WORKSHOPSKILL · PARTICIPANT KIT

Blind Portrait — Participant Workbook

The guide in print, a frame to write after every debrief question, and session notes pages.

Folder: `blind-portrait` · Category: communication · 2 people per pair · 15 min · offline · print props · assessment-type

License: CC BY 4.0

CONTENTS

Objectives
Minute-by-minute script
Variations
Agent version
The 8 questions
Scoring cues (assessment-type sessions)
Setup
Known failure modes & rescues
Props in this folder
How to run this debrief
3 known failure modes of the debrief itself

15
MINUTES

print props
SETTING

Blind Portrait — Facilitator Run Sheet

A back-to-back drawing exercise where one participant describes an image and the other draws it — without either seeing the other's work. The debrief turns the gap between the two pictures into concrete evidence about instruction-giving, listening, and assumption-checking.

Objectives

By the end of the activity, participants will have:

1. Experienced the cost of **one-way instructions** versus checked understanding.
2. Seen their own default role: describer who assumes, or drawer who guesses silently.
3. Practiced one repair move: **asking one clarifying question before starting**.

Setup

Space: two chairs per pair, back-to-back, ~30 cm apart. No table between them — the drawer holds the pad on their knees.

Materials per pair:

Item	Source
1 × describer card	`blind-portrait-prop-cards.pdf` (card 1)
1 × drawer card	`blind-portrait-prop-cards.pdf` (card 2)
1 × judge card	`blind-portrait-prop-cards.pdf` (card 3) — cut, one per observer
1 × timing card	`blind-portrait-prop-cards.pdf` (card 4) — for you, the facilitator
1 × mystery image	any line drawing: a bicycle, a lamp, a floor plan. Prepare 2 per pair (round A / round B)
Paper + marker per drawer	thick marker, not pencil — mistakes should be visible

Grouping rule: pair people who work together daily for round A; randomize pairs for round B. The contrast is the lesson.

Roles: describer (holds image, may not show it), drawer (holds marker, may not ask questions in round A), observer (if you have an odd number — otherwise you float).

Minute-by-minute script

Time	Phase	Facilitator does	Participants do
0–2	Frame	"One of you will describe, one will draw. You may not turn around. The describer may not say what the image **is** — only what it **looks like**."	Take cards, split roles

Time	Phase	Facilitator does	Participants do
2–5	Round A (3 min)	Start timer on the timing card. Say nothing else — silence is part of the design	Describer describes; drawer draws; no questions allowed
5–7	Reveal	“Turn around. Compare.”	Pairs laugh / wince; observers note gaps on judge card
7–10	Round B (3 min)	Swap roles, new image. Rule change: “the drawer may ask **three** questions total”	Second round runs with checked understanding
10–13	Reveal + compare	Prompt: “what changed between round A and round B?”	Pairs self-score both rounds on the judge card
13–15	Bridge to debrief	“Keep both drawings — they are your data for the debrief.”	Lay drawings side by side

Then run the debrief — see `blind-portrait-debrief.md`.

Known failure modes & rescues

1. **The describer narrates the whole story instead of the shapes.** (“It’s like a farm…”) Rescue: stop the round for 10 seconds, repeat the rule — “describe what you **see**, not what it **means**.”
2. **The drawer goes abstract to avoid being wrong.** Rescue: the debrief question “what did you do when you weren’t sure?” is built for this. Do not fix it live.
3. **Pairs finish early and disengage.** Rescue: hand them the judge card — score round A vs round B while others finish.

Variations

- **Online:** describer on camera only, drawer on shared whiteboard. Keep the no-questions rule — the constraint is the activity.
- **Large groups (20+):** run in trios (describer / drawer / observer), 2 rounds of 4 minutes, gallery-wall the drawings before debriefing in plenary.
- **Assessment-type:** run the pre-measure *before* pairing up, and the post-measure right after the debrief — see `blind-portrait-assessment.json`. The interesting number is not the score, it’s the **delta**.

Props in this folder

- `blind-portrait-prop-cards.pdf` — poker print-ready: describer / drawer / judge / timing cards
- `blind-portrait-guide.md` — this run sheet
- `blind-portrait-debrief.md` — 8 debrief questions, 3 failure modes
- `blind-portrait-assessment.json` — pre/post measure preset

- `blind-portrait-paper-form.pdf` — the A4 answer sheet: the measure as a print-and-fill form
- `blind-portrait-workbook.pdf` — participant workbook: the idea in plain words, guided items, notes and action pages
- `blind-portrait-slide-deck.pdf` — the slide deck for teaching or projecting
- `blind-portrait-slide-deck.html` — the same deck for any browser, speaker notes on N
- `blind-portrait-license.md` — what you may do with all of this, in plain language
- `blind-portrait-activity-poster.pdf` — The whole activity on one wall (A3): meta, run of show, debrief questions, watch-outs.
- `blind-portrait-start-here.md` — one page, thirty seconds, then print and go
- `SKILL.md` — machine-readable manifest for AI agents
- `blind-portrait-run-sheet.pdf` — the print edition: this run sheet + the debrief sheet, bound as one A4 PDF

Agent version

Every file in this folder has a stable public URL — an AI agent can fetch the props, the debrief and this run sheet with three curl commands (see `SKILL.md`). The paper version itself needs no screen at all: no projector, no accounts, just markers and chairs.

Blind Portrait — Debrief Sheet

> 8 questions, 3 failure modes, one rule: the drawings are the data.
>
> Use with `blind-portrait-guide.md`. Debrief runs 10–20 min after the two rounds.

How to run this debrief

- Keep both drawings on the table, side by side, for the whole debrief. Every question points back at them.
- Ask questions **to the pair first**, then to the room. The pair has the freshest evidence.
- Write answers on this sheet or on the back of the drawings — participants keep them.

The 8 questions

1. Shapes, not stories.

“Describer: when did you catch yourself explaining what the image *means* instead of what it *looks like*?”

→ Targets: instruction clarity. Most describers do this in the first 30 seconds.

2. The silent guess.

“Drawer: what did you do in the moments you weren’t sure?”

→ Targets: assumption behavior. Watch for “I just drew something plausible” — that is the finding, not a fault.

3. The cost of the rule.

“Round A, no questions allowed: how much of the gap between your two pictures came from the rule, and how much from the description?”

→ Separates constraint effects from skill effects. Don’t let them blame the rule entirely.

4. The three questions.

“Round B, you could ask three questions. Which question helped most? Which would you ask first if you could restart?”

→ Surfaces the repair move: check understanding *before* starting.

5. Same pair, different result.

“When you swapped roles, what did you do differently as describer — knowing what it felt like to draw blind?”

→ Perspective-taking evidence. This is the strongest single indicator in the debrief.

6. The daily version.

“Where does this exact pattern — sending instructions into silence — show up in your week?”

→ Transfer question. Expect: email specs, handovers, ticket comments, stand-up updates.

7. The one repair.

“If you could install one habit from this exercise into your team’s communication, which one?”

→ Commitment question. Make it singular — one habit survives Monday.

8. The drawing you’d frame.

“Which of the two drawings is the honest portrait of how your pair communicates today?”

→ Closing question. It ends the debrief on the evidence, not on a platitude.

---

3 known failure modes of the debrief itself

1. **Laughter eats the lesson.** Round A drawings are funny; the room will want to stay in the laughter.
   Rescue: laugh with them once, then place the two drawings side by side and ask question 3. The contrast quiets the room.

2. **Blame lands on the describer.** The gap feels like one person’s fault.
   Rescue: reframe — “the describer described alone; the drawer drew alone; the *pair* produced the gap.” Question 5 is the pivot.

3. **Meta-talk replaces examples.** Participants start speaking in abstractions (“communication is important”).
   Rescue: point at the drawings. “Show me where on the paper that happened.”

Scoring cues (assessment-type sessions)

If you are running the pre/post measure (`blind-portrait-assessment.json`), note these observables during the rounds — they justify the delta in the report:

Observable	Points to
Describer checks in before starting (round B)	Repair habit forming
Drawer asks a question in the first 30 s	Uncertainty tolerance
Pair scores round B higher without a “better artist”	Understanding, not skill, improved

The report your participants receive is a pair-level comparison, never an individual ranking — keep it that way when you present it.

Shapes, not stories.

Describer: when did you catch yourself explaining what the image *means* instead of what it *looks like*?

The silent guess.

Drawer: what did you do in the moments you weren’t sure?

The cost of the rule.

Round A, no questions allowed: how much of the gap between your two pictures came from the rule, and how much from the description?

The three questions.

Round B, you could ask three questions. Which question helped most? Which would you ask first if you could restart?

Same pair, different result.

When you swapped roles, what did you do differently as describer — knowing what it felt like to draw blind?

The daily version.

Where does this exact pattern — sending instructions into silence — show up in your week?

The one repair.

If you could install one habit from this exercise into your team's communication, which one?

The drawing you'd frame.

Which of the two drawings is the honest portrait of how your pair communicates today?

Session notes