

# The Great Banana Chain Game

## Age Range

- 12-18

## Group Size

- 15-35

## Time

- Set-up: 5 minutes
- Activity: 60 minutes

## Materials

- 11 character cards (included on resource sheet)
- 24 impact cards (included on resource sheet)
- 11 chairs
- 20 nickels
- 1 long rope or string

## Set-Up

- Put 11 chairs at the front of the room. Create space for everyone to sit on the floor.

## Delivery Tips

- Best run with at least two facilitators.
- Familiarize yourself with *The Great Banana Chain Game Resource Sheet* and try to communicate the points on this sheet to the participants in an age-appropriate way.
- The activity instructions provide a basic script for this activity, but feel free to improvise!



NWT SCIENCE FOCUS

## Topic

- Local Food Production

## Objective

- Understand 'systems thinking' and its relationship to sustainability
- Learn the conditions that our food, drink and clothes are produced
- Draw connections between personal choices and their global impacts



## Energizer (5 minutes)

Have the group stand in a circle and follow your lead as you run through the *Banana Song* one line at a time, with actions. Then sing and dance the whole song together.

*Bananas of the world unite* (action: cross index fingers high above your head)

*Peel banana, peel, peel banana* (action: pretend to peel a banana)

*Peel banana, peel, peel banana* (action: pretend to peel a banana)

*Eat banana, eat, eat, banana* (action: bring hands to mouth, like you are eating something)

*Eat banana, eat, eat, banana* (action: bring hands to mouth, like you are eating something)

*Go bananas! Go, go bananas!* (action: act like a monkey with lots of enthusiasm)

## Activity Directions (20-30 minutes)

1. Introduce the banana chain game by saying something like:

*“Now that we’ve got bananas on our minds let’s go behind the scenes to learn about an ordinary banana that you might buy in an ordinary grocery store. It seems so simple, but the act of buying a banana is part of a much bigger system that involves many people across many different countries and, possibly, thousands of kilometres.”*

2. Ask for 11 volunteers and distribute the 11 character cards and the TransFair and ask everyone to read their card to themselves. Set things up by saying something like:

*“You are all the audience and guests of a TV talk show called “The Great Chain Show.” Each of you will be invited up on stage to represent a part of the banana production chain. In your hand, you hold a card explaining who or what you will represent in this production chain.”*

3. Have one facilitator assume the personality of a boisterous, enthusiastic game/talk show host and introduce the main part of the game:

*“Welcome to The Great Chain Show, where EVERYBODY—every person and thing you can think of—gets to have a voice. On today’s show, we’re going to take a closer look at everyone’s favourite fruit—the banana! Our guests will include all of the people, processes, and impacts involved in producing, packaging, shipping, buying and consuming a banana. As I invite each of our guests up, I’ll ask them to introduce themselves to us and have a seat on our stage. I’d like to invite our first guest up here. Is the Consumer here?”*

4. When Ali the Consumer steps up, have the host ask them to come to the front, read out their card and sit on one of the chairs. Then, the host can say:

*“Thank you, Ali. OK, now. Who’s going to sell the banana to Ali? Would the grocery store manager please come up?”*

5. When Joanne, the grocery store manager, finishes reading her character card, introduce the next character by saying:

*“Thank you, Joanne. Now, how will the banana get to the grocery store? Would Ted the trucker please come up?”*

6. When Ted finishes reading his character card, have the host continue introducing characters in the same way until all of the characters have been introduced and are sitting at the front of the room.





7. Have the host introduce the next part of the game:

*“Now that you’re all seated comfortably let’s try a little experiment. Ali, I’m going to give you \$1 in nickles so that you can buy a banana from Joanne. Ali, please give Joanne the 20 coins. Joanne, you keep what you think is your fair share of the \$1 for the banana and pass the rest down the line. Each of you gives money to the next person in line, keeping what you think you deserve out of that \$1.”*

8. When all the money has been distributed, have the host ask each character to tell the group how much money they kept.
9. Take the money back and distribute it as it works in the standard banana market:
  - a. \$0.35 (7 nickels) goes to the grocery store, transportation company and packager
  - b. \$0.60 (12 nickels) goes to the big banana company
  - c. \$0.05 (1 nickel) goes to the plantation manager, who must pay all expenses and workers wages from that portion
10. Have the host start a discussion by saying something like:

*“That doesn’t quite seem fair, does it? Has anyone got any ideas for making the banana trade fairer?”*

11. At an appropriate time, have the host bring the game to a close:

*“If this were a Fair-Trade banana, we’d remove the Big Banana Company from the story and share the money they take with all the characters at the end of the line. That would put \$0.65 of the \$1 into the hands of those who plant, grow and harvest the bananas. Does that seem like a fairer split?”*

## Impacts Discussion (15 minutes)

**This section is suitable only for children aged 14-18+.**

1. Break the kids into small groups of 3 or 4. Distribute the impact cards between the groups. Have each group discuss their impact cards, decide whether they are positive or negative impacts, and determine where each impact applies to the chain. If it is a positive impact, put it in front of the appropriate chair. If it’s a negative impact, place the card behind the appropriate chair.
2. Once all of the cards have been placed, come back together. Compare the locations of the positive and negative impacts.
3. Close the discussion of the impacts with a summary statement like:

*“We’ve just examined all the people and processes involved in the production of one banana, but the same thing could be done for everything that we consume. In fact, a banana is a relatively simple thing. Imagine all the impacts that are associated with something like a cell phone, made up of many different components, constructed using machinery instead of growing on trees, and uses lots of different materials from different countries. You can also imagine the impacts associated with a pair of jeans, which might be designed in one country, made of cotton, metal, and thread from several other countries, and sewn in yet another country.”*





## Connections Game (15 minutes)

### This section is suited to children aged 12-14

1. Get a length of string and have all children stand in a circle holding the string. Ask a series of questions about familiar products, like an apple, coffee, chocolate bar. Have the children raise their hands to answer the questions, while continuing to hold the string. For example:
  - a. Where does an apple come from?
  - b. Where does it grow?
  - c. Who picks the apple?
  - d. Who eats the apple?
  - e. How does the apple get from the orchard to the store or market?
2. After an appropriate amount of question and answer, explain to the children that the string is like a food chain. When one person in the chain pulls, the whole chain moves. This represents how the food chain is connected and that there are repercussions all along the chain.

## Action Discussion (10 minutes)

*“Our actions affect us, other people and the planet. Even something as simple as buying and eating a banana. We can try our best to minimize negative impacts and maximize the positive ones. The global food trade isn’t always fair, but what can we do to make sure that our actions have positive impacts?”*

Get kids to write down all the answers. You can suggest examples like:

- Buying Fair Trade goods
- Buying or harvesting local fruit (e.g. harvesting local berries instead of eating bananas)
- Make your school a Fair Trade school
- Holding an event to tell people about Fair Trade

