

The Morning After That Hasn't Happened

Facilitator note: The skill is the premortem - interviewing a failure before it happens, so the team can say what it knows while saying it is still cheap. Keep the frame on the two rules: "it already happened" (reports, not predictions - no arguing about likelihood, only contributions about how) and "the item you most want to skip is the one the exercise exists for." The committee's resistance ("we're going to jinx it") is treated as the normal cost, pushed through kindly; nobody's hole makes them stupid. Do not let this become "expect the worst about everything" (the rehearsal is one bounded hour for a defined event, not a worldview - the actual day is mostly joyful) or "the premortem predicts the real failure" (the story's twist is that it does NOT - the van breaks down anyway, and what the rehearsal built was the team's ability to catch, not a crystal ball). Students are not asked to disclose real failures; Activity 7 is a fictional case.

Teacher answer key

1. A checklist is built from what the planners already imagined - it can confirm the known list is done, but it has no row for the unknown. The premortem replaces the checklist's question ("did we do the items?") with a different one ("the thing flopped - how?"), which lets the team's quiet knowledge surface as news instead of worry.
2. Rule one: it already happened - reports, not predictions, so nobody can argue likelihood and the hour is spent on contributions. Rule two: the item you most want to skip is the one the exercise exists for. The first disarms politeness ("everyone's being polite about it" while the plan is alive); the second aims the exercise at the blind spot, because the skipped item is usually skipped for a reason that feels like a reason.
3. b, d, a, c, e. The rehearsal (b) surfaces the holes; the holes get owners (d); the drill (a) makes the fixes executable, not just written; the van (c) proves the rehearsal's real product was the team's ability to catch; and the page (e) turns one committee's hour into next year's starting rule.
4. (a) $211 \text{ girls} \times 1 \text{ cup} \times 3 \text{ stations} = 633 \text{ cups}$, plus 10% = about 696, so plan 700. (b) Each grade's count takes 2 minutes and the reports are handled one at a time: $4 \text{ reports} \times 2 \text{ minutes} = 8 \text{ minutes}$ after the last girl passes a checkpoint, the committee knows everyone is accounted for; without the protocol, the answer was "never." Steps shown.
5. The catch is the specific failure (nobody said "the van"); catching is the practiced ability to absorb any failure - named owners, a checkpoint page, a rehearsed short-count sentence. Rehearsing catching beats guessing the catch because the real surprise is by definition the one you did not imagine, so the durable asset is a team that adapts in minutes, not a list of predictions.
6. The drawing should show: the park's far fork; the front of the walk going left, the younger clump going right; the sign at the fork; Freida's second sign fifty feet BEFORE it ("a sign at the

fork itself is a sign you read after you've chosen"); and the fork's marshal. Strong captions quote "the item you most want to skip is the one the exercise exists for." Any honest rendering counts.

7. Sample: Opening - "Mindel says: 'It's strike night. The show flopped. Tell me why - reports, not predictions, and nobody's hole makes them stupid.'" Item - "The crew finally says the one they'd been skipping: the flats are painted on both sides because nobody confirmed which side faces the audience." Rule - "She rules that every hole gets a name and a fix before anyone leaves, and thanks each reporter by name." All three parts, with names; wording may vary. (Case name Mindel is fictional.)

8. WALKERS row 1 columns 1-7; PLAN row 2 columns 1-4; FLOP row 3 columns 1-4; SWEEP row 4 columns 1-5; STATION row 5 columns 1-7; MILES row 6 columns 1-5; ROUTE row 7 columns 1-5; HEADCOUNT row 8 columns 1-9. The imaginary event the committee interviews is the FLOP; the job invented so nobody walks alone is the SWEEP.