LOW CHALLENGE COURSE INITIATIVE SELECTION GUIDE

Activity Descriptions, Illustrations and Space Requirements for Installation and Operation

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What is a Low Challenge Course Initiative?
Group initiatives, also called teams courses or low ropes courses, are problems or obstacles that challenge
groups and individuals both mentally and physically. These challenges require “teamwork” for the activities to
be completed successfully. These activities allow the trainer or facilitator to work right alongside the group,
helping them explore their objectives in the moment, and preparing them for bigger challenges, such as a ropes
course, climbing structure or the challenges found in the everyday world.
Experiential Systems offers over 30 different low challenge course elements. These elements properly facili-
tated by trained staff will be capable of helping groups to work on: leadership, confidence, listening, commun-
ication, and resource planning, fostering personal growth, risk taking, creativity, trust and strategy to name just a
few of the benefits.

Who are Low Challenge Courses Intended For?
Low challenge courses are great for camps, schools, universities, resorts, the military, corporations, scout troops
and organizational development consultants. Whether you work primarily with youth or adults a low challenge
course will help you meet your groups development needs.

How Many People?
Most low challenge course elements work best with groups from between 8 and 20 in size. A few elements
work well with larger and/or smaller size groups. Depending on the elements selected a minimum staff to
participant ration of 1 to 15 will be required.

WHAT ARE THE COSTS IN OPERATIONALIZING A LOW CHALLENGE COURSE?
There are many costs that go into operationalizing an adventure program. Each site and program are individual
in nature and will need to be evaluated. Here is some general information concerning costs.

Site Evaluation
A site visit may be required to determine the most appropriate location for your activity area. For some ele-
ments and construction this is not always necessary and photos and facility drawings may suffice. Issues to
consider are: the location of underground utilities, finding level areas for installation, avoiding flood areas,
Having appropriate shade and close proximity to both bathroom facilities and water.

Planning
A clear understanding of your client base and the intent of your program will be required to ensure the elements
selected are right for your needs and will help you work on your specific programming goals. To do this we will
conduct meetings and interviews with your program director to determine the best package of activities for your
organization, this may happen on the phone or during a site visit.

Arborist Inspection
If trees are used in the construction of your challenge course an inspection by a Certified Arborist will be
required. This is an important step to ensure your new challenge course will last a long time and that trees with an
infection or inset infestation aren’t chosen for installation.

Materials and Labor
Materials and labor costs will be billed together. We can build most any structure that has been dreamed up. All
materials selected are chosen for their strength, corrosion resistance and durability. All materials used and labor
practices employed by Experiential Systems meet or exceed the minimum standards set by the Association for
Challenge Course Technology (ACCT).

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Ground Improvement and Landscaping

Heavy equipment (skid steers, fork lifts, etc.) may be required for your installation and depending on the soil condition and the time of year for your installation, ground improvements may be necessary to remove tire tracks or other divots placed by the machines. Additionally, it is recommended that 4” to 6” of wood chips or similar surface be placed under all challenge course elements, as a suitable means of fall protection. You may also want to install a trail system for participants to travel on between elements.

Staff Training

Staff training is imperative and required of any new organization purchasing activities from Experiential Systems, Inc. Training will help ensure your staff know how to operate and maintain the elements installed. Training additionally helps staff to learn how to connect the challenge course to a purpose or desired outcome.

Training length and cost will vary based on the number and types of elements selected for installation, the number of staff in attendance and their current level of experience with challenge course facilitation. For some organizations with high staff turnover this is something you will want to budget for annually.

Insurance

Depending on your type of organization and the type and amount of existing insurance, additional coverage may be necessary for you to operate your course and protect it from unforeseen damage or vandalism. Types of insurance to have include General Liability and Workers Compensation as a minimum.

Staffing

Depending on your organization you may need to hire additional staff to operate and manage your new challenge course. The staffing responsibilities may include: scheduling the course, course facilitators, and a challenge course manager.

Marketing

A new challenge course isn’t very exciting or profitable if no one is using it. Knowing who your target audience is and developing a marketing plan is essential for a challenge course program to be successful. A good marketing plan will include: Printed materials, web design, attendance at local meetings and conferences, and mailings to schools, camps, community groups, etc.

Annual Inspection

Most insurance providers require that each challenge course facility/element receive an annual inspection by a qualified professional to ensure structural integrity of all activities. This is additionally, the current industry standard as published by ACCT, the American Camping Association (ACA), The Association for Experiential Education (AEE) and other associations.

Adding Activities as Your Program Matures

Once you become more comfortable with your activities you might want to add activities, thus keeping your program evolving, growing and attractive to return clients.
Questions to Ask Before Building a Challenge Course

1. What populations do I intend my challenge course to serve?
2. What are their ages?
3. What physical attributes do my clients have?
4. Do I anticipate return visits to my challenge course by groups?
5. Do you intend to engage in long term relationships with clients or offer one time stand-alone events?
6. How will I reach my target audience?
7. What type of return on investment do I want to offer my clients?
8. Do you have a brand identity or color scheme that needs to be integrated into the challenge course design?
9. What type of space is available for your new challenge course (indoor, outdoor, square footage, zoning restrictions, etc.).
10. Who will I designate to supervise the challenge course program?
11. Who will I designate to operate the challenge course program?
12. Does any of my staff have experience with challenge course programs?
13. What time availability does my staff have for receiving training on how to operate the challenge course?
14. How many participants do you intend to work with at a time?
15. Will multiple client groups need to use your challenge course at the same time?
16. Do I have the necessary insurance coverage for a challenge course?
17. Are my proposed activity sites conducive to challenge course programming (relatively free from pedestrian and vehicular traffic, a pleasing setting, restroom facilities, facilities for meals, etc.)?
18. Who owns or regulates the property I am considering?
19. How can I protect my proposed challenge course area from trespass and vandalism?
20. What are my funding resources?
21. Does my chosen challenge course builder/trainer/inspector carry liability and workers compensation insurance?
22. Does my chosen challenge course builder / trainer have experience building the type of challenge course I desire.
23. Can my chosen challenge course builder / trainer provide references for their work?

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CHALLENGE COURSE ELEMENTS

The Web
The Web (or spiders web) challenges participants to carefully move their team from one side of the giant web to the other side without touching the web itself. Consequences are applied when participants accidentally cross the line, or overstep their boundaries while trying to be successful.

Zig Zag Crossing
This group event challenges participants to carefully move their team across the open area using only each other, the five platforms and the three planks provided. Consequences are applied when participants or a plank accidentally touch the ground while trying to be successful.

Group Wall
This group event challenges participants to carefully move their team up and over to the other side of the vertical wall. Once a person has gone over the wall they are no longer able to help lift - thus leaving the last person to get up and over the wall with only the help of the last two people to make it to the platform.
**The Nitro Crossing**

During the nitro Crossing event participants must pass over an imaginary canyon transporting everyone safely using only a swinging rope and each other. Variations on this activity provide several different scenarios and potential outcomes. Group members will have a blast solving this highly energizing problem together.

![Nitro Crossing](image)

**The Whale Watch**

This Whale Watch event challenges participants to carefully maintain balance as their team shifts responsibilities (moves) from one side of the giant teeter totter to the other side. If either end of the platform touches the ground, the group must revisit the plan and try again. Multiple variations exist for this element, each providing different set of problems, solutions and strategies for success.

![Whale Watch](image)

**The T.P. Shuffle**

This T.P. Shuffle event challenges participants to trade places on the pole (switch roles in the organization) without losing their personal balance, another teammate's balance or the balance of the whole organization. A variety of variations to this activity keep it lively and full of learning potential for all groups.

![T.P. Shuffle](image)
The Adventure Walk

The adventure walk is a series of events that are typically found on a high ropes course. During this event participants must get through a series of obstacles that increase with difficulty as the event progresses. Spotters are used to help keep each participant from stepping off the element and touching the ground.

The Squeeze Box

This squeeze box event challenges participants to work together cooperatively as they try fitting all members of the team into the Squeeze Box. This task is similar to the age old game of “how many people can you fit into a telephone booth”. This activity is great for breaking down issues of personal space.
The Cable Traverse
The cable traverse is an excellent element at any stage of a program, but particularly as a final event. The participants have to balance their way along a series of cables suspended just above the ground. Only the occasional tree (or pole), and each other are available for support.

The Australian Trolley's
In using these team ski’s or trolley’s participants must work together in unison to move across an open area. One misstep and it’s back to the starting line. This activity is more difficult than it appears.

The Island Crossing
The Island Crossing event challenges participants mentally to discover away to cross from one island to the other island without touching the ground in between. Given limited resources, participants must work toward their strengths to be successful.
The Port Hole
In the Port Hole event participants must pass through the porthole on a sinking ship before the boat goes under. The large tire represents the porthole.

The Wild Woozy
The wild woozey (or trust walk) is a unique low rope activity that challenges participants to move along a set of diverging cables as far as they can, while maintaining contact with a partner. The rest of the group provides the all important safety net, by spotting. The activity appears to be very physical, but a refined technique is more important than physical ability. Identifying and practicing this technique results in a massive improvement in overall team performance.

Trust Fall
The trust fall is a powerful event that elicits team support and trust. Participants must climb onto a platform three to four feet off the ground. After discussing a few key thoughts about the strengths and blind spots they as an individual bring to the team and the support they need to be most effective they fall backwards into the arms of their teammates.
**Triangle Traverse**
The triangle traverse is a challenging group event has participants traversing around the taut cable triangle using only a long rope for support. During this journey team mates must cross paths with other individuals working on a similar goal.

![Triangle Traverse Image]

**The Meuse Crossing**
The group must move from one end of the Meuse to the other, using only the limited resources provided. Individuals and resources are not allowed to touch the ground within the Meuse.

![The Meuse Crossing Image]

**The High Beam**
This high beam event challenges participants to carefully move their team up and over the elevated beam. Once you have gone over to the other side, that is the only place you can help from.

![The High Beam Image]
Planks
This unique three dimensional puzzle will keep even the best groups challenged as they try to “put the pieces together”. The activity comes complete with 14 high quality Baltic Birch wood planks, a cordura nylon carrying case and instructions for a variety of ways to facilitate and debrief the activity.

The Bullz Eye
The bullz eye (or giants finger) event challenges participants to carefully remove a large ring off of a sleeping giants finger without touching the finger itself and waking the giant up.

The Criss Cross
Participants traversing across different diverging cables must work together to pass each other without stepping off the cables. Other group members serve as spotters to keep the team moving on the element without touching the ground.
All On Top
The All On Top (or All Aboard) event challenges teams to all get on the same page. A small platform is used to accomplish this seemingly impossible task of supporting every member of the team for a minimum of 15 seconds. Every participants feet must be off the ground and only the support of the platform and fellow group members may be used.

Swinging Beam
The Swinging Beam (or Bucking Log) event challenges participants to carefully step up and maintain balance while traversing on this swinging Beam. Variations on this activity make it a “must have” for any adventure program.

Horizontal Web
In one variation of this activity participants must travel from one side of the web to the other while staying connected. Connections cannot be broken while inside the web and the web itself cannot be touched.
**Rescue Scenario**

In this mock rescue scenario participants work to rescue and carefully transport an individual across the varied terrain. Participants must work cooperatively to maintain balance and solve various problems along their journey.

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**The Cube**

Your entire team must travel through the multidimensional cube. Each individual in your team must take a unique path through the cube from one side to the other. No two people may pass through the cube (in the cube and out of the cube) in an identical fashion.

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**The Spiders Cage**

The team must work carefully to lift and pass each participant through the openings in order to escape the Spiders Cage without touching any of the webs and waking up the spider.
**Traffic Jam Stumps**
The team must strategically move to solve this human chess problem that has the left side switch places with the right side. Participants may only move one stump at a time, move into an empty space and only travel forward.

![Traffic Jam Stumps](image)

**Channels**
This high energy activity has team members working together using plastic channels to move a tiny ball from one location to another without dropping the ball. The ball can only roll forward and may never touch the ground.

![Channels](image)

**Fragile Cargo**
Sometimes called Toxic Waste, this activity is an excellent way to challenge a groups ability to solve complex problems. To be successful teams must transport a variety of substances from one are to another without dropping or touching their cargo. Harder than it appears this activity will keep even the best groups challenged.

![Fragile Cargo](image)

**Ring Transfer**
Groups must lift a ball off of the provided stands and carefully carry them a distance over to another stand and gently set it down without “dropping the ball”.

![Ring Transfer](image)
**A-Mazement**
Get your group around this giant replica of a childhood favorite. Your group must navigate successfully through this intricate maze without dropping the ball.

**Number Cruncher**
Teams must race the clock to hit a series of numbers in sequence, Harder than it appears this is a great portable activity that every organization should have.

**Insanity**
This high energy activity is just what you need to help groups learn the benefits of teamwork over competition. In the activity team are broken into three groups. A center location contains a variety of resource. The activity is over when one group has all the resources in their department.

**Helium Stick**
This magical lightweight pole must be put on the ground in an even and balanced position. No group members fingers are allowed to release contact with the Helium Stick.

**Giant Tangram**
This extra large version of a classic mental problem, is a great activity for small and large groups. The Tangram is 4’ x 4’ and comes with 20 puzzle cards and a carrying case.

**Group Puzzle**
This lightweight heavy duty plastic puzzle is 4’ x 4’ and has 16 pieces, comes complete with 15 blindfolds, 30 ft. of webbing and a nylon carrying bag.