



Learning Scoop

The Snowball Method



The Snowball Method

- The name describes how knowledge is produced with this method; it starts with one thought that gathers new perspectives and through that grows fuller and richer. This method guides students towards producing knowledge and developing thoughts collectively. The essential thing is not who wrote what but what new perspectives are awakened in one by what was written by another.



The Snowball Method in Practice

- For this method, small groups of 4 to 6 members should be formed. In practice, the group works best if it can be in a circle. The circle makes it easier for more natural interaction.
- The instructor assigns a theme to the group. Then, each member of the group gets a paper, and they write down their first thoughts about the assigned theme. The thoughts should be expressed in a few words but they should still be clear enough so that others can understand what the person means when they read them.
- When everyone has written their thoughts on the topic, each student passes their paper to the student on the right. They then read the paper and in turn, write down their thoughts and comments. Their comments can fill in information, challenge and/or question things that were written by the previous student. The idea is to continue developing the ideas. When everyone has written their comments, the paper is again moved to the next person on the right. This is continued until everyone gets back their original paper. The instructor can also stop the exercise before the paper has gone full circle if the groups are different sizes for example or if they feel that the goal has been reached.

Where can the Snowball Method be used?

- The method can be used to start discussions, develop new ideas and to map out students' current understanding of a topic. It can also be used to assess and test plans as well as a group warm up or development exercise.
- The snowball method is not time nor place dependent, which means that it can be carried out over a longer period of time. People can go and read other people's work when it best suits their schedules. It can be used in online learning situations as well.
- Group size is not a problem either; this can be used with large groups as well, for example in a lecture. In this situation, groups of 4-6 can be formed from people sitting close to each other.

Group snowball adaption

- The snowball method can be carried out as a group as well. For example, pairs or groups of 3 can be formed within a larger group of 6 to 12 students. Together, these small groups produce the initial paper and then together, the group comments and critiques the papers they receive from other groups. Otherwise, the procedure is the same as for the individual snowball method.



Examples of Snowball exercises

- **Use: Starting a training/ course**

Exercise: What themes would you like to work on, develop and analyze during the course?

- **Use: Warm up/group development**

Exercise: What kind of activity will promote your own learning and others' learning in this group (used to create the rules to follow during the course)?

What kind of support and help are you willing to offer other people in the group?

What kind of support and help do you want to receive from other members of the group?

Examples of Snowball exercises

- **Use: Mapping current understanding**

Exercise: What do you remember about X?

How should situation X be resolved?

What arguments do the proponents and opponents of X have?

- **Use: Encouraging/provoking discussion**

Exercise: What do you think about claim X?

- **Use: Mapping opinions**

Exercise: What does X represent to you (this question can be connected to values, etc.)?

Why is it important to you to...(do something)?

Examples of Snowball exercises

- **Use: Developing a plan**

Exercise: How can X be developed?

- **Use: Developing ideas**

Exercise: How do you think X should be carried out?

What thoughts do you have about X?

Write down what you think are the 3 best ideas or solutions to the situation/problem.

- **Use: Assessment**

Exercise: How would you assess your group's performance?

What feedback would you give to the instructor?

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With best wishes,
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