

1 Get tangled up

What?

This is a tool that will help you kick-start a group. It gives group members a chance to get to know each other and to find, sometimes, surprising connections with absolute strangers.

Time?

15-20 minutes.

Why?

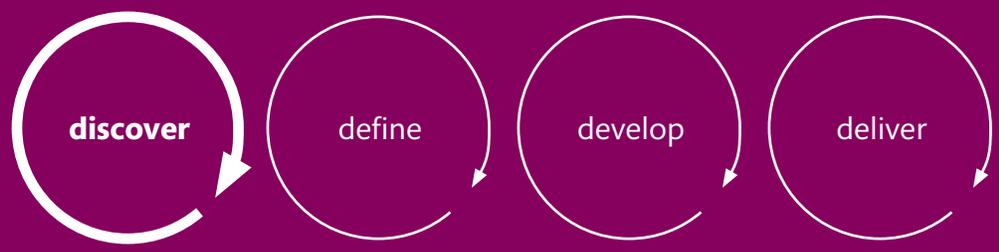
We are all connected to one another in some way. Regardless of how specialized your profession, you will always be able to find connections to the work of those in other specialties or fields. Perhaps you have not realized it yourself yet? To get tangled up (literally) can also build a stronger and more cohesive group because each participant gets a chance to talk about him/herself, find opportunities for collaboration and put their own work in a bigger perspective. The more tangled up the better.

What is needed?

We recommend groups of 6-8 people. If you are working with a big group and you need to break into a set of smaller groups, it would be good if two people facilitate the exercise of splitting into smaller groups. After groups have been established, give every group a ball of yarn (each group a different color, at least 50 meters long). The yarn will represent the connections that exist between the people in the group. Take away all tables, and make sure that there is enough space for each group to sit or stand in their own circle.

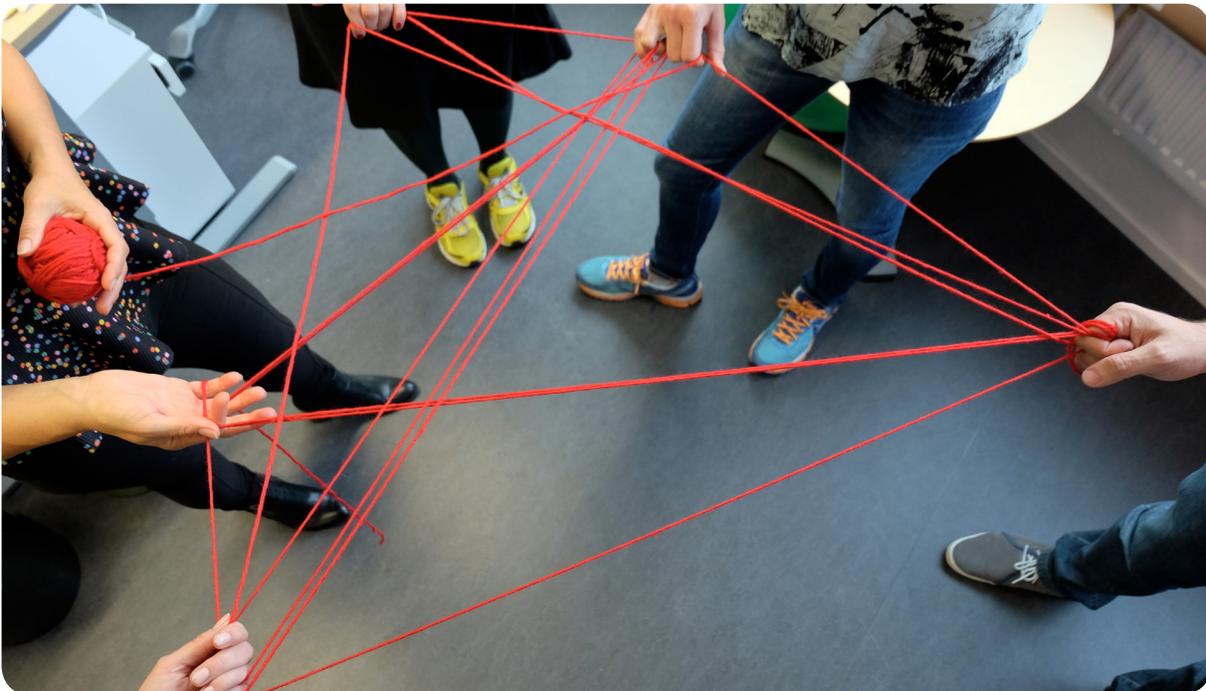
How?

1. Invite the participants to stand or sit in circular groups.
2. Simplify the exercise using an example of a connection. Invite some volunteers and use a ball of yarn to show how the exercise works: "In this exercise we want to find connections between the participants and get to know each other better. One participant begins holding the ball of yarn and starts to talk about him/herself: what his/her work is about, interests or something else that he/she wants to tell. When another participant discovers a connection, he/she raises a hand and asks to take the ball of yarn. The person initially holding the ball of yarn keeps hold of the end of the thread. The ball is passed on and the next participant continues to talk and links to the point of connection. And so on. This continues until there is no yarn left, or when the group feels that they are finished."
3. As facilitator you go around to the groups and ask how it's going, clarify things and help out if it's needed.



4. Are there groups where participants find it hard to find links? Encourage them by providing examples and suggestions of topics they can use to talk about themselves, and encourage them to be creative when looking for links.

5. Round up the session by bringing the small groups together and let them meet in a general and open group discussion. What kind of connections did they find?



Hints!

When you finish, you can ask how the participants experienced the exercise. Did they find many links in their groups? Are there groups with fewer connections than others? Why might this be? Be open for feedback.

Extroverted participants may take a lot of space and monopolize the ball of yarn. As in every group activity you, the facilitator, need to keep an eye on those in the group who are more introversive. Encourage to participate and share their thoughts. Remind the participants to talk with everyone in the group and allow each participant an opportunity to come forward.

Put on some music in the background if you feel this could help participants to relax and provide a cheerful atmosphere. Take pictures of the different webs that the groups create for a colorful memory.