Non-Survival Desert Island Ranking Activity

Rank fictional leisure items for an imaginary island-lodge afternoon, then compare reasons and negotiate a group list; there is no survival answer key.

Host guide / Letter / 3–10 adults; for larger groups, begin in small circles / 15–25 minutes

Read the guide privately first if this activity has hidden answers. Print single-sided at Actual size / 100%. Cut only sheets marked CARDS. Keep answer keys with the host.

What you need

- One copy of the ten-item list per person, or one shared screen.

- Pens or a notes app for private ranking; no supplies are required for a discussion-only version.

- Optional timer and a large sheet for a group top-five list.

How to run it

1. Read the scenario aloud: “You are spending an afternoon at a fictional island lodge. Essentials, transport, and help are already handled. Choose five optional leisure items to keep for the group.” Confirm that nobody is being asked to imagine danger or share personal history.

2. Give each person the ten-item list and two minutes to privately rank the items from 1 (most interested) to 10 (least interested). A person may skip ranking and simply listen. These numbers describe preferences for this game only.

3. Invite each participant to share one high-ranked item and one reason, if they want. Do not require anyone to defend every choice or explain why an item matters personally.

4. Ask the group to negotiate a shared top five. Use a quick vote, a consensus check, or a round of reasons followed by a host tally. There is no answer key and no need for unanimous agreement; record a tie or unresolved choice if that suits the group.

5. Compare the group list with the individual lists. Ask what criteria people used—for example, variety, shared use, quiet, or play—without labeling participants.

6. Close with a neutral question such as “Which item was hardest to place?” or let people pass. Remind the group that the scenario is fictional and does not teach what to do in a real emergency.

Keep the scenario fictional and low-stakes

Desert-island prompts can mean very different things to different people. This version explicitly assumes safety, shelter, water, food, transport, and emergency support are already covered. The group is ranking optional leisure objects, not making a real-world survival plan. There is no standard or expert answer list. Anyone can treat the list as props for a fictional story instead.

The University of Oregon’s staff activity page records an optional “desert island” sharing prompt. It is a context example only, not a ranking standard or survival authority. This page does not borrow an expert answer key; its ten objects and negotiation flow are original choices.

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Use one shared list

All players receive the same ten objects, read in the same order. Rank privately before discussion so the first speaker does not set an expected answer. If an item does not fit someone's interests or access needs, that person may replace it with "another leisure item" or pass.

Do not award points for a supposedly correct ranking. Differences can reflect taste, imagination, group size, or assumptions about the fictional afternoon. The useful part is hearing a reason or making room for a different choice.

Facilitate without pressure

For a large room, split into groups of four to six and let each circle decide whether to create a shared list. For remote sessions, post the list in chat or a shared document; private rankings can stay on paper. No one needs to use a camera or show a personal space.

Offer a silent option: participants may mark a private list, ask the host to include it in an anonymous tally, observe, or skip the ranking. If the island premise feels uncomfortable, switch to "choose five props for a fictional lounge" and continue with the same objects.

Printable host sheet

Scenario: "Essentials and emergency help are already arranged. We are choosing five optional leisure objects for a fictional afternoon at an island lodge." Individual round: rank the list privately for two minutes. Group round: share one choice each, then build a top five. Close with one optional process question or stop without debrief.

Rules: no answer key; no survival advice; no points for a person's ranking; passing is allowed; no one has to explain a preference. If the group disagrees, record a tie or two alternatives rather than forcing consensus.

Debrief without reading into choices

If participants want a debrief, ask how the group handled different priorities: Did anyone name a reason the group had not considered? Was voting or discussion easier? Did a person change a ranking after hearing an explanation? Keep reflection about the activity, not what a choice supposedly reveals about someone.

Avoid questions such as "Who would survive?" or "Who was the best leader?" They turn a playful ranking into a judgment. Thank people for making a list and move on.

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CARDS / Non-Survival Desert Island Ranking Activity

R_ISLAND-001 / Optional leisure item

A small deck of blank cards and a pencil for inventing a new table game.

R_ISLAND-002 / Optional leisure item

A paperback book selected for a shared quiet reading hour.

R_ISLAND-003 / Optional leisure item

A compact sketchbook with broad colored pencils.

R_ISLAND-004 / Optional leisure item

A small speaker with a playlist chosen by volunteers.

R_ISLAND-005 / Optional leisure item

A soft lightweight ball for a gentle seated or standing passing game.

R_ISLAND-006 / Optional leisure item

A large-print puzzle book with several kinds of word puzzles.

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CARDS / Non-Survival Desert Island Ranking Activity

R_ISLAND-007 / Optional leisure item A paper kite kit for a calm, supervised outdoor activity.	R_ISLAND-008 / Optional leisure item A small set of tabletop dominoes for a shared game.
R_ISLAND-009 / Optional leisure item A pocket field guide for noticing and sketching local plants.	R_ISLAND-010 / Optional leisure item A folding tablecloth for a shared picnic-style art project.

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Host answer key

Keep this section separate from player cards. Accept equivalent wording where the meaning matches.

01. Blank cards and pencil

A preference prompt, not a survival supply.

02. Paperback book

Choose or replace the title without asking for private details.

03. Sketchbook and colored pencils

Offer a verbal or observer option if drawing does not fit.

04. Speaker and volunteer-selected playlist

Music is optional; no one needs to name a favorite.

05. Soft lightweight ball

Any physical play remains optional.

06. Large-print puzzle book

This is not a knowledge or speed test.

07. Paper kite kit

Treat it as a story prop if outdoor play is unsuitable.

08. Dominoes

No prior game knowledge is required.

09. Field guide

No plant identification or safety advice is part of this activity.

10. Tablecloth

Keep the premise comfortable and fictional.

Hosting questions

Is this a survival exercise?

No. The scenario assumes essentials, transportation, and emergency help are already arranged. The list contains optional leisure objects and is not a survival guide.

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Are there right or wrong rankings?

No. Participants rank items for a fictional group afternoon. Preferences can differ without being scored.

Can someone pass or avoid the island theme?

Yes. A person can observe, skip ranking, or switch the premise to choosing props for a fictional lounge or story.

How should a group handle disagreement?

Use a vote, keep a tie, or record two alternatives. Unanimous consensus is not required.

References

University-hosted example of an optional workplace “desert island” discussion prompt. Its song prompt is not reused; this page uses original leisure-item cards and makes no survival claim.

https://vpfa.uoregon.edu/everyday-inclusion-resources-and-activities

Original AI-assisted resource with AI editorial review. Independent human playtesting and physical printing have not been completed. Answer, listen, or pass.

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