



Top Traders

Aim

that young people explore the effect of global trade rules on people's lives.

Age

12 years and over

Time

25 minutes

Materials

Scrap paper (such as old newspapers or magazines), copies of WTO fact box.

Suggested Rules

- The other team lose half their paper.
- Only people with brown eyes can make paper balls.
- The other team only get €50 for each ball
- The other team only get to make balls for one minute.

What to do

Split the group into two teams. Explain that the teams have to complete a task. The first team to complete the task is the winner. They then get to make a rule that the losing team has to obey. The task is then repeated. The winning team then gets to make a new rule for their opponents. After four rounds, count up the total and declare one team 'Top Traders'. Bring the two teams together. Ask what happened during the game? How did the teams feel? Was it fair? Why? Does this happen in real life? Who makes the rules for trade? Explain that the game is over and mix the participants.

Ask if anyone has heard of the World Trade Organisation (WTO). Hand out copies of the WTO fact box. In groups of three discuss how the WTO works. Each group should come up with an alternative wording for the acronym WTO that reflects the way they act. For example, Wealthy Traders Only.

Note to Leader

After each round, the existing rule is cancelled. Be careful to ensure that the rules respect the safety of participants. Leave it to participants to figure out that the size of the balls isn't important.

The Task

Give each team a pile of scrap paper, such as old newspapers and magazines. Explain that each team has to make paper balls that can be traded for money at the end of each round. Each round lasts two minutes. The paper balls are worth €100 each, irrespective of size.





About the WTO

- The World Trade Organisation (WTO) is a forum where countries agree trade rules. The WTO was created on 1 January 1995.
- Currently, 144 countries are members of the WTO.
- Many developing countries joined the WTO (and its predecessor GATT) because rich countries appeared to be ready to open their markets to the two strongest developing country exports: textiles and agricultural products.
- Rich countries were able to create loopholes in the rules to prevent competition from poor countries for these industries. For example, they promised to reduce support to their farmers, but rich countries now actually spend more supporting their farmers than they did in 1995.
- Farmers in the US receive \$20,000 in subsidies from the US Government, while farmers in the EU also receive large subsidies.
- They compete on national markets in the Philippines with farmers earning only \$200 per year.
- There are around 3,000 meetings per year at the WTO in Geneva. Poor countries often cannot afford to go to many meetings. Japan has 25 negotiators at the WTO, Bangladesh has just one and 29 of the poorest countries have none.
- As the rules tend to be written by the richer and more powerful countries, they work in their favour.
- Rich countries ensure their corporations can enter and trade in poor countries, while poor countries are not allowed to protect their domestic industries, which are vital for long-term development.
- The concerns of poor countries are overlooked, such as the right of the poor to cheap medicines or sufficiently healthy food.

Source: Trócaire (2001). Trade and Globalisation: A Resource for Geography

