

Public Goods Game

The public goods game is a common economic experiment that explores cooperation and the provision of public goods within a group. Here are the instructions for conducting the paper and pencil version of the public goods game:

Materials needed:

Pencil and paper for each participant.

Envelopes for each round of the game.

Play money or real money for the initial donation (optional).

Introduction:

Explain to the participants that they are taking part in an economic experiment and stress that their decisions will be confidential.

Randomly form pairs or groups:

Depending on the size of the study, randomly pair participants or form groups. Each group should consist of at least three participants.

Initial equipment:

Provide each participant with an initial financial contribution (real or play money).

Decision-making:

Explain the rules of the game: participants can decide whether to keep their money (selfish strategy) or put some of it into a group fund (cooperative strategy).

Emphasise that the total amount contributed by all group members is multiplied by a coefficient (e.g. 1.5) and then divided equally among all participants, regardless of their individual contributions.

Recording decisions:

Give each participant a sheet of paper. Ask them to write down the amount (if they decide to contribute to the group fund).

Remind them that their decisions are confidential.

Collecting decisions:

Collect written decisions from each participant without revealing the amounts to the group.

Calculating the group fund return:

Summarize the total contributions of all participants. Multiply this total by a predetermined factor (e.g., 1.5) to determine the group fund.

Distribution of the group fund:

Divide the group fund equally among all participants, regardless of their individual contributions.

Evaluation:

After each round, conduct a debriefing to discuss the decisions made and the results.

Encourage participants to reflect on the balance between self-interest and cooperation.

Multiple rounds (optional):

Conduct multiple rounds of the public goods game to observe how contributions evolve over time.

Participants can discuss strategies and adjust their decisions in subsequent rounds.

Data collection (optional):

Collect data on individual contributions, group pool size, and participant responses for analysis.

Ethical aspects:

Remind participants that their decisions are part of the experiment and there are no right or wrong answers.

Emphasize the importance of maintaining confidentiality and not discussing individual decisions outside the experiment.

Modify these instructions based on the specific goals of the experiment and the characteristics of the participants.