

# Helium Roll

**Introduction:** Lower the roll of duct tape to the group

**Materials:** One roll of duct tape per group. The newer the roll of tape (the heavier the roll) the quicker and easier it is for the team to complete this game. Light rolls of duct tape make it much more difficult for the group to experience success quickly.

**Time Frame:** 20-30 minutes

**Group size:** 8 -12 people



**Story:**

“You are a team of scientists and you have recently discovered a new energy source—a machine that uses a roll of duct tape as a crucial component. The problem is the roll of duct tape must be lowered into the machine by all team members in a very specific way; otherwise the machine won’t work. Good luck, I know your team can do it!!!!”

**Directions:**

1. Circle up the team into a tight formation
2. Everyone extends their right arm and holds out their index finger at chest level (like they are pointing at someone). From above it will look like the spokes of a wheel.
3. The facilitator then announces that they will be placing a roll of duct tape on top of their index fingers. This part is important! When you place the roll of duct tape on their fingers. **KEEP YOUR HAND ON TOP OF THE ROLL OF DUCT TAPE** to prevent the group from raising it in the air. Apply just enough pressure on top of the roll of duct tape to prevent the group from lifting it up. It seems every group wants to raise the roll of tape with their fingers even before they understand or know the directions.
4. Presentation script: “Your directions are as follows: as a group you must lower this roll of duct tape without even a single person losing contact with the roll. Should someone lose contact with the roll you must start again.”
5. After reading the rules below release your hand from the roll of duct tape and step back.

**Rules:**

1. No one may lose contact with the roll of tape. If anyone loses contact with the roll the entire group must start again. The starting position is chest level.
2. Only the index finger on the right hand can be used. The index finger must be placed below (underneath) the roll of duct tape. Nothing else is allowed to touch the roll. The roll may not be altered from the way it was originally presented.
3. Index fingers must remain rigid and straight (like you are pointing at someone)
4. Fingers and hands may not make contact with anyone else during the game.

**Facilitator notes:**

1. This is a very challenging game to complete without cheating. If the group is fully honest about losing touch, then it would take as long as 60 minutes to compete. Because of this, do not do this game if the team is experiencing serious conflict.
2. Here's what typically happens in the activity: When the facilitator gives the direction and then releases the roll of duct tape, the group will most often RAISE the roll. The group will usually laugh and find this somewhat strange. It is likely to take several attempts to just keep the roll steady (not lowering or raising)
3. This is a communication intensive activity where each person must be absolutely committed to doing his or her part. People will usually get frustrated and it's common to see some blaming occur.
4. The group will probably throw out many ideas on how to solve this challenge. What is usually observed is the entire group focusing doing his/her job with the direction of one leader. Groups that have the most difficulty are usually all talking at once.
5. You may have to stop this activity several times mid-stream to help the group process how they are approaching this activity.
6. Why the game is called "Helium Roll?" When you first place the roll of duct tape on the participant's fingers and then release it the group inevitable raises the roll. It is as if the roll is made of helium and wants to float away.

**Suggestions:**

You can use this activity to help with leadership in the groups. You can stress that everyone must be committed to the vision and the process. Blaming and excuses won't help you achieve results any quicker. Staying calm and focused is critical to success especially when you think it can't be done.