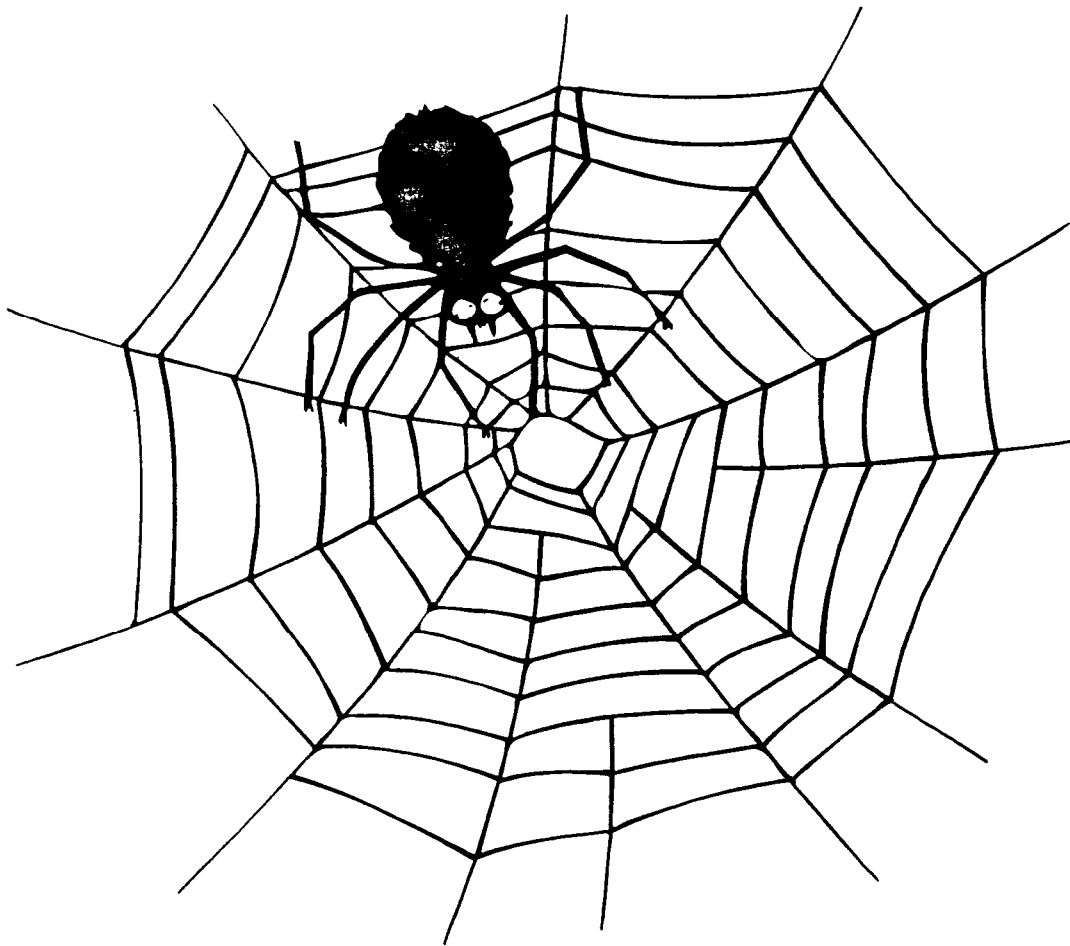


Girl Scouts of the Chesapeake Bay  
501 South College Avenue  
Newark, DE 19713

## Challenge Course Facilitators Guide



## **Objectives of Challenge Programs**

The Challenge Course experience can meet many objectives of groups:

- => To have fun
- => To develop trust
- => To learn how to cooperate and get along better
- => To learn how to communicate
- => To get to know each other better

There are also many individual goals that can be achieved through the Challenge Course experience:

- => To build leadership skills
- => To challenge oneself
- => To improve critical thinking skills
- => To learn better problem-solving techniques
- => To improve interpersonal skills - speaking, listening, observing
- => To take appropriate risks.

## **Goal Setting and the Full Value Contract**

A Full Value Contract is a verbal agreement that all participants make before the adventure experience. This agreement outlines how members of the group will deal with each other. The agreement is a good place to outline group and individual expectations. During the adventure experience, the group will be in situations that may become frustrating, intimidating or stressful. In times like these, people may forget how to treat others. Having the Full Value Contract to remind people is a concrete reminder in these situations.

The Full Value Contract is flexible enough to be used with all groups. There are three commitments that are usually made as part of a FV Contract:

1. The agreement to work together as a group and to work toward individual and group goals.
2. The agreement to adhere to certain safety and group behavior guidelines.
3. The agreement to give and receive feedback, both positive and negative, and to work towards changing behavior when it is appropriate.

## **Briefing**

The briefing should relate to the activity that you are about to begin. During the briefing period, there are two types of information that is shared.

1. Instructions that the leader gives the group, much of which is non-negotiable safety information.
2. Shared information where there is give and take, goal setting, clarification and framing.

The shared information draws on response from the participants. It's here where participants can voice doubts, talk about goals and contracts, try to relate what was learned in previous initiative to the present task. Briefing sessions should be in response to the needs of the group. You may need lots or little time.

## MOHAWK WALK/BLIND BEAM

### Storyline:

1. You're the flying Zambini family! World famous tight wire walkers! The show's almost over and your entire family needs to walk all the way out above center ring (last leg of Mohawk), stand together, and take a bow.

### Safety:

1. Check boards to make sure they're safe.
2. Since the entire group is supposed to participate (to be on the board), spotting is difficult. Facilitators and individuals not participating on this element should spot those people who appear to be at most risk (i.e., those who can fall furthest).
3. If participants are about to lose balance, stress stepping off the board and assisting others.
4. **Do not allow anyone to stand on the boards outside edges of the blocks.** The other end of the board will fly into the air and hurt someone.

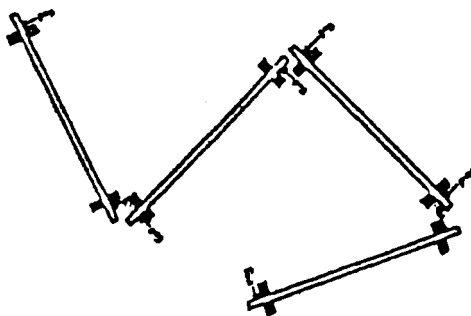
**Facilitator position:** Stay near those in the group whom you have determined to have poor balance and coordination. Try to stay near handicapped individuals, especially those who need assistance and aren't getting any.

### Processing:

Common issues: planning, communication, use of resources, balance, and mutual support, dealing with frustration.

Things to look for during debriefing:

- How did you decide who would go first and last?
- Was there a leader?
- Did you work together? How?
- What was frustrating about this element?



## ANTS ON A LOG/PAZOO

### Storyline:

Welcome to the magic transporter beam! In order for the beam to be able to transport you all to the land of Pazoo, where you will all be exalted leaders, you need to get on the beam for the transporter beam and await it's further instructions. (Everyone should get on the beam.) I will now act as a translator between the transporter beam and your group. (Put your ear up to a tree and pretend you are listening.) The magical transporter beam has instructed me to tell you that in order to be transported to the magical land of Pazoo, you must (choose one depending on the skill of your group):

- Put yourself in order of height, shortest on one side, tallest at the other end.
- Line up by age (either oldest to youngest or by birthday)
- Re-arrange yourself - have everyone switch sides. The person on the end should end up on the other end.
- Use your imagination for other ideas

If the group is getting done quickly, ask them to stop and you say, "The magical transporter beam has just informed me that it has changed its mind. Now, to be transported you should...." Remember, only use this when the group is doing well to avoid frustration.

### Safety:

1. Be sure the surrounding area is clear of debris.
2. Everyone will be on the board at the same time. Facilitators and individuals not participating on this element should spot those people who appear to be at most risk.
3. Only one person is permitted to move at a time.
4. Participants can also be challenged to line up according to height, age, the number of years in Girl Scouting, etc. Be creative.

**Facilitator position:** Stay near those people who have the least balance, those who look unsteady, or those who are moving.

### Processing:

Common issues: balance, communication, trust, support, use of resources.

Things to look for during debriefing:

- How did it feel to be dependent on another person?
- Did you act as a team?
- What specific skills did it take to be successful?
- How would you do it next time?
- How would you teach someone else?



## ACID RIVER/THE MUSE

### Storylines:

1. Your group has to get across the highly polluted toxic/acid/lava river with three boards to help you. There are also protruding rocks out there to help you. Neither you nor the boards can touch the acid, so watch out!
2. In search of rare pink porpoise eggs, your expedition team must safely cross the bogs of lost swamps. Surprisingly, you have discovered that the boggy water of the swamp is still inhabited by saber-toothed beavers, sneaker snapping turtles, and the leather-like Great White Bog-Water Shark. Careful study by your team seems to indicate that their continued existence is directly dependent upon eating whatever "fast food" is available in the swamp with amazing regularity. Your precise calculations suggest that you have only \_\_\_ minutes to safely cross the swamp before the feeding frenzy will begin again. (Time allowed is a function of group size and perceived prowess. Twenty minutes for a group of 10 is average.)

### Safety:

1. Make sure that blocks are solidly on the ground, that they are the required distance apart (i.e., that the element is "do-able"). Check boards to make sure they aren't cracked, don't have splinters, etc.
2. Boards cannot be thrown or allowed to fall. No jumping allowed from block to block, or board-to-board. No one is to be carried across. If a person is handicapped in the course of the initiative, (blindfolded, etc.), facilitator and participants must take extra care to spot and protect that person.
3. Fingers and feet should be clear of boards during placement.
4. Facilitator should spot the board when it is being passed to ensure that participants do not accidentally hit each other.

**Facilitator position:** Step into river; be especially active when boards are passed high up into the air in order to spot boards. Also step in to spot handicapped participants who seem unsteady or who aren't being cared for by the group.

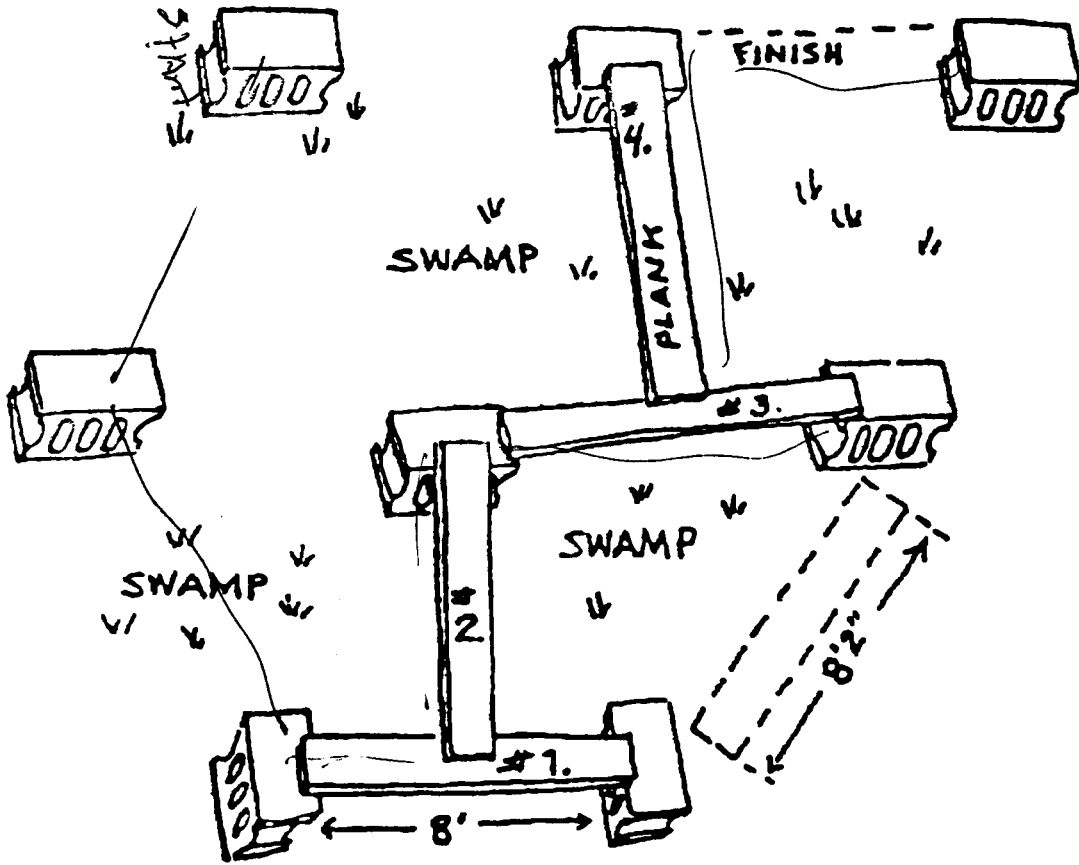
### Processing:

Common issues: problem solving, leadership/vision, communication, leverage, planning

Things to look at during debriefing:

- How did they decide on a plan? How was leadership chosen?
- Was the person with vision the best choice as leader?
- How well was vision/plan communicated?

# Acid River / The Muse



## SPIDER'S WEB

### Storylines:

1. You're trapped in a cave and there's only one way out! Unfortunately, a giant prehistoric spider has blocked the passage with its web! You know that if you touch any part of the spider web, the spider will come running ready to devour you. Due to the sensitivity of the web, you'll only be able to get one person through any one hole before it's no longer useful.
2. You're behind enemy lines in World War I, and the only way to freedom is through a barbed-wire fence – be careful not to touch any part of it, or to draw too much attention to any one spot along the fence. Therefore, you'd better only send one person through each hole lest the sentry becomes suspicious.

### Safety:

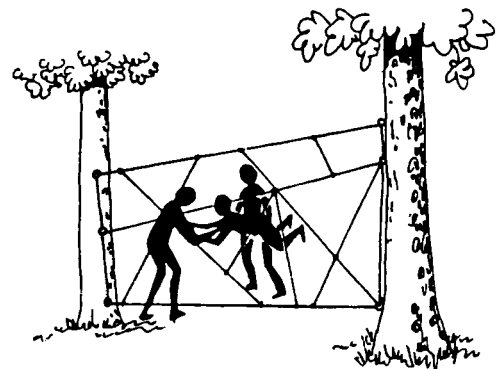
1. Participants cannot go under or over the web.
2. Facilitator may assist first and even second person through hole. Participants are not allowed to dive through holes. No one is allowed over the web (too high). Caution a group to spot individual at all times, even if they aren't touching that person. Pass participant through the web head first and face up so that efficient spotting of head is possible.
3. Once through the web, participants can come back to help spot (not assist) those who have not yet gone through the web.

### Processing:

Common issues: planning, plan execution, communications, resources allocation, leadership, roles, community, team caring, individual control. Discuss appropriate touching, trust, body issues and setting boundaries.

Things to look for during debriefing:

- How were decisions made? How was leadership decided?
- What is role of person going through hole?
- How was frustration handled?
- Were all ideas listened to?
- What was needed from the group?
- Did anyone ask for something specific from the group?
- What attitudes or behaviors made it difficult to trust others?
- What made it difficult (or easy) to allow others to lift you?



## TROLLEYS

**Equipment:** Set of trolleys

### Storylines:

1. Your group needs to cross a flowing river of lava in order to get to the shoreline where a boat awaits to take you off the volcanic island! Fortunately, you have these specially treated lava-proof skis to ride on. Unfortunately, the ropes are lava proof and neither are your feet so watch out!
2. You've crash-landed in the Himalayas and your only way to civilization lies across snow drifts over twelve feet deep. Your special snowshoes will help you, but work together and watch out for the dreaded snow elves. They'll steal you ropes and you feet if you touch the snow. (A fun variation is having the group come upon the Kingdom of the Snow Elves. If they make any noise, the elves will hear the group and get them! Another great handicap if a participant steps on the ground is to make that person "disoriented" and turn them around backwards!)

### Safety:

1. Check beams to make sure they're not too badly warped. Check ropes and tie off or braid loose ends.
2. If participants start to fall off, they should let go of ropes and step off trolleys to avoid the domino effect. Pushing/horsing around is not allowed. If individuals are blindfolded, extra attention must be taken with those people (spotting if needed).
3. For adult groups, make sure ropes are long enough, at least four feet, to avoid backaches.
4. Tying ropes to feet is not allowed.

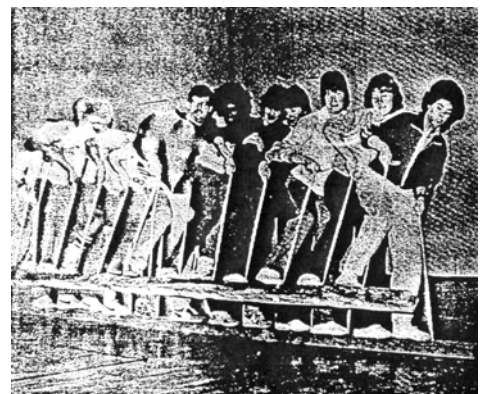
**Facilitator position:** Stand toward the front of line to try and catch domino effect should it happen.

### Processing:

Common issues: communication, leadership, time pressure, acceptance of change, continuous improvement, perceptions of handicaps, focus on blame or solution.

Things to look for during debriefing:

- Was there a bias towards action or planning?
- How was plan decided?
- What is response to change?
- Where is focus when it does not work?
- How is frustration handled?
- How are handicapped treated?  
How did it feel to be handicapped?
- Does group stop to make improvements in system?
- How is leadership chosen?



## ALL ABOARD

### Storylines:

1. Your group is floating along in a dinghy that springs a leak and begins to sink. Soon you come to a "rock standing out in the middle of an ocean of doubt." Everyone needs to get on it. Just in time, too, because there will be a search plane flying overhead soon and you will need to wave and sing loudly one verse of the group's favorite song for the plane to find you. (The waters could also be filled with sharks ready to attack soon.)
2. You are a landing party from the starship Enterprise. The planet you're on is unstable and ready to blow. As always, something is wrong with the transporter and only one transporter pad is working. You need to pile onto one spot long enough to shout "BEAM US UP SCOTTY!" three times and get beamed up.

### Safety:

1. Check platform to make sure it is stable and not cracked. Check surrounding area for things that would hurt if a person landed on them (branches, debris, and rocks).
2. All participants must have at least one foot on a platform (most important rule), and no feet on the ground. No stacking of participants. If a participant starts to fall off, he/she must step off and spot and not drag the rest of the group down.
3. Other participants can be asked to help spot.

**Facilitator position:** Facilitator must continuously circle element and spot.

### Processing:

Common issues: fun, creativity, effective use of all resources, buy in to common goal/plan, communication, trust, and comfort with physical contact.

Things to look for during debriefing:

- How did they decide on a plan? (first suggested, vote, consensus, etc.)
- How concerned were they for each other's well being? (physical, emotional)
- Did they have fun?



## TT LOG (Teeter Totter Log)

This initiative problem is a variation of the teeter totter used on playgrounds. The object is to balance your small group (10 to 12) on the top of the TT Log for ten seconds. If the log touches the ground at either end at any time, the group must start again (everyone off of the log). Participants are allowed to climb on the log only at the long end (fulcrum to end) and then spread themselves along the log while trying to maintain balance. SPOTTERS MUST BE USED.

### Variations:

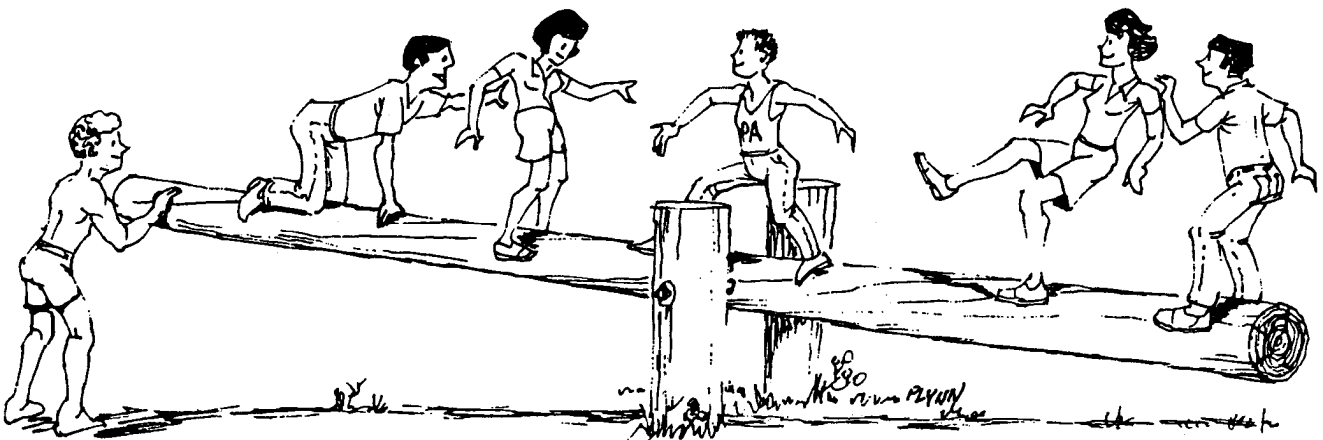
1. An easier variation would be to start over only if the log touches the ground at the far end.
2. Another variation would be to have the participants (one at a time) walk from the long end to the other end without falling off. SPOTTERS MUST BE USED!

### Processing:

Common issues: fun, creativity, effective use of all resources, buy in to common goal/plan, communication, trust, and comfort with physical contact

Things to look for during debriefing:

- How did they decide on a plan? (first suggested, vote, consensus, etc.)
- How concerned were they for each other's well being (physical, emotional)?
- Did they have fun?



## **PLAYPEN**

This initiative is a useful group problem that indicates the value of working together.

### **Storyline:**

Your group is out for a walk on the beach. You round a corner on your hike and decide it is time to return home. As you turn around you notice that you have wandered onto a sandbar. You also notice that the tide has changed and the water is rapidly rising. Your only available safe place is to get your group on the pilings that are sticking out of the quickly rising water and wait for the tide to change.

### **Directions:**

Ask the group to stand in a circle behind the stumps of the playpen. On the facilitator's signal (GO works well), the participants are to mount the stumps (one per stump) and join hands. The group is timed from the signal to hand joining. Have the group try again to see if they can better their initial time. With a bit of thought and cooperation their time should decrease for their 3rd and 4th tries.

### **Safety:**

1. Check stumps to make sure they are stable and not wobbly. Check surrounding area for things that would hurt if a person landed on them (branches, debris, and rocks).
2. Other participants can be asked to help spot.
3. Do not allow participants to attempt to walk around the playpen.

### **Processing:**

Common issues: fun, creativity, effective use of all resources, buy in to common goal/plan, communication, trust, and comfort with physical contact. Emphasis is on GROUP efficiency in contrast to individual stumbling.

Things to look for during debriefing:

- How did they decide on a plan? (first suggested, vote, consensus, etc.)
- How concerned were they for each other's well being (physical, emotional)?
- Did they have fun?

# Playpen



## THE MAZE

**Objective:** For a participant to make their way out of the maze without using their sight.

**Storyline:** You and your group are lost in the woods. A fire begins somewhere in the forest. Thick smoke is traveling through the woods very quickly. Your only chance to get out of the woods is to follow the maze of the trees, feeling to find your way out. Due to the thick smoke, your eyes keep tearing and you must keep them closed (or blindfolded). Follow the rope to get to the end. Watch out for dead ends!

**Rules:** Each person must maintain contact with the rope at all times. Maneuvering under a rope is not allowed. Each participant must move slowly and not lead with their head. As each participant reaches the end, the facilitator taps each on the shoulder, tells them to remove their blindfold or open their eyes, and watch QUIETLY until all have exited the maze.

**Common issues:** TRUST. The participants trust that the facilitator will not make fun of them. The facilitator must also trust that the participants will not peek or will keep their eyes closed.



## **NITRO CROSSING/HERE TO THERE**

### **Objective:**

To transport a group and a container (#10 can) 7/8 full of "nitro" (water) across an open area using a swing rope.

### **Rules:**

Participants must swing over a "trip wire" at the beginning and end of an open area without knocking either obstacle off its support. If a trip wire is knocked off, the entire group must go back and start again.

No knots may be tied in the swing rope; however, a large knot may be tied at the bottom of the rope if help is needed for less adept participants.

The "nitro" must be transported in such a way that NO water is spilled. If any spillage takes place (one drop), the entire group must start over. The container must be topped off at the 7/8 full mark after each spilling.

The swing rope must be obtained initially without stepping in the open area between the two trip wires.

The participants are allowed to use only themselves and their clothing to gain the swing rope.

Participants are not allowed to touch the ground while swinging between trip wires and must attempt the crossing again if they do so.

### **Variations:**

**Here to There:** Have the participants swing from one landing platform to the other. When ALL swingers reach the landing platform they must ALL remain on the landing platform for a 5 minute time span.

**Disc Jockeys:** Have discs in the area (bicycle tires, hula hoops). Each participant is to swing to and land on one of the discs and remain until each participant eventually lands on one of the discs. Only one participant may occupy a disc.