

# Domino Theory

## A 99-Word Story Activity from *Say It Quick!*

© 2010 Brian Remer, [brian@thefirefly.org](mailto:brian@thefirefly.org)

### Summary

People work in groups to match the beginning of a story on one card with its ending on another.

### Purpose

To gain new insights about a topic through a chance juxtaposition of stories

To use randomness to stretch the group's thinking about the topic

### Number of Participants

Minimum six people divided into at least two groups. Best group size is fifteen to thirty.

### Supplies

- Four 99-Word Stories written so the end of each story is on a different story card. Print page 3 of this document onto a sheet of heavy card stock. Print page 4 on the back of that sheet and cut it into fourths. Print enough card stock so you'll have a set of four domino cards for each small group of participants.
- Do not number the cards.
- Two or three discussion questions. Post these at the front of the room or print and distribute them to each group.

### Discussion Questions

- What are the common themes that link these four stories?
- What connections can you make between these stories and the topic of today's training?
- What new insights do you have about the topic and how might you apply one of these insights to your own situation?

### Faultless Facilitation

To get the most value from this 99-Word Story activity, consider how you might influence the tone of the learning environment. Think about your role and your responsibility to challenge people to stretch their understanding of the topic. Sometimes having the opportunity for a significant conversation is more important than reaching a consensus agreement about the topic.

Here are some suggestions:

- ◆ Avoid either-or thinking by modeling an open interpretation of the 99-Word Stories.
- ◆ Encourage people to share their own stories that relate to those selected.
- ◆ Ask people to keep their personal stories short. Share the air time.
- ◆ Promote multiple ideas for a rich conversation.
- ◆ Give people a moment of silence to identify central concepts that summarize or connect stories in their own mind.
- ◆ Be comfortable with ambiguity. Trust that the time spent will be meaningful even if people don't bring up each and every one of your own brilliant insights.
- ◆ Leave 'em hungry. As facilitator, you don't have to tie up every loose end. Trust people to continue important conversations off line, at the water cooler, and after the workshop.

## What To Do

<b>Activity</b>	<b>Facilitator</b>	<b>Participants</b>
Preparation	Prepare a set of 99-Word Story cards as described above. Do not worry if some of the stories are not related directly to the teaching topic.	--
Small Group Work	Divide the participants into groups of three to six and give them a pack of story cards in random order. Explain that their task is to sort the cards into the correct sequence matching endings to beginnings like a set of dominoes. Set a timer for 10 minutes.	Read through the stories and begin matching endings to beginnings.
Sharing	Ask teams to tell you the sequence they determined. Be alert for any stories that are out of place.	Be prepared to explain why you made your particular sequence of cards.
Challenge	Next, ask the groups to try and determine why these specific stories were linked together. What themes are common to the stories? What light do the stories shed on the training topic? Allow about 10 minutes.	Read the stories again looking for links, similarities, differences, and new insights.
Discussion	What unexpected pairings were made? Which stories seem to fit with the theme and which do not? Are there any ways that the stories which don't appear to fit the topic might actually provide insight about it?	Share your ideas, especially any new thoughts that are a result of the inclusion of stories that don't appear at first to be related to the topic.

*The end of one story...*

The farther you are from home, the bigger home becomes.

---

*The start of another...*

### **Location, Location, Location**

When we built our home under a stand of Vermont maple trees, we were determined to keep the property as wooded as possible. Instead of planting a lawn, we seeded the area close to the house with wildflowers and perennials. The rest we left natural.

Wild blackberries sprang up quickly: whip-like strands with thorns like claws and bitter, tiny fruit. Fortunately, they were shaded out by a dense growth of ferns. But in the lupine beds, those same ferns are crowding out the flowers we've planted.

*The end of one story...*

What's a weed; what's not? Depends on where it grows!

---

*The start of another...*

### **Faster Than...**

Standing in line at the Batman Rollercoaster for 45 minutes, we were hot, sweaty, and brain numb listening to the Joker's theme song over and over. A few people began to leave. What was happening? Should we stay in line, get a return on our time investment? Should we leave and cut our losses?

"It'll be closed for hours," my daughter speculated. That was it. Instantly we were at the tail of a long line in the *opposite* direction as her words spread and people began to leave.

*The end of one story...*

Our rumors and reputation spread faster than our actions!

---

*The start of another...*

### **The Trivial Things**

One time I was reprimanded for leaving the meeting room at work in disarray. It was true I'd neglected to clean up the coffee cups but the criticism seemed a bit over the top.

Later that day I was sweeping the deck at home. The best technique was to let the dirt, dust, and dead bugs drop through the spaces between the wooden floorboards. Usually "falling through the cracks" means someone got hurt. The system didn't work.

*The end of one story...*

But sometimes we should use the cracks more: to sift the insignificant things out of our lives and relationships.

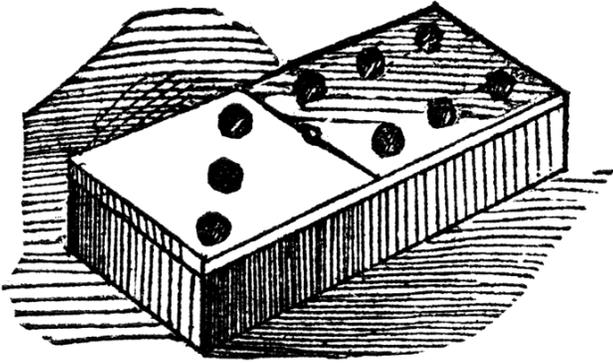
---

*The start of another...*

### **How Big is Home?**

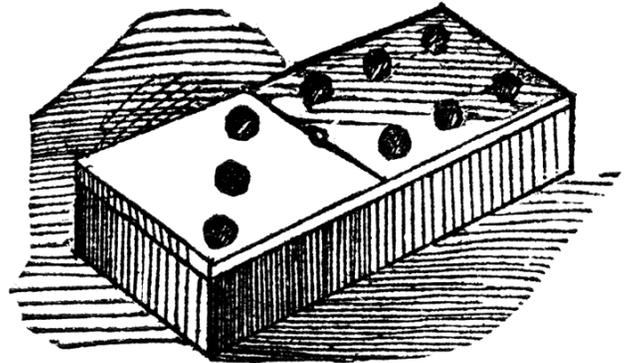
Driving across the New York interstate a car approached from behind. With lights flashing and horn blaring, a middle aged couple smiled and waved enthusiastically as they sped past. "Hey, what's up," I thought. Then I noticed their license plate: Nebraska, just like mine but a county across the state I'd never visited. I waved and smiled emphatically.

The three of us had yet to meet but here, a thousand miles from home, we were neighbors, even friends. We could exchange gossip at a diner!



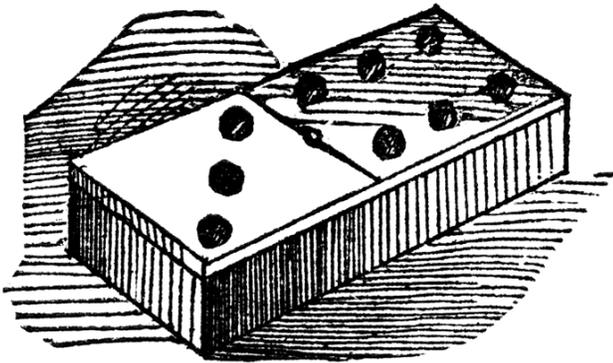
# Domino Theory

© 2010 Brian Remer



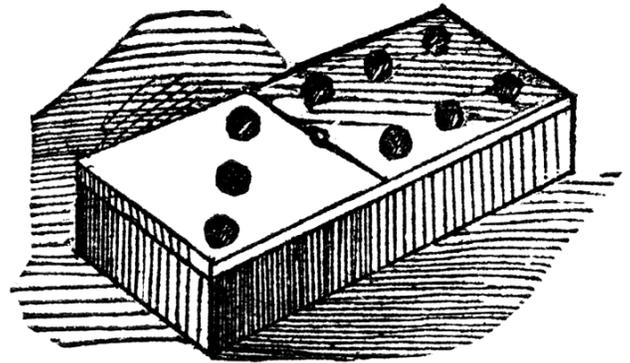
# Domino Theory

© 2010 Brian Remer



# Domino Theory

© 2010 Brian Remer



# Domino Theory

© 2010 Brian Remer

