

# Teamwork: Cup Stack Take 2



Last year the cup stack was one of my FAVORITE team building activities ([see post here](#)). So, naturally, I wanted to give it another shot! The Cup Stack is a fun, yet challenging activity that promotes team work. The supplies are basic: cups, string, rubber bands. I go ahead and tie the string to the rubber bands so it is ready to go. I make a few for groups of 4 and a few for groups of 5, this way no matter what the numbers are in the classroom I can make it work.

I start by asking students what teamwork is. What does it look like? sound like? feel like? We brainstorm a list of ideas that I hang in the classroom for students to refer to. Each class comes up with a variety of ideas, but they all center around the same theme.

## Team Work

- helping each other
- working together
- everyone has a part
- cooperating
- same goal
- good sportsmanship
- everyone is a leader
- listen to others
- be flexible → try new ideas

Then I introduce their challenge. I start off by admitting that this will be a frustrating activity. We discuss ways to handle our stress and feelings that arise when others make a mistake or don't do what we want them to do. I model that they will each be given 6 cups and a rubberband with strings attached to it. Their job is to stack the cups into a design by only holding onto their individual string.

I demonstrate that when everyone pulls on their string the rubberband opens wider, and vice versa. I also show them the challenges of picking up a cup that has tipped on its side or fallen on the floor. No matter what happens, they must follow the one rule: **YOU CAN ONLY TOUCH YOUR STRING**. No touching the rubber band, no touching the cup, and no touching other group member's strings. I reinforce how communication is so important in order to reach the goal. Then I set them off. Here are some videos and pics.





After about 10-15 minutes, we pause and reflect on our experiences. I ask them to rate their group on how well they worked together using the ideas we wrote at the beginning of the lesson. I ask them what went well for their group. I also ask them what didn't go well for their group. We talk about different strategies and ways we can handle ourselves when things don't go the way we want them to. Throughout the activity I walk around and facilitate positive communication, so I usually have a few examples to help springboard the discussion.