

TRICKLEDOWN

The only thing is no one knows they're playing a game

£300x what you earn

TRICKLEDOWN is an ideal “convention opener” but can be played with any gathering where the space is contained, people are milling around and there’s the anticipation or expectation of getting a free drink. A good number of participants is around 60-80 but it could in theory be played by anywhere between 20 and 200 people, possibly even more.

i. Ahead of the event, the words “free drinks” or “free bar” should be used on promotional material or personalised invites. Guests should arrive expecting at least one free drink.

ii. At the event, as part of the administration of welcoming/processing arrivals, all guests should be given a colour sticker. If the potential exists to disguise this colour sticker on another more legitimate label – eg. a name badge – then this opportunity should be taken. The colour sticker should ideally be a piece of discreet information on the guest’s person. However not all gatherings require name badges and in these cases a colour sticker should be attached to the guest’s lapel or similar with as little explanation as possible.

iii. Three colours of stickers should be distributed in the following ratios to guests: Green – 10%; Yellow – 40%; Red – 50%

iv. The free bar area should be laid out in advance with three distinct drinks on offer: water, wine and champagne. The drinks need to be out of reach of the guests so that bar staff have to serve guests. Further more, a visibly tight supply of each type of drink should also be arranged still in their bottles. A cursory glance at the bar area should tell guests everything they need to know: three drinks; limited supply (and we mean limited).

v. The bar staff need to be carefully coached in how to deal with guests. They should serve guests

immediately as they arrive at the bar, without asking them what they want. Green guests get champagne, Yellow guests get wine and Red guests get water. Green guests may access wine and water too and Yellow guests may also access water. If guests ask for any other drink than the ones they’re entitled to, bar staff should politely refuse with a “I’m sorry sir/madam, I can’t give you *drink-you-want*, but we do have *drink-you’re-allowed*”. Never let on that the coloured sticker is the source of the discrimination.

vi. Additionally, whenever Green or Yellow guests take a drink, bar staff should wordlessly hand them a voucher. The paper voucher should say “Good for 1 free champagne” (for Green guests) or “Good for 1 free wine” (for Yellow guests). Initially some guests will use the voucher to get a further drink for themselves. If they do, they continue to get given another voucher. Other guests however will start to experiment with the system and might give their voucher to a friend with a different colour sticker so that they can get, say, champagne instead of water

This is completely permissible and if a Red guest approaches the bar with a “Free Champagne” voucher, they should be given champagne without question – however, those guests aren’t given a further voucher when served.

vii. Throughout there is the potential for interesting emergent behaviour. To best take advantage of the narrative of the game and what it reveals about the nature of privilege and asset-clustering, it is suggested that the event be filmed, with targeted guest interviews throughout the evening. Things to look out for are:

- The first realisations among guests that some guests are ‘better’ than others.
- The first signs of discontent or dissent (probably at the bar)
- Guests trying to find rationalisations for the different colours: people tend to see a logical explanation for the difference in privilege, rather than accept it’s a randomly assigned facet of life.
- Privileged guests acting nepotistically and handing either their voucher or their sticker to a friend so they can get a better drink.
- Privileged guests organising to prevent ‘altruistic’ behaviour as they realise it will dilute their share of good drinks.
- Less-privileged guests self-organising and pressurising more privileged guests to share the wealth.

viii. The game will come to a natural end as drinks run out. It’s suggested at around this point that someone give a formal explanation of events and reveal to guests that they’ve been unwitting players in a game about the trickle-down myth of wealth.

