Flexibility; iii. Understand, negotiate and balance diverse views and beliefs to reach workable solutions, particularly in multi-cultural environments

- **THEME: RESOURCES**

- **Keystone Economic Principle™ #4:** Economic systems influence choices
- **Skills:** 14. Creativity and Innovation; 14.a-c
- **Skills:** 17. Communication and Interpersonal Skills; b. Teamwork
- **Skills:** 17. Communication and Interpersonal Skills; d. Dealing with Conflict

\*\* For additional standards and content references, please see the [end of document](#).

### Overview:

The Fold the Paper activity is an exercise to help students begin thinking “outside the box.” Students must be innovative to figure out how to get everyone in their team off the carpet/tile, despite the mental roadblock of the paper in front of them.

### Objectives:

This activity will help students see that we often put constraints on ourselves that do not really exist. By the end of the exercise and discussion, students should be able to understand that thinking creatively often means looking at a challenge in a new light.

## Materials and Handouts:

Large (minimum 11x17") papers for each group of 2-3 students

One white sheet of paper with a large black dot drawn in the middle

## Activity:

- Clear the middle of the classroom to allow space for the groups to congregate.
- Divide the class into groups of 2-3 students, and have the groups stand in clusters in the middle of the classroom.
- Place a large sheet of paper on the ground in front of each group, but do not say anything specifically about the paper.
- Tell them that you are going to give them instructions, and they are not allowed to ask any questions.
- Tell the students that in 5 seconds their feet cannot be touching the carpet/tile. Count down from 5. (Most groups will jump onto the paper.)
  - Note: Do NOT say that the students must use the paper. The point of the exercise is that even though you never say that they must use the paper, most students will automatically use the paper, rather than think of alternative ways of accomplishing the challenge.
- Eliminate any group that was unsuccessful in accomplishing this task.
- Tell each group to pick up their piece of paper and fold it in half. Then tell the students, once again that they have 5 seconds to get everyone in their group off the carpet/tile on the floor. Eliminate any group that was unsuccessful in accomplishing this task.
- Repeat until all the groups have been eliminated or until one group begins using a different strategy (e.g. sitting on the desks on the periphery of the room, standing on chairs, etc.).
- Reorder the classroom and have the students return to their seats.

## Writing Prompt or Class Discussion:

*Here are some optional questions for writing prompts and/or class discussion.*

- Questions on the exercise:
  - What were the exact directions that you were given?
  - Did I ever mention that you must use the paper?
  - Why do you think most groups immediately jumped onto the paper?
  - If no students ever tried a different strategy for getting their group off of the carpet/tile (e.g. sitting on desks):
    - What were other strategies that you could have used to "get your group off the carpet/tile," as I requested?
  - If one or more groups used a different strategy:
    - What made you realize that you did not have to use the paper?
- Questions on how this exercise applies to real life:
  - Why do you think that we sometimes put constraints on ourselves that do not exist?
  - Can you think of a successful inventor/business person who has thought about a situation from a different angle and been very successful because of that?
    - E.g. Apple was the first to think beyond CD's to successfully market an MP3. (An upper-level economics term for this process is *creative destruction*. If appropriate, the teacher may introduce this word to the class.)
  - What are situations/problems/issues in your life or in the community that you can think of? How can you think about the situation differently to come to a useful solution?

## Post-Discussion Activity

- For one final test, tell the class that you are going to hold something up, and they have to tell you what they see.
- Hold up the white sheet of paper with the black dot and ask the class what they see.
  - Most students will say, “A black dot.”
- The correct answer is “a white paper with a black dot,” as you did not tell them to say what they saw *on* the paper.
- Remind the students not to confine themselves with non-existent constraints.

\*Idea for the Fold the Paper exercise was found on the Youth Work site at <http://www.youthwork.com/activitiesinit.html>\*

## Additional Standards and Content References

### Voluntary National Content Standards in Economics:

- Standard #11 : Institutions
- Standard #14: Entrepreneurship

### Partnership for 21st Century Life Skills Concept:

- Learning and Innovation Skills > Communication and Collaboration
- Learning and Innovation Skills > Creativity and Innovation > Think Creatively, Work Creatively with Others
- Learning and Innovation Skills > Creativity and Innovation > Critical Thinking and Problem Solving
- Life and Career Skills > Flexibility and Adaptability

### National Content Standards for Entrepreneurship Education:

- Ready Skills, D. Communication and Interpersonal Skills; Group Working Relationships (D.23-D.26)
- Entrepreneurial Skills; A. Entrepreneurial Processes; Actualization; A.31 Use creativity in business activities/decisions
- Entrepreneurial Skills; B. Entrepreneurial Traits/Behaviors B.27 Demonstrate creativity

### Economics Vocabulary:

- **Assumptions** – Beliefs or statements presupposed to be true.
- **Entrepreneur** – [...] a risk-taker, inclined to see opportunity when others do not.
- **Innovation** – A new idea or method.
- **Interdependence** – A situation in which decisions made by one person affect decisions made by other people...
- **Inventors** – Someone who creates or devises a new process, application, machine...
- **PACED Decision-Making Process** – A decision-making process designed to help people solve problems in a rational, systematic way. It includes the following steps: State the **PROBLEM**, List **ALTERNATIVES**, Identify **CRITERIA**, **EVALUATE** Alternatives, and Make a **DECISION**.
- Source: *EconEdLink.org* by the Council for Economic Education
- **Asymmetric Information** – a situation in which one person in a transaction has more information than the other person (i.e. the teacher’s knowledge vs. the students’)
- **Cooperation** – action undertaken through voluntary collective effort
- **Ideology** – a framework of beliefs or theories about the world
- Source: *Teaching the Ethical Foundations of Economics* by Jonathan B. Wight & John S. Morton, National Council of Economic Education, © 2007

### Keystone Economic Principles™:

- For more information: [http://infusionomics.com/wp-content/uploads/2010/06/Keystone\\_Cheat.pdf](http://infusionomics.com/wp-content/uploads/2010/06/Keystone_Cheat.pdf)