



PUZZLES

Custom puzzles can be playful conversation starters. Put the pieces together to reveal a question, image, or idea that gets the discussion flowing.

Where and When to use It: Puzzles can be used in multiple settings – staff meetings, outreach events, classrooms – to introduce a concept, explore a new idea, give an instruction, or gather feedback. Instead of asking participants to respond to a message on a whiteboard, have them out

MATERIALS

- Paper (8.5 x 11 inches or larger) – Printer paper, construction paper, drawing paper
- Cardstock • Markers • Pencil • Glue • Scissors • Envelopes, paper clips, or small bags to hold puzzle pieces
- Optional: Computer and printer to create puzzle design

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Decide what message you want displayed on each puzzle and how many puzzles you would like. For example, one completed puzzle might display, “What is one transportation safety concern you have in your community?” Another puzzle might display, “Brainstorm five ways to improve park access for disabled individuals.”
2. Write each message on a separate piece of paper. Make sure you write in large, neat letters so the message is easy to read. Use colorful patterned paper or add little designs and drawings to decorate your paper. This will make the puzzle design more interesting and fun to put together.
3. Glue each piece of paper onto a piece of cardstock. This will make the puzzle more durable.
4. Turn the cardstock over. On the blank side, use a pencil to lightly draw the individual puzzle pieces. Make sure you draw pieces large enough for people to assemble easily. It’s okay to make a puzzle that is challenging, just not impossible!
5. Cut out the individual puzzle pieces and place them in an envelope or baggie. Repeat this process for each puzzle.
6. At your meeting or event, give participants a puzzle to put together. They can work individually, in pairs, or in small groups. Tell them that their puzzles will reveal a message to respond to.

7. Once each person or group completes their puzzle, have them respond to the message. In a staff meeting, you might have people share their responses in pairs or small groups. At a community event, people might write their responses on a piece of butcher paper or share ideas with the staff member tabling.

Tips: Not all puzzles have to reveal messages.

Try creating puzzles by cutting up images of your neighborhood (historical photos are great for this!). Once participants complete their puzzle, ask them to respond to the image in front of them. Here are a few questions to ask using the Visual Thinking Strategies method:

- a. *What’s going on in this picture?*
- b. *What do you see that makes you say that?*
- c. *What more can you find?*

Tip: Check out the Visual Thinking Strategies website for tips and resources on using visual art to spark meaningful conversations.

NEXT STEPS

- While putting together a puzzle is fun, the conversations they inspire will be key. After the puzzles have been assembled and ideas are shared, decide how you will turn ideas and feedback into action. Keep a record of responses to reference during future meetings or planning sessions. Save puzzle pieces to reuse with different groups.

Safe Routes Partnership leads creative community engagement activities to support Vision Zero initiatives in Washington, D.C. All activities can be adapted for different audiences and purposes. Have you tried one out in your community? Let us know!

www.saferoutespartnership.org | facebook.com/SafeRoutesPartnership | [Twitter @SafeRoutesNow](https://twitter.com/SafeRoutesNow)