



Check Please!

What is it?

The *Check Please!* Worksheet helps inactive people consider the costs and the benefits of a sport. While it is designed for group use, individuals can use it at home. When you use it in a group, it is important that the participants take the lead. They should try to anticipate consequences that apply to their personal situation.

How will it help me get more people active?

Choosing the right sport is critical in determining whether participants continue being active or drop out. Discussing the benefits and costs of a sport, coupled with the opportunity to try it, has been shown to be more effective in getting people to participate than other methods such as lecturing. In one study using this approach, participants attended 84% of their fitness classes while the control group, which did not use the cost-benefit approach, attended less than 40% of the classes over the same period. It is likely that the same results would be obtained in a sports setting.

When could I use it?

Use this tool as part of a planning process when participants are in the early stages of becoming active.

For example...

As she neared 40, Maggie realized that she had not been regularly physically active since she left university. She wanted to get back in shape, manage her weight, and improve her overall health. The question was what kind of sport she should choose. She thought that skiing would be a fun winter activity. The director at her community centre recommended that she fill out a *Check Please* benefits vs. costs worksheet.

When Maggie weighed the benefits (improving her balance and coordination, enjoying winter more) with the costs (price of equipment, potential for injury, limited season) she was surprised to find that the costs outweighed the benefits. Maggie saved herself time, money and frustration by choosing to join a racquet club. The cost and risk of injury were lower and she was able to participate year-round. This choice made it much more likely that she would be active regularly, often, and for life!

Other useful ToolKit Tools

Use the *Check Please!* Tool with *Take the First Step* and *On the Move to Physical Activity*.



Suggested format

Photocopy as many copies of the worksheet as needed.

Source

This Tool was adapted from the *Canadian Physical Activity, Fitness and Lifestyle Assessment Manual*, which is available from the Canadian Society for Exercise Physiology at www.csep.ca.



Check Please!

Instructions

For this activity, allow about ten minutes for the participants to complete the benefits versus costs worksheet. It is important that the participants list benefits and costs independently. Then have a full group discussion to talk about each of the costs and benefits. The discussion should help participants clarify the costs and thus make them less intimidating.

Group Process: Script for the Instructor/Trainer/Leader

Introduction: *"For this activity, what I would like us to do is to take a few minutes to list as many of the potential costs and benefits of being involved in **(name specific sport)**. If you look at the page that has been handed out, you will notice the table entitled Check Please—The costs and benefits of **(name specific sport)**.*

*"When you think about it, some of the consequences of **(name the sport)** are things that happen pretty quickly, possibly within the first few days or even the first hour. Others may occur later, within a few months or even years. Although the long-term costs and benefits might seem motivating, often the most immediate benefits or costs determine whether or not you choose to continue.*

The Benefits: *"What I would like you to do right now is to think for a minute or so about the immediate or short-term benefits to you of your involvement in **(name specific sport)**. Think of the things that are of immediate benefit when you first start. You don't have to fill in the whole table; just list as many benefits as you can think of.*

"If you are having trouble thinking of some, that's OK. We will take a few minutes to discuss what everybody came up with afterwards. So try your best, but you can always get some ideas from other people when we have our discussion a little later.

(give them 5 minutes to fill out the Benefits column)

The Costs: *"Like anything else, being involved in **(name specific sport)** is not always a bed of roses. Certainly there has to be some reason why people don't stick with it. Let's see if we can generate some of those reasons or the short-term costs associated with **(name specific sport)**. I will give you five minutes to fill out the costs column and then we can discuss what you came up with.*

(give them 5 minutes to fill out the costs column.)



“Now let’s spend some time reviewing what you came up with.”

Review the suggestions first, making sure that they are only short-term consequences. You may have to add some of your own. Part of this discussion is to encourage participants to consider how to take advantage of the benefits and address the costs in ways that are relevant to them.

Closing:

*“As you might have noticed, there are quite a few costs and benefits associated with **(name specific sport)**. In fact, you might even find that there are some hidden costs and benefits that you hadn’t considered in the past. In any case, we can work on these when we look at how best to **make (name the specific sport)** an effective part of our lives right now.*



Check Please!

A benefits vs. costs worksheet

| <i>The Benefits</i> | <i>The Costs</i> |
|---|--|
| Benefits to me include.... | Costs to me include... |
| Benefits to others who are important to me are... | Costs to others who are important to me are... |
| Approvals I can expect from others are... | Disapproval I can expect from others is... |