WORKSHOPSKILL · PARTICIPANT KIT

Silent Lineup — Participant Workbook

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

Folder: `silent-lineup` · Category: leadership · 8–20 people · 10 min · offline · optional print · assessment-type

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10	8–20	optional print
MINUTES	PEOPLE	SETTING

Silent Lineup — Facilitator Guide

The group lines up by birthday — no talking, no writing, no phones. Ten minutes of pure non-verbal coordination, and a debrief about who led, who followed, and what leadership looks like when the loudest tool is taken away.

Objectives

By the end of the activity, participants will have:

1. Watched **leadership emerge without words** — gestures, position, initiative.
2. Seen their own default: the one who organizes, or the one who waits to be organized.
3. Practiced one coordination move: **make yourself legible** — hold up fingers for your birth month.

When to use this activity

- The room needs to see leadership emerge *before* anyone is appointed — the fastest opener for a session on informal authority.
- You have ten minutes, a stretch of floor, and 8–20 people who will talk over every other exercise.
- As a warm-up before `rotate-the-lead` or `the-decision-rights-map`: this is the quickest way to see who moves first, and who waits.

Setup

Space: a clear wall or line on the floor the group can stand along.

Materials: none for the lineups themselves — a timing card is not needed; you count the three minutes. The folder adds an optional poker deck (rules, gesture code, observer, timing) for rooms that want the observation made visible.

Rules — say them out loud: “Line up by birthday, January on my left, December on my right. No talking, no writing, no phones. You have three minutes. Go.”

Grouping rule: the whole group at once. Over 16 people, run two lines and compare how each organized itself.

How to run it

Time	Phase	Facilitator does	Participants do
0–1	Frame	State the rules. “Silence starts now”	Stand, scatter
1–4	The lineup (3 min)	Time it. Say nothing. Watch for who checks edges (January?) and who helps stragglers	Gesture, shuffle, compare birthdays on fingers
4–5	Verification	Walk the line, each person says their birthday out loud — once, in place	Errors surface, quick fixes allowed (still silent)
5–8	Round two: seniority	“Line up by years in the company. Same rules.”	New dynamics — this one is harder to gesture

Time	Phase	Facilitator does	Participants do
8–10	Bridge to debrief	“Two lineups, two systems. Hold your memories — the debrief needs them.”	Transition

Then run the debrief — see `silent-lineup-debrief.md`.

The card

The optional `silent-lineup-prop-cards.pdf` (poker spec, 63.5 × 88.9 mm, bleed and cut guides, branded back, blanks) carries four faces: a **rules** card — the three bans, visible to the whole line; a **gesture code** card — fingers-for-month, the legibility pattern; an **observer** card — for anyone who wants to track who moves first and who unsticks the jam; and a **timing** card — three minutes made physical. Blanks take your own codes. With no cards at all the activity runs; the deck turns the facilitator’s private observation into the room’s shared one.

Failure modes

1. **Someone talks “just to fix one thing.”** Rescue: restart the round with an amused “and again — in silence.” The rule is the activity; one word collapses it.
2. **The group clusters and stalls in the middle.** Rescue: no rescue — the stall is data. The debrief question “who could have broken the jam?” is built for this.
3. **Verification reveals a long run of errors.** Rescue: keep it playful — errors are the point of verification, not an embarrassment. Applaud the fix, not the perfection.

Variations

- **Blind lineup:** eyes closed for round two — now touch is the only channel (pre-agree a shoulder-tap alphabet).
- **Order by opinion:** line up from “strongly agree” to “strongly disagree” on a work statement — a silent temperature check that feeds straight into a discussion.
- **Remote:** impossible in the original form — replace with mute-cam ordering: everyone types their birthday into chat simultaneously, then self-sort on a shared whiteboard in silence.

Facilitation notes

- Your silence is the instrument. The moment the facilitator helps, leadership has been artificially supplied and the data is spoiled.
- Debrief in position — walking the line while asking keeps the evidence visible and the memories fresh.
- Run it early in the session. A room that has just lined up silently can handle harder truth talk afterwards; the reverse rarely works.
- If you hand out the optional prop deck, give the observer card *before* round one, not during it — an observer who arrives late misses the emergence, which is the whole point.

Put it on the wall

Print `silent-lineup-activity-poster.pdf` (A3) to put the rules, the run of show and the debrief questions on one wall — while the room is silent, the wall is the only thing talking.

Props in this folder

- `silent-lineup-guide.md` — this run sheet
- `silent-lineup-debrief.md` — 8 numbered debrief questions with what each targets, plus failure modes of the debrief
- `silent-lineup-assessment.json` — machine-facing file (not listed in the download table): pre/post measure preset
- `silent-lineup-prop-cards.pdf` — optional poker deck (63.5 × 88.9 mm, bleed and cut guides, branded back, blanks): rules, gesture code, observer, timing cards
- `silent-lineup-paper-form.pdf` — the A4 answer sheet: the measure as a print-and-fill form
- `silent-lineup-workbook.pdf` — participant workbook: the idea in plain words, guided items, notes and action pages
- `silent-lineup-slide-deck.html` / `.pdf` — the deck for teaching or projecting: presenter drawer (S), audience mode (B), round timer (T), built-in QR, print fallback; the `.pdf` is the same deck for print
- `silent-lineup-run-sheet.pdf` — the print edition: this run sheet + the debrief sheet, bound as one A4 PDF with bookmarks
- `silent-lineup-activity-poster.pdf` — the whole activity on one wall (A3): meta, run of show, debrief questions, watch-outs
- `silent-lineup-start-here.md` — one page, thirty seconds, then print and go
- `silent-lineup-license.md` — what you may do with all of this: run it, copy it, translate it, rebrand it; keep the attribution line
- `SKILL.md` — machine-readable manifest for AI agents
- `*-Letter.pdf` — US Letter editions of the print documents

Agent version

Every file in this folder has a stable public URL — an AI agent can fetch the guide, the debrief and the answer sheet with three curl commands (see `SKILL.md`). The exercise itself needs nothing but floor space and silence.

Silent Lineup — Debrief Sheet

> 8 questions, 3 failure modes, one rule: no word was spoken, so every action was a choice.
>
> Use with `silent-lineup-guide.md`. Debrief runs 10 min after round two.

The 8 questions

1. The first mover.

“Who moved first — and what did they actually do?”

→ The first move in a leaderless group is usually an edge-claim: walking to the January end. Name it.

2. The legible ones.

“Whose gestures could you read from three meters? What made them legible?”

→ Legibility is a leadership skill: birth month on fingers beats vague waving.

3. The jam.

“Where did the line jam — and who could have broken it? Did anyone try?”

→ Most jams stay jammed. The question is not blame; it is permission: did people feel allowed to unstick it?

4. The followers.

“First three people to follow the first mover: why them? What did they see that others didn’t?”

→ Early followers co-lead. This question usually surprises the room.

5. Round two, new system.

“Birthday to seniority — what changed in how you organized? Faster, slower, messier?”

→ Seniority is sensitive — watch the room; keep it light but honest.

6. The daily version.

“Where in your week does the group coordinate without an appointed leader — and who moves first there?”

→ Transfer question. Expect: incident response, chat threads, meetings without chairs.

7. The one move.

“If you could install one silent-lineup move into your team’s Monday, which one?”

→ Commitment question. Expect answers like “make my status legible without being asked.”

8. The last position.

“Who ended up at the very ends of the line — and what did being at the edge feel like?”

→ Closing question. Edge positions isolate; end on who checked the edges.

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3 known failure modes of the debrief itself

1. **It becomes a personality quiz.** “You’re a natural leader!” — labels replace analysis.
   Rescue: redirect to moves, not people: “what did they *do* that worked?” Question 1 and 2 do this.
2. **The silent get no credit.** The quietest participants organized the middle and no one noticed.
   Rescue: ask question 2 while pointing at the middle of the line, not the ends.
3. **Round two turns into a seniority roast.** Years-in-company surfaces status, and jokes get sharp.
   Rescue: timebox it — one observation, then question 6 moves the room to daily patterns.

If you are running the pre/post measure (`silent-lineup-assessment.json`), note these observables during the lineups:

Observable	Points to
Someone claims an edge position in the first 10 s	Initiative habit
Finger-months or another legible code emerges	Coordination design
A jam gets unstuck by a non-first-mover	Distributed permission

The report your participants receive is a self-comparison, never a ranking — keep it that way.

The first mover.

Who moved first — and what did they actually do?

The legible ones.

Whose gestures could you read from three meters? What made them legible?

The jam.

Where did the line jam — and who could have broken it? Did anyone try?

The followers.

First three people to follow the first mover: why them? What did they see that others didn't?

Round two, new system.

Birthday to seniority — what changed in how you organized? Faster, slower, messier?

The daily version.

Where in your week does the group coordinate without an appointed leader — and who moves first there?

The one move.

If you could install one silent-lineup move into your team's Monday, which one?

The last position.

Who ended up at the very ends of the line — and what did being at the edge feel like?

Session notes