

How To Manage the Room and Think “SAFETY”



The Samurai Game® can be produced in diverse settings. Primary considerations in selecting a room are safety, flow of movement and participant comfort. Of these three, SAFETY is most important. The Facilitator needs to be able to easily observe the entire space in which performance of TSG is being produced. Some specific considerations include:

Room/Spaces. Ensure there is sufficient space for the battlefield and burial grounds for the size of group you will be leading. Space requirements vary with the number of participants. Factors that can impact this are pillars, door and/or window openings, stationary furnishings, etc.

Using Adjacent Spaces. Sometimes the space in which TSG will be played consists of one room and an adjacent separate space. A separate room could be used as a burial ground, but ideally all participants need to be able to view the battlefield once you give them permission to open their eyes and watch. It is important that all of the “active” elements of TSG occur in the same space (the larger or more suitable space). This ensures that the Facilitator can see and manage all activities. If an adjacent space will be used as a burial ground, have another person (support staff or other non-participant) assist the Facilitator to oversee the burial ground to ensure the safety and physical comfort of the “dead” samurai, and to let the Facilitator know if anyone in the burial ground is departing from their TSG role (e.g., sitting up, opening eyes, smiling, laughing, talking, coming “out of character”).

Lighting. Make sure your room is well lit. Generally speaking a well-lit room increases participant trust and involvement. During the “battle portion” you may want to dim the lights, and IF so – **MAKE SURE YOUR LIGHTING LEVELS PROMOTE A SAFE PERFORMANCE ENVIRONMENT.** A dark room can be unsafe. What is too dark? **If you cannot easily see the eyes of any participant from completely across the room then your room is too dark. You must be able to see everyone’s eyes.** If possible, lighting in the burial grounds can be lower, ideally not shining light directly into the eyes of those lying in the burial ground. At the same time, the light should not be so low that the participants become encouraged to sleep.

Flooring. While it is possible to use hard floors, a carpeted or soft floor is preferred for safety and comfort. If TSG is to be produced on a hard floor, it is advisable to provide soft yoga or exercise mats or blankets for the burial ground. Lying on a hard surface for long periods of time can be uncomfortable and exacerbate existing physical problems. If TSG is being led on a hard floor and the burial ground is without mats or blankets, the Facilitator should consider limiting the time a “dead” must lie on the floor. Bring them to a seated position

soon so they can observe the action. Bring the “dead” back to life sooner or more frequently.

Doors, Exits and Fire Safety. **All doors leading in and out of the TSG room must remain unlocked. At no time should any entry/exit door be locked. Fire Exits must be clearly identified to participants, if not obvious, and they must NEVER be blocked or locked.** On occasions you might want to decorate the facilitator table with a lit candle during the battle portion – this being for aesthetic purposes, but you MUST NEVER create a fire safety problem. For this reason it is not advisable to use lit candles to outline the burial ground area.

Accessibility & Cleanliness. If it is not obvious, let participants know where the bathrooms are located. Ensure that the bathrooms are clean and functional. Even if the building maintenance is someone else’s responsibility, the participants’ experience of the facilities will impact their TSG experience and their opinions of the Facilitator.

Temperature and Hydration. Maintain a comfortable temperature in the space throughout TSG and monitor the temperature and participant’s comfort level throughout the performance. If the space is too hot, participants engaging in more strenuous battles or roles (such as sentry), can become overheated. If the space is too cool, those lying dead can easily become chilled. If necessary advise the participants to have sweaters or jackets available for use in the burial ground. If participants want to keep a water bottle nearby to use during TSG, that is OK.

Sound Systems and Audio Equipment. Depending on the size and type of space, you may need microphones for the Facilitator (and translator, if applicable), and a separate output channel for music. Test and become familiar with the operation of the equipment before participants arrive and are allowed to come into the room/space. Make sure it all works well so that you won’t have to experiment once folks are in the room. Experience has shown that simple sound systems and unobtrusive audio speakers will serve you and the participants much better than large complex systems.

Marking Facilitator Position, Sentry Positions & Burial Grounds. It is important to determine how you will use the physical space before participants arrive. Take time to map out the battlefield and burial ground location, and where you—the Facilitator (and translator, if applicable)—will place your supplies and notes. Maintain a clear entrance or exit pathway for all participants. Once you’ve mapped out the space, place a strip of tape where each Sentry will be standing (facing one another), and if helpful, where the burial grounds for each army will be. Keep your Facilitator Table clean and aesthetically pleasing, as this is in accordance with the entire production and helps bring your role as The Fate of War “into character”. You want your room to be “pleasing to the eye”. If possible

store unneeded equipment out-of-sight, and ask your participants to organize and store their personal possessions in a safe and well organized manner.

Coffee/Tea/Water/Food Stations. On occasion you may want to provide, or be asked by clients to provide, refreshment stations for participant breaks. It is recommended that these stations be placed just outside the room entry/exit doors so that venue staff can maintain the stations without having to interrupt your program or interfere with your program space. Sometimes a venue's hall space is not appropriate for refreshment stations outside the room and you will need to have them inside. We recommend you place these just inside the entry/exit door. If you allow your participants to bring refreshment to their seats, remember to have these items removed off to the side of the room when you are doing movement activities and especially during the "battle portion" of your production so that no one accidentally steps or falls as a result of these items.

Using Outdoor Spaces. TSG is best performed in a closed space, but it has been performed in outdoor areas. In some rare situations an outdoor space could be preferred. In addition to the factors already mentioned, keep in mind the following:

- How will sunlight, wind, level and hardness of ground, dampness of soil, noise and other distractions impact the safety, wellbeing and attention of the participants?
- Can the participants easily hear what the Facilitator is saying, or will wind, surf, traffic, river flow make this difficult?
- Can the Facilitator easily see all participants and their eyes, and hear all of the participants, including those in the burial ground?
- How can you "contain the energy" of the space without walls and a ceiling?
- Are buildings, walls or natural factors (trees, streams, shrubs, earth mounds, etc.) available that you can use to help keep the participants focused?
- Could you "curtain off" the battleground and the burial ground using thinly veiled curtains and still use the natural aesthetics to enhance the performance?

Every Participant Is His/Her Own Authority. This is particularly important in the following areas:

- Physical needs, emotional safety and wellbeing – including use of toilet. TSG participants NEVER need to ask anyone for permission to exit the space, use the toilet and return to the space.
- A TSG participants should never be required, pressured or forced to engage in any physical activity that he or she does not freely want to do, nor should he or she ever be required to talk about anything (either personal or of a business nature) that he or she wishes not to.
- Out of respect for each participant and his or her right to NOT talk about issues of a personal or business nature, when the Facilitator asks for *round-the-circle-sharing*, always state clearly: “Saying, ‘I Pass’ - is a totally acceptable answer.”
- *Know the audience.* Pay attention to the obvious physical needs of the participants. IF you notice that someone has a physical ailment or condition that could be exacerbated by standing on one foot, or raising arms into the air or to shoulder level, or laying on the floor, or standing for long periods of time then respectfully ask that person for permission to discuss the situation and advise him or her of the risks involved and assist a safe and respectful outcome.
- Know the cultural and religious convictions of the region where you are delivering TSG. Cultural or religious norms can impact whether or not certain people are allowed to touch others and/or when the customary daily religious activities need to happen.