

The \$2 Game



Instructions for the game leader

This game was created by Dr Mary Rowe for her class in 'Negotiation and Conflict Management' at MIT (Massachusetts Institute of Technology). For more information go to...

<https://ocw.mit.edu/courses/sloan-school-of-management/15-667-negotiation-and-conflict-management-spring-2001/lecture-notes/>

Purpose: To experience negotiations in a win/lose scenario.

Age group: Suitable for 10 years and over.

What you will need: A space big enough for your group to sit comfortably in pairs.



You might choose to have plastic money bags containing \$2 in small change (10 cent pieces would be preferable), BUT YOU DON'T REALLY NEED THIS. You can bargain over a 'theoretical' \$2.

Each player should have a pen and paper.

Set of 'Secret Instructions' for each round.

To prepare before the game

The game has three rounds.

For the first round the leader needs to print off several copies of the 'Secret Instructions for First Round' (see Appendix 1).

Each player receives a secret instruction, so you will need to print out enough sets to cover the number of players you have. You will need to cut up the sheets of secret instructions before the game begins. They will be distributed randomly.

For the second round the leader needs to print off several copies of the 'Secret Instructions for Second Round' (see Appendix 2). Again, you will need one secret instruction per player so you may need to print off several sets, and cut them up.

For the third round use the secret instructions from rounds 1 and 2. Mix them up and distribute randomly.

Instructions ONLY for the game leader

Although the players do not know this at the beginning, they will play the game three times.

The first and second time they change partners. But the third time they are suddenly told they will play again with the same partner.

Players naturally first think, "This is easy, we will just divide the two dollars in half." But each also has a Secret Instruction. The Secret Instructions tilt each player toward competition, accommodation, or compromise.

The Secret Instructions deal with bargaining targets that each player has, particular bargaining styles or behaviours, as well as things like public reputation.

Instructions to read out to players at the beginning of the game

This simulation is about win/lose bargaining. You and another person must divide \$2 between you today; what you get, the other person loses.

There may not be any side deals, or "paybacks tomorrow," or cheating of any other kind!

Please follow the instructions, just for today, even if you don't like them. Some people like this kind of bargaining. Other people hate it. If you hate it, play it out anyway and you can share your feelings during the debrief.

Please try very hard to follow your Secret Instructions in each round of this simulation. You will have specific, personal instructions with each new partner; they will be different each time. You may not tell anyone else about these instructions until the bargaining is over. Again, please follow the instructions as precisely as possible.

You will have a few minutes to consider strategy and tactics; please make notes as to your plans and ideas about how you will bargain.

Here are your questions:

- What do you want here?
- What is your most optimistic hope?
- What is your realistic expectation?
- What will you settle for?
- What does the other person probably want? How will you find out?
- How will you persuade the other person?
- What will your moves be?
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It is not possible to ask questions for more instructions; just do as well as you can.

Each round will run for ten minutes.

Instructions for game leader continued

Debrief after the first round: Ask the players who enjoyed the game and who didn't. Players may be surprised to see that some people love the game and others don't!

Players may also have found out something about their personal negotiation style; how they will naturally approach a bargaining situation.

Talk with players about bargaining ranges and the impact these have on negotiations. For example, in some pairs there is a positive bargaining range because the 'targets' add up to less than \$2. In some pairs there is a negative bargaining range because some players have been told to try to get more than \$1. How do these different bargaining ranges affect negotiations?

Debrief after the second round: The secret instructions for the second round deal with values, attitudes, and time constraints (or lack of time constraints). Ask players how they felt about playing different roles. Were they comfortable about following their secret instruction?

Talk to players about the fact that their bargaining partner's attitude and behaviours can affect their desire to negotiate with them again in the future.

Also discuss the effect of time constraints, or lack of time constraints, on the negotiations.

Debrief after the third round: At the beginning of the third round players were suddenly told to play again with the same partner. Ask players a series of questions:

'How did your knowledge of your partner's negotiating style affect how you bargained with them in this round?

Were relationships particularly mistrustful? Or trusting? Why?'

What did this round teach you about the importance of relationship building in negotiations?

Message to take away and share with players at the end of the game

Sometimes splitting the \$2 equally between two people is not the most equitable or fair solution. This may be because one partner is in greater need than the other, and the bargaining partner recognizes this.

Sometimes negotiations can be dominated by a particularly strong or stubborn bargaining partner. Sometimes a 'weaker negotiator' ends up giving up on what he/she really needs to get.

The basic idea in this game is that relationships with others are important. So, if you rip someone off in the first round, you will be in a difficult situation when you meet them in a subsequent round. Generally, in long-term relationships a win-win situation is a more peaceable solution than a win-lose scenario.

A win-lose form of bargaining will always leave one partner feeling resentful and hard done by. This will affect how he/she relates to you in the future.

A correlation can be made from this simple game to international peace negotiations. In the end, the world will be a more peaceful place if everyone has their needs met. Building strong, trusting relationships is much more important in the long-term, than 'winning' one particular battle.



Appendix 1: SECRET INSTRUCTIONS FOR FIRST ROUND

-----Cut along these lines-----

THE \$2 BARGAINING SIMULATION

Secret Instructions:

50 cents

Try to get as much of the \$2.00 as you can. Bargain as effectively as possible; make up any story you wish. It is extremely important to you that you at least get bus money to get home tonight: 50 cents. If you do not get at least 50 cents, you will be walking for more than an hour and it will be dark and cold, out where you live. Actually, get more if you can; be as effective as possible.

THE \$2 BARGAINING SIMULATION

Secret Instructions:

80 cents

Try to get as much of the \$2.00 as you can; make up any story you want. Whatever else your objectives, you should be careful to get at least 80 cents of the \$2.00 because you will have to make a toll call to your family and they will be terribly worried and upset if you do not make that call. So, do as well as you can, and remember you must get at least 80 cents.

THE \$2 BARGAINING SIMULATION

Secret Instructions:

\$1

This is zero-sum bargaining and you should get as much of the \$2.00 as you can, with any story you like. It is really important that you should get at least \$1.00 in this round.

THE \$2 BARGAINING SIMULATION

Secret Instructions:

\$1.30

You have been carefully chosen for a particular goal in this simulation. It is important that you should win at least \$1.30. Feel free to make up any story you like; get as much of the \$2.00 as you can.

THE \$2 BARGAINING SIMULATION

Secret Instructions:

\$1.60

This is zero-sum bargaining and you should get as much of the \$2 as you can, with any story you like. It is really important that you should get \$1.60 in this round.



Appendix 2: SECRET INSTRUCTIONS FOR SECOND ROUND

-----Cut along these lines-----

THE \$2 BARGAINING SIMULATION

Secret Instructions:

Battle-Ax

You are a well-known and consistent battle-ax. You are known for always getting every penny out of every competitor. Please try to imagine that you will never see the other person again, but everyone else who matters to you is waiting to see if you can play this game effectively. Make up any story you want, as strong a case as you can. Get as much of the \$2.00 as you can. This is a chance to live up to your formidable reputation as a really effective competitor; go to it!

THE \$2 BARGAINING SIMULATION

Secret Instructions:

Dependent

You may make up any story you wish. You should try to get as much of the \$2 as you can. However, it is important to remember that you will be dependent on this colleague for a long time to come. This simulation is only the first of many contacts with the other person, so you will want to be extra careful not to offend in any way. Do as well as you can in the context of the long-term association to come.

THE \$2 BARGAINING SIMULATION

Secret Instructions:

High Tension

This is zero-sum bargaining. You should get as much of the \$2.00 as you can, with any story you like. Please keep up a high level of tension. Act concerned, repeat demands; don't give in at all, if you can help it. If you do give in, come down only one cent at a time. Please be tough.

THE \$2 BARGAINING SIMULATION

Secret Instructions:

Imaginative

This is zero-sum bargaining and you want to get just as much of the \$2.00 as you possibly can. Please spend a moment and be really imaginative. You were chosen for this instruction because of your creativity and inventiveness. So be imaginative, be convincing, and bargain just as effectively as you can. Make up the most convincing tale you can and good luck!

THE \$2 BARGAINING SIMULATION

Secret Instructions:

Public Figure

This is zero-sum bargaining and you should get as much of the \$2 as you can, with any story you like. However, you are a well-known public figure, with a reputation for fairness, decency and graciousness. Your reputation is extremely important to you and you should bear in mind that your colleague is likely to make public anything you say (and how you say it). So--do as well as you can, use any arguments or story you wish, but keep your reputation!

THE \$2 BARGAINING SIMULATION

Secret Instructions:

Say Little

This is zero-sum bargaining and you are to get as much of the \$2.00 as you possibly can. Please try really hard. Here is your special instruction: pick an expectation of what you will try to get and stick to it if you can, but say as little as possible. If you can, try to get away with saying essentially nothing at all, except for the amount you want. You may listen courteously as much as you want but try as hard as you reasonably can not to talk. If you absolutely have to, make up a story to bolster your claim, but try to (if you can) not to talk at all except for stating an amount of money.

-----Cut along these lines-----

THE \$2 BARGAINING SIMULATION

Secret Instructions:

Tape Recorder

This is zero-sum bargaining and you should get as much of the \$2 as you can, with any story you like. However, your colleague is quite likely to be wearing a hidden tape recorder, and may be a journalist. Your colleague may be working for a newspaper or may be working for "60 Minutes." (Please be very careful that you would feel comfortable seeing your story in the newspaper or on television.)

THE \$2 BARGAINING SIMULATION

Secret Instructions:

Untrustworthy

This is zero-sum bargaining. You should get as much of the \$2.00 as you can; make up any story you like; be as effective as you can. A warning: your colleague has been extraordinarily untrustworthy in all previous \$2 bargaining simulations. Be polite, but please be very much on your guard. Consider carefully anything you are told and be wary. Consider whether you can believe anything your colleague says.

THE \$2 BARGAINING SIMULATION

Secret Instructions:

Ten Minutes

This exercise will be timed. Please do everything you can to reach a settlement within 10 minutes. You may make up any story you wish, to win as much of the \$2 as possible. However, keep in mind that it matters a lot that you are able to meet your deadline and actually reach a settlement; this is your most important priority.

-----Cut along these lines-----

THE \$2 BARGAINING SIMULATION

Secret Instructions:

Another Chance

You may make up any story you wish, to win as much as you can from your colleague. If you do not reach a settlement this session, don't worry about it. You will have a chance to continue with this person. What matters most is your meeting your own objectives when you do settle, (so think through carefully what those objectives are).

THE \$2 BARGAINING SIMULATION

Secret Instructions:

Hard Time

This person you are dealing with probably will not want to tell you about it but he or she has had a terribly hard month. This past month was full of disaster: money troubles, family difficulties, and none of it your colleague's fault. Through it all, your colleague has been bearing up. Nevertheless, this is zero-sum bargaining, so get all you can. Make up whatever story you wish, and get as much of the \$2.00 as possible. (Just remember that your colleague has been having a very hard time.)

