

Roleswap Argument — Facilitator Run Sheet

Folder: roleswap-argument · Category: conflict · 6–16 people · 20 min · offline + online · print props · tool pack

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20

MINUTES

6–16

PEOPLE

print props

SETTING

Roleswap Argument — Facilitator Guide

Take a disagreement that's actually live in the room, then make each side argue the *other* side's position honestly — steel-man it, land one true thing in it, and surface the need both positions are really serving. People leave able to state the opposing case without distortion, which is the precondition for solving anything together.

Objectives

By the end of the activity, participants will have:

1. Stated both live positions fairly enough that each side accepts the description.
 2. Landed at least one genuinely true thing inside the position they don't hold.
 3. Named the shared need both positions are serving — the smallest common ground the next decision can build on.
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When to use this activity

- Two teams or two people are stuck in a “we're right, they're wrong” loop and re-litigating the facts won't break it.
 - A contested decision is coming up and you need the other side to be able to support it — run the swap *before* the decision, not after.
 - You have 6–16 people split across two sides of a real (not hypothetical) disagreement, and 20 minutes; it runs on a shared board online.
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Why the swap flips it

Most workplace conflicts don't stall because the facts are unknown — they stall because nobody on either side can describe the other's position in a way that side would accept. Forcing the swap makes that gap visible and closes it in one sitting: once everyone can state both cases fairly, the argument stops being about who is right and starts being about the shared need underneath.

Setup

Space: one side of a wall or shared board per position, plus an open spot between them for the shared need; the two sides face the board, not each other.

Materials per pair of sides: one full set of role cards ([roleswap-argument-prop-cards.pdf](#)) and a pen each.

Materials for the room: a timer you will hard-stop, and the A3 poster up on the wall.

Grouping: 6–16 people split into two sides of a real disagreement that is safe to surface. Below 6, run it as a whole-group demo with two volunteers.

Roles: each side argues the other's position; listeners only correct misstatements; you frame both positions honestly, time the argue window, and stop parody.

How to run it

Time	Phase	What you do
0–4	Frame	State both live positions in one honest sentence each. No caricature allowed — if a side objects to how its position was phrased, fix the phrasing before moving on.
4–10	Swap & argue	Each side argues the <i>other</i> position as someone who genuinely holds it. Listeners may only correct misstatements, not score points.
10–15	Steel-man	Strengthen the other side's best case beyond what they argued themselves. The goal is a version the other side says “yes, that's it” to.
15–20	Land it	Each person names one thing that is genuinely true in the other position, then the group names the shared need underneath both. Everyone returns to their own side and restates it — now carrying what they learned.

The card

Use the faces from [roleswap-argument-prop-cards.pdf](#) : a your-side card, a their-side card, a steel-man card, a what's-true card, a shared-need card and a swap-back card, with branded backs. Keep a hard timer on the argue window — the 20 minutes only hold if it's stopped on time.

Failure modes

- **Someone argues the other side to mock it.** Hold the line: a swap performed as parody hasn't happened. Ask them to run it again as someone who genuinely believes it, or hand the card to a volunteer who will.
- **A side insists its position is obviously right and there's nothing to learn.** Ask for exactly one true thing in the other. Almost no real position has zero truth in its opposite; the refusal is usually the thing worth surfacing.
- **The room is too polarized to argue a hot case publicly.** Drop into pairs with a neutral third person reading the cards aloud, so nobody has to perform their own side in front of the other.

Variations

- **Manager and reports:** have the manager argue the reports' position first; the asymmetry of who swaps matters more than the mechanic.
- **Written variant (online):** each person posts their steel-man of the other side in a shared doc before anyone restates their own; reading order makes the empathy visible.
- **Before a decision:** run the swap inside the meeting where the contested call is actually being made, not in a follow-up session after it.
- **Too hot to argue out loud:** run it in pairs with a neutral reader before any whole-group swap.

Facilitation notes

- The strongest moment is when the other side says “yes, that's exactly it” to a case you built for them.
- Fix the framing before you start: if a side objects to how its position was phrased, no swap afterwards is honest.

Put it on the wall

Print `roleswap-argument-activity-poster.pdf` (A3) to put the run of show, the “argue to understand, not to win” and “land one true thing” rules on one wall while you facilitate.

Props in this folder

- `roleswap-argument-prop-cards.pdf` — poker-spec print sheet (63.5 × 88.9 mm, bleed and cut guides): your-side, their-side, steel-man, what’s-true, shared-need and swap-back cards, branded backs
 - `roleswap-argument-run-sheet.pdf` — the print edition: this run sheet + the debrief, bound as one A4 document with bookmarks (`-Letter.pdf` is US Letter)
 - `roleswap-argument-activity-poster.pdf` — the whole swap on one A3 wall sheet
 - `roleswap-argument-guide.md` · `-debrief.md` · `-start-here.md` — the facilitator guide, the debrief, the one-page start here
 - `roleswap-argument-license.md` — what you may do, how to rebrand, what shipped when
 - `SKILL.md` · `roleswap-argument.zip` — the machine-readable manifest, and the whole folder in one download
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Agent version

Every file in this folder has a stable public URL — an AI agent can fetch the cards, the debrief and this run sheet with three curl commands (see `SKILL.md`). The paper version needs nothing but two sides of a wall, one set of role cards and a timer.

Roleswap Argument — Debrief

You did not change anyone’s mind. You made both positions stateable without distortion — and that is the floor a real decision can finally be built on.

Use with `roleswap-argument-guide.md` . The land-it close at minute 20 is the compressed version; this sheet is the full one.

How to run this debrief

- Test the swap first: ask whether each side would accept the other’s account of its own position. If not, the swap hasn’t happened yet — do it again before debriefing.
 - Pull out the one true thing each side found in the other. That’s the seam a joint solution can open along.
 - End on the shared need stated in a sentence neither side objects to — the common ground the next decision sits on.
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Read the board

1. **Both positions, restated fairly.** If everyone in the room can now say each side’s case in a way that side would accept, the swap actually happened. If one side still can’t, you’re back in the loop.
2. **The one true thing each side found in the other.** Not a concession — an honest point in a position they don’t hold. That’s the seam where a joint solution can start.
3. **The shared need both positions are clumsily serving.** Say it in a sentence neither side would object to; that sentence is the smallest common ground you now have.

The four debrief questions

- When you argued the other side, where did you catch yourself slipping into parody — and what did that slip cost you?
- Name one thing that is genuinely true in the position you *don't* hold. If you can't, what would make it findable?
- Now back on your own side — did restating your position after the swap change anything? What, precisely?
- What would a proposal have to include so the shared need is honored, not just one side's version of it?

Failure modes of the debrief

Failure mode	Why it happens	The rescue
The swap reads as a joke	Parody performed instead of argued	Run it again as someone who genuinely believes it, or hand the card to a volunteer who will.
“There’s nothing to learn from them”	A position defended as obviously right	Ask for exactly one true thing in the other; the refusal itself is the thing worth surfacing.
Nobody returns to their own side changed	The exercise stayed intellectual	Have each person restate their own position out loud now, and name what they’re carrying from the swap.