

# Project idea: „Masquerade Ball“

**Competencies: Communication skills and judgment**

**Age group: 12-15 years**

**Project duration: 120 minutes**

**Link to learning module: [www.teachtoday.de/en/masqueradeball](http://www.teachtoday.de/en/masqueradeball)**

## Project objectives

The aim of the project is for children to learn to reflect on their gaming behavior when playing computer and online games. In doing so, they are sensitized to their communication behavior during games, especially during game chats. In joint role-playing, they learn that the Internet as an imaginary mask can quickly tempt them to disregard the general rules of conduct on the Net. The discussion about the role play and the experiences, the rethinking of their own behavior and the development of emergency strategies should strengthen the children in dealing with the Internet and make them more confident.

### The children

- recognize different degrees of linguistic expression.
- know the effects of linguistic expressions.
- discuss and clarify communication conflicts together.
- put themselves in different roles and take on their perspectives.
- share and reflect on their experiences and observations.
- jointly develop rules for communication behavior and observe them.

### Subject and methods

### The children

- analyze the communication behavior of others on the Internet and critically assess it.
- reflect on their behavior in digital communication situations.

### Activities and behaviors

### The children

- observe, reflect and discuss their own and others' communication behavior in a constructive way.
- are empathetic and put themselves in the other person's shoes.
- know that they need to seek help in case of serious communication problems.

### Social communications



## The children

- reflect on their own communication behavior.
- recognize that digital communication must also meet moral and social standards.
- develop solution strategies and think about them.

Personal competence

## Introduction

Gaming behavior in computer and online games

The opera of the same name by Verdi is about the game with the mask, about the confusion of reality and appearance. It ends tragically - with a murder.

The magic of the mask arises, on the one hand, from the anonymity it grants and, on the other, from the qualities attributed to it. With the exclamation "The mask gone! What is your name?" the hero in the opera tries to intervene in the entanglements of the masquerade. The game with the mask has gotten out of hand. The avatars in games, the nicknames in chats are the masks of today. In the project idea, the children deal with their behavior in computer games and game platforms. In a scenic mask game, the children are sensitized to the influence that anonymity on the one hand and the character of the mask (the avatar) on the other hand can have on their behavior.

## Project procedure

Zorro, Superman, Ladybug and Batman - many heroes and heroines get their superpowers only through a mask. Great masks are also known from numerous cultures of the world from the present and the past. At the beginning, the project framework is explained culturally (country, region, movie, game) or historically (era). The children receive an introduction based on visual or film material. Which masks do the individual children particularly like? What characteristics do they associate with their preferred mask? Each child assembles a mask from the offered picture and form examples, either freely or according to instructions. How do the children design the mask to make its powers and special characteristics visible to others? With which behaviors and characteristics do they think the role behavior with the mask for a scenic realization?

The scenic masquerade is performed in small groups where the children can show off their mask. To facilitate the transfer to their own behavior, a scenic role play is implemented with the help of given conflict scenarios and masks. Afterwards, the children reflect on their impressions: How did the mask performance work? Which masks and representations excited them, which frightened them? How easy or difficult was it for them to portray the attributed characteristics with the mask? What would it have been like without a mask?

The fact that a mask can have a great influence on what we dare to do and how we behave is an important experience that the children take away with them at the end. The children realize that they act differently with masks than without, and transfer this realization to the Internet. They learn that the screen, an avatar or nickname are also a kind of mask behind which one can hide and that this makes one "braver" but also leads to rash statements.



## Phase description | Social form

### Phase 1 | Individual work, plenary

#### Preparation:

The children are introduced to the cultural or historical framework by means of visual material: e.g. the masks of the Incas or Alemanni, from Gabon or Venice, etc. Together, the characteristics of the masks are recorded on word cards and duplicated so that three to five characteristics are available in a property pool for each mask).

Masks with word  
card set and  
names

#### Making the masks:

Before making the masks, the children combine desired properties from the property pool into a set. Possible options include quick-to-create coloring masks (see information at the bottom of the page) on cardboard, paper bags, or paper plates, or time-consuming custom masks combined with an art project. Whether simple or pompous, each mask gets a "talking" name at the end (for example, "nasty fury" or "watery eye"). The property set and the mask name are mounted on a sheet.

#### Presentation of the masks:

The completed masks are presented to the other children. A presentation area is prepared in the classroom or a room with presentation facilities is sought out. The children gather in the cinema seat. In small groups the children can stage their mask, its name and special characteristics or is realize an exhibition in the classroom. The masks on display should definitely be presented with the name card and the set of characteristics.

### Phase 2 | Group work, plenary

#### Preparation:

By lottery, for game assignments, masks and children are brought together in game teams. For this purpose, short game instructions with the masks to be used are given on the lot cards (for example: a mask has won something. How does an "evil" mask react, how does a "friendly" mask react? A mask has betrayed the secret of another mask. What happens?) The frequency of the lot cards determines the team size (Two cards of the same default means: two children. For older children or children with more experience playing, exercises from improvisational theater such as feeling points, feeling squares, or feeling cabs can also be tried.

Playing with  
masks

#### Implementation:

The game teams are given some time to prepare an improvisation of about five minutes. Only the key points are negotiated: Who plays which mask and acts how? How do the teams enter or leave the scene? For the presentation of the scenes, the children gather again in the cinema seat in front of the presentation area. The watching children may request to take off a mask for a short period of time.



### Phase 3 | Small groups, plenum

The children reflect in smaller groups whether and how they were able to adopt the characteristics of the masks. Did the "strong mask" actually make them strong? Did they find it easy? What was it like to play without a mask? What was particularly difficult and what was surprisingly easy? How did the children experience the other players? How did the children experience the expressions? In comparison with digital communication, the children recognize that the supposed anonymity and hiding behind an avatar or nickname on the Internet acts like a kind of mask. In the working groups, the results of the reflection are noted down. Afterwards, the results of all groups are summarized on a poster:

Poster

- The children are more self-confident with a mask.
- The children are more honest with a mask.
- The children express themselves more rashly/unreflectively with a mask.
- The children have a lower inhibition threshold.
- etc.

The children discuss to what extent their experiences with the masks can be transferred to games and game characters. Do you become someone else with a great avatar, a scary avatar, or a brave avatar? Who gets recognition with a beautiful mask, who more with a scary one? Do you feel braver with the muscle-bound avatar? Do you get more attention with the hyperfeminine avatar? Do you feel more confident when you know that no one knows your real name or who is behind the mask? The results are collected on another poster.

### Phase 4 | Plenum

Exchange and discussion:

Children can pick out examples from negative comments and chat threads and discuss together what effect the choice of words and the metaphors used have. How could the sections be more neutral and how can criticism be formulated appropriately in the first place? What is permissible to say and what is a serious insult? How can you react when you are really mad at someone? What can you do if you feel uncomfortable in chats or in games? What can you do if you or others are badly insulted or threatened? Together, the children discuss preventive strategies for a good atmosphere and safe interaction: What can happen and how do I act when it does? Each child records the results on a sheet, and a poster is created for the class.

Individual sheet,  
poster

Before it happens:

Be respectful, do not reveal personal (personal data), check sources critically, expose agitation. The children think about how they will react if they are involved in unpleasant chats or similar. They write the actions on another poster.

When it happens:

Ignore and block troublemakers, end unpleasant contacts/dialogues immediately (leave chat), get help, talk to trusted people, inform school.



## Continuation

The project idea is suitable as an initial introduction to the topic of "Hate on the Net or Hate Speech" and can be carried out as an introduction as well as a preventive measure in everyday school or team life.

The project can continue to raise awareness of general behavior on the Internet. In addition to communication, topics such as data protection, privacy, deception, defamation, etc. can also be addressed.

Notes



