

# The Trading Game

## Activity for ages 14 +

**Aim:** To show how trade can benefit or hinder the economic development of different countries and to help explain to students the reasons for the perpetuation and widening of the differences in wealth between countries.

**Introduction:**

- ✓ A simulation game best played with a group of 15-30 people.
- ✓ Working in groups representing different countries, students make shapes which they take to the banker for credit.
- ✓ The objective is to make as much money as possible.
- ✓ The game leader (you) can change the terms of the game at any time.
- ✓ This game will take approx. 60-90 minutes including the discussion.

**Materials:**

- ✓ A large room with 4-7 tables.
- ✓ 30 sheets of white, A4 paper.
- ✓ 6 A4 sized envelopes
- ✓ 20 home-made or monopoly \$100 notes
- ✓ 2 sheets of coloured stickers
- ✓ 4 pairs of scissors
- ✓ 4 rulers
- ✓ 2 compasses
- ✓ 2 set-squares
- ✓ 2 protractors
- ✓ 13 lead pencils
- ✓ 1 large sheet of paper to write the rules of the game and to display the Diagram of Shapes (see last page).



**Contents of A4 envelopes:**

- ✓ Place the following items in the different envelopes as set out in the table below.

Group A	Group B	Group C	Banker
Country name card	Country name card	Country name card	1 protractor
2 pairs of scissors	10 sheets of A4 paper	4 sheets of A4 paper	1 set-square
2 rulers	1 sheet of coloured stickers	2 \$100 notes	1 pencil
1 compass	2 \$100 notes	2 lead pencils	1 ruler
1 set-square			Paper to keep score
1 protractor			
1 sheet of A4 paper			
6 \$100 notes			
4 lead pencils			

- ✓ Group A countries can include:  Australia,  USA,  UK and  Japan.
- ✓ Group B countries can include:  Brazil,  China,  India and  Indonesia.
- ✓ Group C countries can include:  Haiti,  Afghanistan,  Zimbabwe and  Somalia.



**Instructions:**

- 1) There will be three types of groups, Group A, B and C – each group represents a different country.
- 2) You will be the game leader.
- 3) Assign one student as the banker, who will not be in any of the groups but will tend to the bank instead.
- 4) Divide the class into 6 groups. If the class size is too small then 3 groups will do. Make sure Groups B and C have fewer members than Group A.
- 5) Hand each group an A4 envelope (don't tell them they are all different) and then read out the objectives of the game:

“Each group represents a country. Your group's aim is to make as much money as possible with the materials provided. No other materials can be used. In order to earn money you must manufacture paper shapes (as shown on the Diagram of Shapes) and take them in batches of five similar shapes to the banker for checking and crediting to your account. You can make as many shapes as you like and the more you make, the richer you become.”

- 6) Read out the rules of the game:
  1. The shapes must be drawn exactly as shown in the Diagram of Shapes, and MUST be cut out with scissors.
  2. You must only use materials that have been handed out in the envelopes.
  3. There can be no physical force used on anyone in this game.
  4. The game leader represents the UN and can intervene in any dispute.
- 7) Start the game by telling the groups to open their envelopes and begin making shapes.
- 8) They are to take these shapes, in batches of five, to the banker for checking and crediting to their account. The banker keeps a record of each group's earnings.



### Creating new trading situations:

To reflect the changes that occur in the real world market, you may want to introduce one or several of the following scenarios:

- ✓ Change market values: Change the monetary value of some of the shapes. For example, if the circles drop in value, the compasses will no longer be as valuable. Make sure the banker is aware of any changes.
- ✓ Introduce additional raw materials: Announce that a new deposit of raw-materials has been discovered in the world and then hand additional sheets of paper to one of the groups. Alternatively, you can hand coloured paper to one of the groups and let everyone know shapes made from this paper are worth either less or more than others.
- ✓ Use of the stickers: Group B has possession of coloured stickers which they have not been told anything about. Let only Group A know that any shape produced with a sticker on it will be worth four times its original value. Let the banker know of this change. See how Group A behaves and how Group B reacts.
- ✓ The granting of aid: Give certain groups the use of an extra pair of scissors (or ruler, pencil, compass etc) for a short time on certain conditions. For example, they may have to give a certain percentage of the shapes they produce with the scissors to the donor group.
- ✓ Start a strike: As the game leader, halt production of all shapes by removing the scissors from the game for a few minutes.

### How the game unfolds:

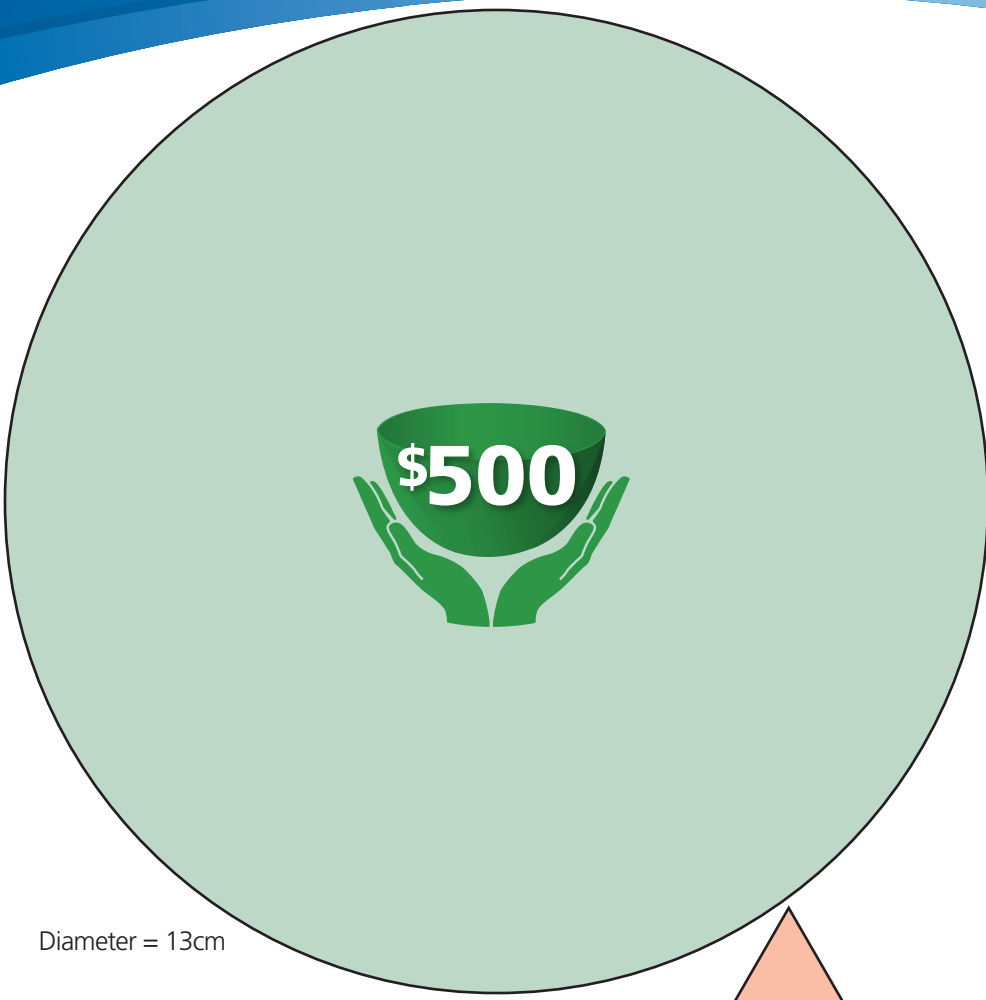
- ✓ Students will soon realise they don't have the same envelopes and that some groups cannot make shapes at all. You will be asked questions such as "Why haven't we got scissors?" etc. Do not answer their questions, simply refer to the rules or remain silent.
- ✓ Students should start trading materials on their own – do not suggest this idea to them.
- ✓ Note how students interact, the trading partnerships that develop, theft of materials (only intervene if you are asked). Write down interesting comments and behaviour.

### Debriefing:

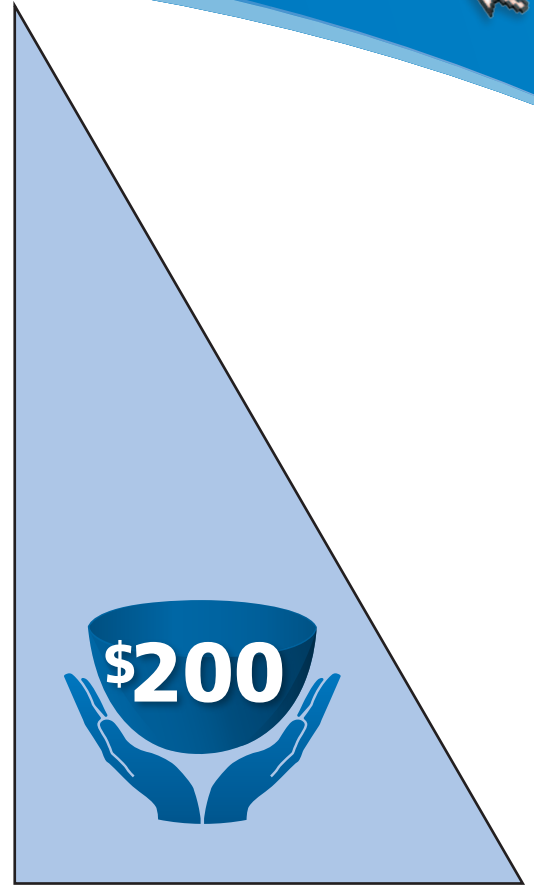
- ✓ The students will have noticed that the game was intrinsically unfair. Ask them what was unfair about it.
- ✓ Ask them to describe any incidents during the game when the advantage/disadvantage or being a rich/poor country was evident. Mention any alliances formed and deals negotiated and ask the class to discuss whether they were fair.
- ✓ Now look to the real world: explain that this game reflects the inequities in trading between countries and how difficult it can be to get a balance between countries with raw materials and countries with the ability to buy and process those materials.
- ✓ Ask them how they felt about being a poor or rich country. Who felt angry, helpless or despondent?
- ✓ Did the rich countries share their wealth? Ask them why/why not? How did the poorer countries feel about this? Is it fair that 80% of the world's resources are owned by 20% of the world's population?
- ✓ Ask students to learn more about 'Fair Trade'. What is it and how can this movement make life better for producers in developing economies?

Adapted from It's Not Fair, Christian Aid UK (1993).





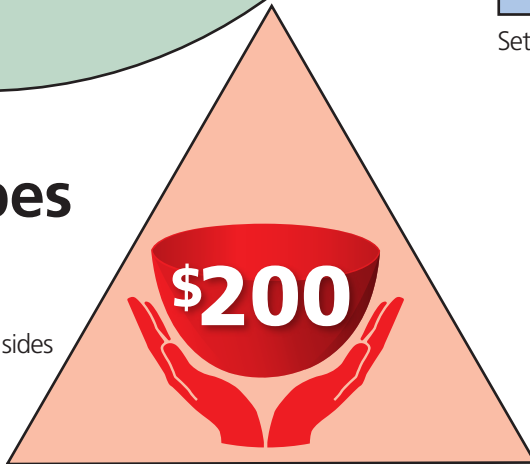
Diameter = 13cm



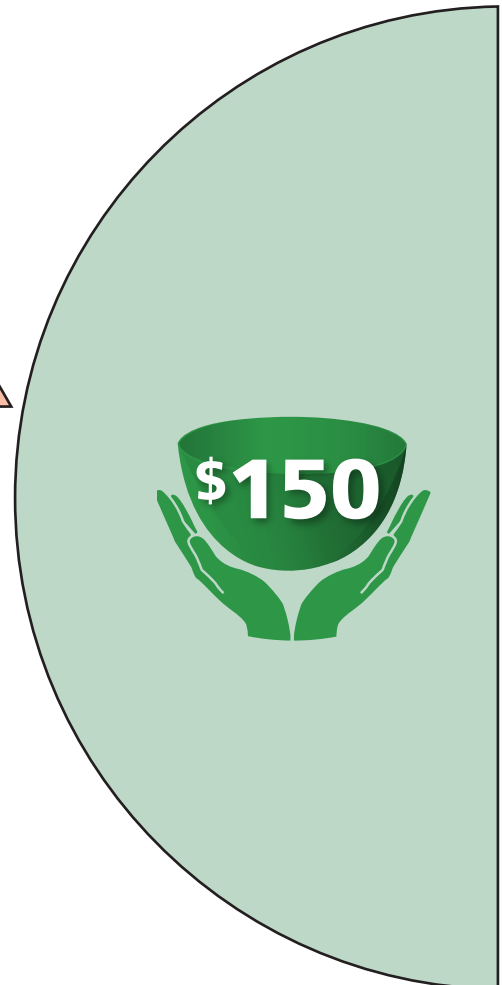
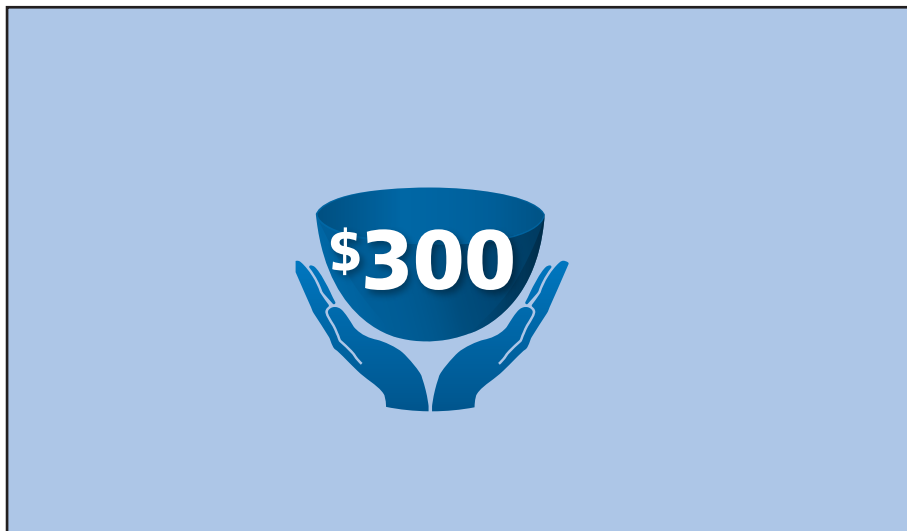
Set square size

## Diagram of Shapes

Triangle with 7cm sides



Rectangle with sides 7cm x 12 cm



Protractor shape and size

