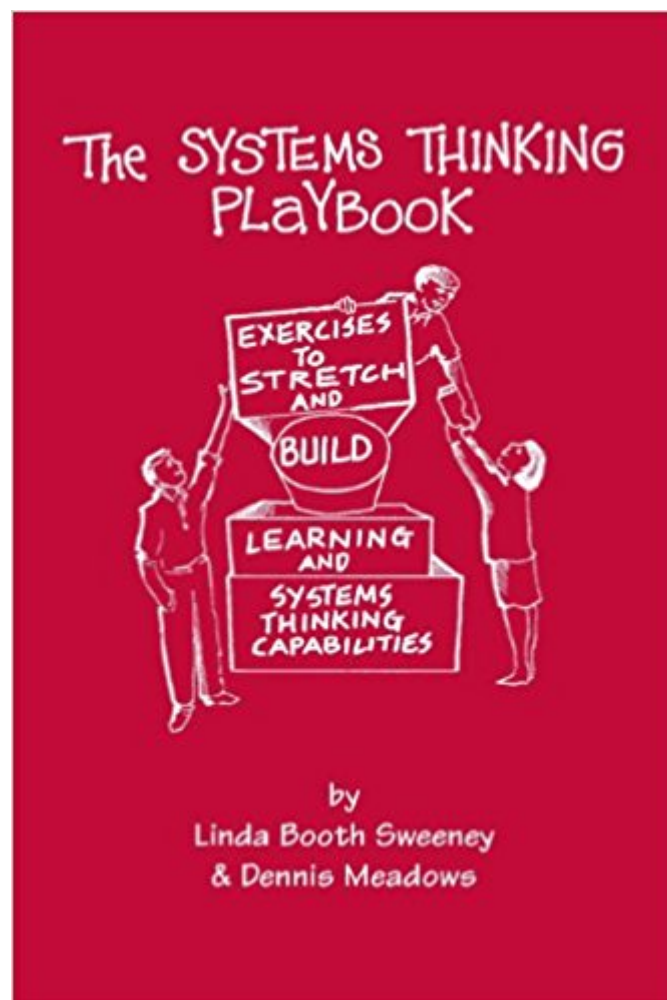




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# The Systems Thinking Playbook: Exercises To Stretch And Build Learning And Systems Thinking Capabilities



## Synopsis

This book has become a favorite of K-12 teachers, university faculty, and corporate consultants. It provides short gaming exercises that illustrate the subtleties of systems thinking. The companion DVD shows the authors introducing and running each of the thirty games. The thirty games are classified by these areas of learning: Systems Thinking, Mental Models, Team Learning, Shared Vision, and Personal Mastery. Each description clearly explains when, how, and why the game is useful. There are explicit instructions for debriefing each exercise as well as a list of all required materials. A summary matrix has been added for a quick glance at all thirty games. When you are in a hurry to find just the right initiative for some part of your course, the matrix will help you find it. Linda Booth Sweeney and Dennis Meadows both have many years of experience in teaching complex concepts. This book reflects their insights. Every game works well and provokes a deep variety of new insights about paradigms, system boundaries, causal-loop diagrams, reference modes, and leverage points. Each of the thirty exercises here was tested and refined many times until it became a reliable source of learning. Some of the games are adapted from classics of the outdoor education field. Others are completely new. But all of them complement readings and lectures to help participants understand intuitively the principles of systems thinking.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

As a person charged with organizational change at our college (the largest two year technical college in the US, with over seventy thousand students, more than three thousand employees, four campuses, two public television stations, three unions and an annual budget of over 207 million

dollars a year), I am always looking for ways to get our employees to see a clearer picture. We have been using "Teeter Totter" as part of our leadership effectiveness training and have noticed several things. First, of course, is the expected "you want us to what?" and the "this won't take more than five minutes" responses. Second, we see a lot of conscious effort on the part of the teams to actually make the exercise work. Third, we have seen some real glimpses of learning. When using this exercise with our campus leadership teams, I noticed an increase in understanding of the dynamics at play. As team members gingerly stepped onto the board, the member who was acting as the coach for the team kept saying "don't just look at where your opposite is on the board, feel where he or she is. Feel the board, feel your contact with the board, feel the other member and what they are feeling." In the de-brief, the conversation turned quickly to how we can understand what the other members on our team are going through during their daily jobs. Great exercises, great book. -- James B. Rieley, Director The Center for Continuous Quality Improvement Milwaukee Area Technical College

I did a Human Dynamics workshop in April. I went into the Playbook and pulled several exercises. They were so valuable (before and during the day) because: - the intention is explicit - the directions are so clear - the advice is wise I used "Five Easy Pieces." Your description was very clear and easy to follow. I also did "Circles in the Air" at what turned out to be exactly the right time. Thanks for doing such a great job of documenting and sharing your knowledge. -- Ruthann Prangel

I have just received the second volume of the Systems Thinking Playbook. It has been a much-awaited treat. Thank you for creating something which is so easy to use and so incredibly valuable. -- Cindy Schlough

Madison Area Quality Improvement Network

I have the constant challenge of managing a diverse and talented graphic arts staff, so I am always looking for ways to engage them in discussions of the larger issues facing our company. The "Mind Grooving" exercises made a big impression on my management team. In one group, "Furniture" turned up the usual 'chair' and 'sofa' - and 'dust'! We also did "Arms Crossed" at a full division meeting of sixty as part of a discussion on change in our working environment. Keep up the good work. -- Rebecca K. Neff, Director

Creative Solutions Division SAS Institute, Inc.

I tried out the first five exercises last night in my class and they worked beautifully!!! The facilitation went smoothly. These exercises are very effective in helping others learn the key concepts of systems thinking. -- Carol Ann Zulauf, Professor, Organizational Behavior Suffolk University

Your Systems Thinking Playbook has become a bible to me! What is so wonderful about these exercises is that the point you're trying to make is immediately obvious to everyone; there's no need to explain what participants were supposed to have learned. I used "Circles in the Air" as an icebreaker that kicked off a week-long international meeting with all of my company's international subsidiaries. The simple point about perspective was

especially relevant for this international group. --Peter Smith, Director of Organizational Development WorldxChange Communications --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Linda Booth Sweeney, Ed. D., is an educator, researcher and writer dedicated to helping people of all ages integrate an understanding of complex, living systems into learning, decision making and design. She has worked with Outward Bound, MIT's Sloan School of Management, and Schlumberger Excellence in Educational Development (SEED). She is the author of The Systems Thinking Playbook; When a Butterfly Sneezes: A Guide for Helping Children Explore Interconnections in Our World Through Favorite Stories; Connected Wisdom: Living Stories about Living Systems; and numerous academic journals and newsletters. Sweeney lives outside Boston, Massachusetts. For more information see her blog, Talking about Systems

([www.lindaboothsweeney.net/blog](http://www.lindaboothsweeney.net/blog)). Dennis Meadows is emeritus professor of systems policy and social science research at the University of New Hampshire, where he was also director of the Institute for Policy and Social Science Research. In 2009 he received the Japan Prize for his contributions to world peace and sustainable development. He has authored ten books and numerous educational games, which have been translated into more than 15 languages for use around the world. He earned his Ph.D. in Management from MIT, where he previously served on the faculty, and has received four honorary doctorates for his contributions to environmental education.

I like the exercises and games, but would like it to connect back to system thinking basics in a more clear way.

Examples to learn by. This book takes the main ideas of modern thinking about system's and puts them into games we can all play. A learning tool that makes the toughest intellectual ideas more easily digested and understood. All while having some fun together as a group!

Some good ideas for games, but they are more like ice breakers than system dynamics lessons

Love this book, especially the DVD that shows the authors demonstrating the exercises in real group settings. Outstanding!

Practical guide with a wide variety of exercises and helpful debrief notes

Lots of great ideas for facilitators. For the most part, explained clearly and with lots of examples.

Couldn't get into it. Will try this winter.

good book for planning and teaching systems planning

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