

# TOOL: “YES, AND...” VS “YEAH, BUT...”

## Preparation

- Flip chart or white board
- Markers

**Time required:** 20 minutes

## Introduction

Successful organizations nurture effective communication – inside and outside.

One of the most important thing to remember when communicating is to encourage and maintain collaborative communication.

The process of communication is fascinating because there are so many factors that can affect an individual’s perspective in communication.

We know individual perspectives are influenced by body language, tone of voice and the words that are chosen. Some words have been found to do more damage than good and one example of that is the basic and simple word “but”.

## Objective

This exercise will help participants experience the powerful effect of communicating with a “yes, and.... philosophy.

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# FACILITATION

1. **Explain** that you want them to participate in an interactive, experiential exercise that will demonstrate the power a simple three letter word has in communication.
2. **Divide** the large group into teams of two.
3. **Direct** each team to choose a topic of conversation (work related). They will be having an impromptu conversation about it with each other.
4. **Explain** that they will engage in a conversation/discussion around the topic for 1 ½ minutes when you say “go”.
5. **Instruct** each group to designate one individual to be the conversation starter.
6. **Explain** that the only rule they need to follow during the conversation is this: Once the conversation has been started, each person has to begin their response/contribution to the conversation with the words “Yeah, but ...”
7. **Say**, “go” and after 1.5 minutes say, “stop”.
8. **Explain** that each team will repeat this process with the same conversation topic. Ask the same person to start the conversation in the same way that they started the last one. This time, rather than beginning each response with the words Yeah, but...,” each person has to begin their response with the words “Yes, and ...”
9. **Say**, “go” and after 1.5 minutes say, “stop”.
10. **Ask** participants to compare and contrast the two conversation experiences and share their observations.
11. **Write** key points shared on the flipchart/white board  
  
Expect responses such as:
  - Yeah, but conversations were problem focused and defensive
  - Yes, and conversations were solution focused and collaborative
12. **Summarize** by explaining that communication is about building bridges rather than walls. By saying “Yeah, but...” you stop listening to what others are saying and are only thinking about what you are going to say next. “Yeah, but...” blocks the conversation from moving forward in a positive and productive manner.

By saying “Yes, and...” you first listen to what others are saying to you and then respond from a position of collaboration, trust, and support. “Yes, and...” opens and encourages the conversation to move forward in a positive and productive manner.

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# APPLICATION AND ACTION

## Application Questions

What did personally experience and observe in each of the conversations?

Which conversation was easier? Why?

How can we support a culture of “yes, and...” communication in our department?

What creative ideas do you have to apply this powerful communication dynamic in your organization/department?

## Personal and/or Departmental Action Plan

Things I/we will *STOP* doing:

Things I/we will *START* doing:

Things I/we will *CONTINUE* doing: