

Game Mechanics and Instructional Strategies

Rapid Response: A game-based learning experience for Policy Academy Trainees

Carla Lutchner and David Ohlde

Baker University

Game Mechanics and Rules

Rapid Response is a timed, decision-based card game in which players assume the role of law enforcement officers responding to escalating field scenarios. This game will use the following mechanics throughout:

- **Scenario Cards:** Providing realistic policing encounters with emotional cues and stress indicators (ex, domestic disputes, traffic stops, mental health crisis calls)
- **Response Cards:** Options for making tactical decisions regarding verbal, nonverbal, and tactical communication between officers and civilians
- **Outcome Cards:** Final resolution or narratives that are determined by the escalation status, and impact player choices throughout the game
- **Metrics Board:** Tracks players' four indicators throughout the game:
 - Community trust
 - Officer safety
 - Stress level
 - De-escalation progress
- **60-second timer:** Stimulates high-pressure decision-making

Rule Structure:

1. Players begin with the same baseline metric levels before starting the game:
 - a. Community Trust: 5 points
 - b. Officer safety: 5 points
 - c. Stress level: 5 points
 - d. De-escalation progress: 0
2. Each player starts with a hand of 5 Response Cards
3. A deck of Scenario Cards is placed in the center
4. A deck of Outcome Cards is placed next to it
5. The designated game master will oversee the turn structure throughout the game

Win Conditions: Players will earn performance points throughout the game:

- +1 point for each successfully de-escalated scenario
- +1 bonus point for ending a scenario with high Community Trust (once 7+ points have been reached)
- -1 point of Stress Level hits critical level
- -1 point if Office Safety drops to 0
- Automatic scenario failure if either happens:
 - Community Trust falls to 0
 - Stress Level exceeded to 10

End Game Condition: After 5 rounds, the player with the highest total performance points is the winner.

Alignment to Learning Outcomes (IBSTPI 5 & 6)

Rapid Response aligns with these learning objectives connected to IBSTPI standards by having players:

- Detect and interpret emotional and behavioral cues
 - Learning Objective 1: Identify verbal and nonverbal cues that signal emotional escalation in a field scenario with citizen interactions
- Make quick strategic decisions that consider safety, trust, and context
 - Learning Objective 2: Select and apply appropriate de-escalation techniques within a limited timeframe while maintaining officer safety and community trust
- Reflect on communication choices to improve future performance
 - Learning Objective 3: Evaluate emotional responses and adapt communication styles based on contextual clues

Motivation, Feedback, and Engagement Systems

Motivation:

- Intrinsic: Players will be motivated to continue playing as their tactical judgement and decision-making continue to strengthen throughout the game, and will reflect in real-world scenarios
- Extrinsic: By implementing a score system that rewards successful de-escalation tactics and avoids being penalized for harmful escalation choices

Immediate Feedback:

- Reaction Cards based on civilian reactions will show immediate emotional feedback
- Outcome Cards will describe narrative consequences
- Visual tokens or badges will reward mastery, such as:
 - Active Listener
 - Tone Control
 - Communication Style

Engagement Features (IBSTPI standards 8 and 9):

- A 60-second timer will add urgency for players to place their Reaction Card in response to the Scenario Card drawn
- An unpredictable narrative will keep players emotionally invested throughout the game
- *Rapid Response* can be played as a competitive and cooperative movie to mirror field and partner-based policing

Instructional Strategies Embedded in the Game (IBSTPI standards 3 and 15)

Scaffolding:

- Early scenarios through the first level will provide more hints and player support, while as the game progresses, players will be encouraged to make their decisions on their own
- Later rounds can introduce layered variables (ex, mental health crisis, media outbreak)

Problem-Based Learning:

- Each Scenario Card can introduce issues that require:
 - Quick assessment/analysis
 - Communication choice
 - Ethical reasoning and explanation

Reflection and Debrief:

- During this time, players will be able to explain their choices, and a full group discussion can be held to evaluate the outcomes of the game:
 - Peer-to-peer debriefing activities throughout each round to discuss the response card chosen based on the scenario
 - Instructor-led debrief at the end of the game to review findings and application to real-world scenarios

Accessibility, Ethics, and Inclusivity (IBSTPI standards 17, 18, and 19):

- High contrast and large print cards that have simplified language
- Ethical design choices when creating the scenarios to avoid stereotypes and implicit biases
- Trauma-informed pacing and debriefing practices

Resources and Materials (IBSTPI standards 18-20):

- **Physical materials** will include:
 - *50 Scenario Cards*
 - *40 Response Cards*
 - *30 Outcome Cards*
 - *Metric Board*
 - *Token Chips/Badges*
 - *60-second Sand or Digital Timer*
- **Facilitator Resources** will include:
 - An instructor guide (for gameplay instructions and debrief prompt discussions)
 - Scenario debrief sheets for each group
 - Alignment chart showing each learning objective, game actions, and real-world application

- Technology requirements are not required for table play, but it is optional to have a mobile device for facilitation

Integration of Theories and Standards:

- **Kolb's Experiential Learning Theory (ELT)**
 - Definition: Describes learning as a four-stage cyclical process (Feeling, watching, thinking, and doing) that involves transforming experience into knowledge (Kolb, 1984)
 - Application to Game: Players are experiencing all four stages while playing throughout the game
- **Self Determination Theory (STD)**
 - Definition: Suggests humans have three innate psychological needs (autonomy, competence, and relatedness) that are essential for motivation and well-being (Ryan and Deci, 2000)
 - Application to Game: Players experience choice-making, feedback through metrics, and shared reflection
- **Cognitive Load Theory**
 - Definition: Refer to the amount of information our working memory can process at any given time (Sweller, 1994)
 - Application to Game: *Rapid Response* is designed to simulate realistic stress with supports (tokens and card limits)

Resources

- International Board of Standards for Training, Performance, and Instruction. (2012). *Instructional design competencies: The standards* (4th ed.). International Board of Standards for Training, Performance, and Instruction.
- Kolb, D. A. (1984). *Experiential learning: Experience as the source of learning and development*. Prentice Hall.
- Ryan, R. M., & Deci, E. L. (2000). Self-determination theory and the facilitation of intrinsic motivation. *American Psychologist*, 55(1), 68–78.
- Sweller, J. (1994). Cognitive load theory, learning difficulty, and instructional design. *Learning and Instruction*, 4(4), 295–312.