Case 17: How should the crew give out ten free seats?

Thirty people want ten free workshop seats, and the crew must choose a fair way to decide who gets them.

On your own Read What happened and underline the sentence that tells how many people want a seat. About 6 minutes.

Duda holds up a phone and points at a blank card on a bulletin board.

Your role: You're the one who writes down the rule before the crew picks the ten names. **New skill:** Set fair criteria before choosing.

What happened

The crew has ten free seats for a workshop, and thirty people want one. The crew opened a sign-up sheet on Monday at 9 a.m. Twenty-two names were on it before 10 a.m. By Wednesday, the sheet has thirty names.

The sheet says only "How seats will be chosen: to be announced." The crew has argued about the rule since dinner on Sunday. Gia is running the sign-up. She wants to give the seats to the first ten names, because that is simple and fast. Mateo suggests a lottery instead.

Anika, 16, is at rehearsal most days, and she checks her phone after rehearsal ends. Under first-come, she would see the message after the seats were gone. A third option on the crew's whiteboard would give seats to people who cannot afford the paid version of the workshop. That option would ask people for personal information.

Every method seats exactly ten people. The crew has to decide which ten, and then explain the rule to all thirty.

Your question: How should the crew choose who gets the ten seats, and how should they explain the choice to all thirty people?

Key terms

On your own Read each key term and its example, then write your first guess in the box. About 6 minutes.

Criteria Criteria are the standards or reasons a group uses to make a decision.

En español: criterios

In this case: The sheet says "How seats will be chosen: to be announced." Twenty-two names arrived before 10 a.m. Monday, before the crew stated any criteria.

Trade-off A trade-off is a choice where getting one benefit means accepting a cost or giving something up.

En español: compensación entre opciones

In this case: First-come is fast for Gia to run but favors whoever sees the message first. A lottery gives everyone the same chance but needs a sign-up window and a drawing.

Equity Equity is a way of sharing that adjusts for different needs so everyone gets a fair chance.

En español: equidad

In this case: Option C would give seats to people who cannot afford the paid version of the workshop. It would also ask applicants for personal information.

Who is involved

Gia

Running the sign-up

"First ten to reply get a seat. It's simple, I can post it tonight, and I have a shift at seven."

Anika

Checks her phone after rehearsal

"By the time I see the message, ten people will have answered. I don't even need a seat. I just want to know how you're picking."

Your first guess

Before you look at the evidence, how do you think the crew should choose who gets the ten seats?

I think the crew should ___ because ___.

Notes

Reading passage

Ten seats, thirty names

On your own Read the passage. At each Stop and think box, pause and answer the question in your head or with a partner. About 5 minutes.

Words to know

- **Criteria**: Criteria are the standards or reasons a group uses to make a decision.
- **Trade-off**: A trade-off is a choice where getting one benefit means accepting a cost or giving something up.
- **Equity**: Equity is a way of sharing that adjusts for different needs so everyone gets a fair chance.
- **Consent**: Consent is permission a person gives for something specific, such as sharing a record with a named person.

The story: The sheet fills up fast

The crew has ten free seats for a workshop. Thirty people want one. The crew opened a sign-up sheet on Monday at 9 a.m. Twenty-two names were on it before 10 a.m. By Wednesday, there are thirty. The sheet still says, “How seats will be chosen: to be announced.”

Gia is running the sign-up. She wants to give the seats to the first ten names. It is simple, she can post it tonight and she has a shift at seven. Mateo suggests a lottery instead. A third idea on the whiteboard would give seats to people who cannot afford the paid version of the workshop.

Anika is 16 and at rehearsal most days. She checks her phone after rehearsal ends. “By the time I see the message, ten people will have answered,” she says. “I don’t even need a seat. I just want to know how you’re picking.”

Your role is to write down the rule before the crew picks the ten names.

Stop and think. Why did most names arrive in the first hour, before any rule was posted?

Every rule has a cost

Any way of giving out ten seats to thirty people leaves twenty people without one. In Case 4, you learned that a **trade-off** is a choice where getting one benefit means accepting a cost or giving something up.

Every rule has a cost, continued

Look at the three options on the whiteboard. First come, first served is fast, but it favors whoever sees the message first. A lottery gives everyone the same chance, but it takes more work, and it does not consider need. A needs-based option helps people who cannot afford the paid workshop. **Equity** is a way of sharing that adjusts for different needs so everyone gets a fair chance. But that option asks people to share personal information. In Case 6, you learned that **consent** is permission a person gives for something specific. Applicants would need to agree to share that information, and the crew would need to protect it.

Criteria are the standards or reasons a group uses to make a decision. The crew should write its criteria down before anyone is chosen. Then everyone knows the rule ahead of time. Even people who do not get a seat may accept the result if the rule was clear. If the crew picks a rule after seeing the names, people may wonder if it was chosen to favor someone.

Anika is not asking the plan to revolve around her. “Just don’t tell me nobody loses out,” she says, “because I would.” Gia admits she mostly wanted the job off her list.

Stop and think. Which option would you choose, and who would it leave out?

How real sellers choose

In November 2022, more than 3.5 million people registered for presale codes for Taylor Swift’s Eras Tour. Ticketmaster says about 1.5 million got codes. The other 2 million went on a waitlist (Ticketmaster, November 19, 2022). Someone chose a method for deciding who got a chance.

Stop and think. Why should the crew write down its rule before choosing names?

Sources

Real source | Ticketmaster | November 19, 2022

The Eras Tour onsale explained

Look at the evidence

On your own Read each document and write what it shows and what it leaves out. About 10 minutes.

Evidence A | Sign-up sheet

The workshop sign-up sheet

"Free workshop: 10 seats. Add your name to show interest. How seats will be chosen: to be announced." The sheet opened Monday at 9 a.m. By Wednesday it had thirty names. The first 22 names were added before 10 a.m. on Monday.

Look closely: When did most names arrive, and what rule was posted then?

What it shows

One question I still have

Evidence B | Group-chat thread

The crew's thread, Sunday at 8:30 p.m.

Gia: first come is easiest to run, we just take the top ten.

Anika: I'm at rehearsal most days, I'd see it after it's full.

Mateo: lottery?

Gia: then we need a sign-up window and someone to run the drawing.

Look closely: Which cost does each person name? Which cost does nobody name?

What it shows

One question I still have

Look at the evidence, continued

Evidence C | **Whiteboard**

Three options on the whiteboard

A. First come, first served: fast to run; favors whoever sees it first. B. Lottery after a three-day sign-up: equal chance for everyone; needs a sign-up window and a drawing. C. Needs-based rubric: prioritizes people who can't afford the paid version; needs personal information and someone to judge it.

Look closely: Underline the cost the crew wrote for each option.

What it shows

One question I still have

What is still missing from the evidence?

Notes

Key idea: fair criteria

On your own Read the key idea and the code of ethics, then answer the question in the box. About 8 minutes.

Any way of giving out ten seats to thirty people leaves twenty people without one. A **trade-off** is a choice where getting one benefit means accepting a cost or giving something up. First-come is fast, but it favors people who see the message first. A lottery gives everyone the same chance, but it does not consider need. A needs-based rubric aims at equity by helping people who cannot afford the paid version, but applicants must share personal information. Each option has a cost, so the crew has to choose which cost to accept.

Criteria are the standards or reasons a group uses to make a decision. When the crew states its criteria early, everyone knows the rule before anyone is chosen. Even people who do not get a seat may accept the result if the rule was clear in advance. If the crew picks a rule after seeing the names, people may wonder whether it was chosen to favor someone.

The Markkula Center for Applied Ethics at Santa Clara University suggests looking at a decision through several ethical lenses. They include consequences, rights, fairness, the common good, character and care. The lenses can point toward different options, and they do not add up to one automatic score. A strong decision explains which concern matters most in this case, who carries the cost and what could reduce it.

Professional standards

Adapted from a real source

National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects of Biomedical and Behavioral Research; published by the U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare

The Belmont Report: B. Basic Ethical Principles: 3. Justice

Summary: Summary, not a quotation: the report treats justice as fairness in distribution and lists five widely accepted ways to share benefits and burdens: an equal share, individual need, individual effort, societal contribution and merit.

In plain words: The Belmont Report, written for research with people, lists several fair ways to share limited benefits, such as equal shares or need.

Question: Which whiteboard option comes closest to “an equal share,” and which comes closest to “individual need”?

Professional standards, continued

Your answer

The option closest to an equal share is ___. The option closest to need is ___.

In the news

Real source | NPR | December 20, 2020

The Ethics Of Who Gets The COVID-19 Vaccine And When

A bioethicist explains how leaders chose who went first when there wasn't enough for everyone.

Real source | Scientific American | September 3, 2020

How to Decide Who Should Get a COVID-19 Vaccine First

Lays out competing criteria such as risk, fairness and benefit, the same lenses the crew uses.

Notes

Sort the evidence

On your own Follow each option to its effects and write who carries the cost in each box. About 10 minutes.

Follow each method to its consequences. Who carries the cost under each one, and what makes the chosen process legitimate to the twenty who lose?

First come, first served

The ten fastest responders get seats; people at rehearsal or work see the sign-up late

Who is affected

Lottery after a three-day sign-up

Each of the thirty has the same chance, and need is not considered

Who is affected

Needs-based rubric

Those with the greatest need are prioritized; applicants must share personal information

Who is affected

Whose perspective is missing?

Whose view is missing from these documents? What would you ask them?

The view that is missing is ___. I would ask ___.

Practice: choose a response

On your own Choose the note you would send, explain why and fix the two marked phrases. About 8 minutes.

Gia is drafting a note to the thirty people on the sign-up sheet. Which sentence could the crew defend?

- ☐ **A** "We picked the fairest method, so nobody loses out."
- ☐ **B** "We're holding a lottery so everyone has the same chance. A lottery doesn't favor people with the most need, so we're looking into a second session."
- ☐ **C** "Seats go to the first ten names on the sheet, because those people wanted it most."

Why I chose it

Improve a draft

A student's first draft

We should do first come first served because ❶ it's the most fair. Everyone has the same chance to sign up and if you really want it you'll sign up fast. It's simple and ❷ nobody can complain because they had the same opportunity as everyone else. Also it's way less work for us than reading thirty applications or doing some random drawing. The people who don't get in can just come to the next workshop whenever we have one. This is obviously the best way.

Rewrite each marked phrase so it says only what the evidence supports.

Rewrite phrase 1

Rewrite phrase 2

Grades 6—8

Your task

On your own Read the steps and fill in the planner boxes before you start your draft.

Hold a small-group discussion, then write a short note to the thirty students explaining how the ten seats will be given out.

Use: The three options and Gia and Anika's perspectives.

You'll make: Note, 4—6 sentences

Time: 45 minutes

1. Read the three options on the whiteboard in Evidence C.
2. Fill in the chart: who gains and who pays a cost under each option.
3. Discuss your choice in your group, using your role card.
4. Write your choice and your reason in the planner.
5. Write a note of 4 to 6 sentences in the Your draft box.
6. Add one change that helps people who do not get a seat.

Show it your way

Write it: Write a 4—6 sentence note with the frame "We chose __ because __. This is hard for __."

Say it: In your group, take a role (facilitator, recorder or questioner) and explain aloud which method you picked and who it is harder for.

Show it: Fill the who-gains, who-pays chart for all three options, with a simple icon for each person affected.

Prefer typing? Scan to open the online workspace.

Your task, continued

First come, first served: who gains, who pays

Gains: ___. Pays: ___.

Lottery: who gains, who pays

Gains: ___. Pays: ___.

Needs-based rubric: who gains, who pays

Gains: ___. Pays: ___.

My choice and my reason

We chose ___ because ___.

Your draft

We chose ___ because ___. This is hard for ___.

Check your work

On your own Answer the Check your work questions, mark your level in each rubric row and write one change you made. About 5 minutes.

Does your note say how the seats will be given out?	☐ Yes	☐ No
Does it give a reason?	☐ Yes	☐ No
Does it name who the choice is harder for?	☐ Yes	☐ No
Does it offer one fix?	☐ Yes	☐ No

How your work is scored

Mark one box in each row.

Skill	Beginning	Developing	Proficient	Advanced
Evidence	☐ No reference to who is affected.	☐ Mentions people vaguely.	☐ Names specific people and effects from the case.	☐ Uses case facts to show who gains and who pays.
Reasoning	☐ Claims an option is obviously best.	☐ Gives one reason only.	☐ Uses a lens and names the strongest objection.	☐ Uses two lenses and proposes a revision tied to the objection.
Audience & purpose	☐ Ignores the twenty who miss out.	☐ Mentions them briefly.	☐ Explains the process to all applicants.	☐ Builds legitimacy by publishing criteria and a remedy.
Revision	☐ No change.	☐ Wording only.	☐ Adds a named cost and revision.	☐ Explains how the revision addresses the objection.

Check your work, continued

One change I made

I changed ___ because ___.

Notes

Questions to discuss

On your own Write a short answer to each question, then complete the sentence frames. About 10 minutes.

1 **Whose view would most challenge the option you prefer?**

2 **Anika says she does not need a seat. What is she asking the crew for?**

3 **What would make the twenty people without seats accept the result as fair?**

My take

I think the crew should use ___ because ___.

This choice is harder for ___.

One change that would help is ___.

Talk about this case at home

Case 17: How should the crew give out ten free seats?

In this case, a group of friends has ten free workshop seats and thirty people who want one. Your student compared three ways to choose and wrote a note that explains the choice and who carries its cost.

Questions to talk about

1. When something is limited, like tickets or seats, what makes a way of choosing feel fair?
2. Why might it help to announce a rule before anyone signs up?
3. What is one kind way to tell people they were not picked?

Nobody needs to share personal stories or private information to talk about this case.

See the case online.