

Table Top Briefing

A clear, scripted briefing sets the tone, focuses people on weather-safety goals, and prevents “gamey” behaviour during a tabletop. Below is a concise structure and sample wording you can adapt for festival weather exercises.

1. State purpose and objectives

“Today’s exercise is a discussion-based tabletop to practise how we would manage a significant weather incident during our festival. It is about learning, not testing individuals.

By the end we want to:

- Check if our weather and crowd-safety plans actually work in practice.
- Clarify who decides what, and how information flows.
- Identify concrete improvements for next season.

Invite quick questions so people understand why they are there before you start the scenario.

2. Clarify roles in the room

“Before we begin, a quick reminder of roles:

- Players: You speak ‘in role’ (festival director, safety, prod., etc.) and decide what happens in the scenario.
- Facilitator: I guide the scenario, control time, and ask questions.
- Evaluators: They observe and take notes for the debrief.
- Observers: They mainly listen and may offer comments when invited.”

A short introduction round (name, real-world role, and where you sit on show days) anchors the exercise in your actual command structure.

3. Explain rules of play

Give 5–7 simple ground rules, and show them on a slide or handout.

Suggested wording:

- “This is a no-fault environment: we are here to learn, not assign blame.”
- “Respect and confidentiality: treat others’ input respectfully; assume discussions stay in this room unless explicitly shared.”
- “Stay in role: answer as you would act in your real job during the festival.”
- “Use current plans: feel free to open the weather SOPs, evacuation plans and comms templates on the table.”
- “No outside information: you only know what the scenario tells you; you cannot ‘check the real weather.’”
- “Be specific and brief: describe concrete actions and messages; keep answers short so all can contribute.”
- “Ask if you are unsure: confusion about roles or thresholds is useful data we want to capture.”

Confirm agreement: “Is everyone comfortable with these rules? Anything you feel is missing?”

4. Describe how the exercise will run

Give a simple process overview so participants know what to expect.

Example:

- “I will start with an initial scenario: time of day, crowd size, weather situation, and site status.
- Then we will move through the incident in time steps. Each step begins with an ‘inject’ – a short update about weather and its effects on the site.
- After each inject I will ask: what do you do in the next X minutes? Who decides? What do you communicate and with which channels?
- We will run for about 60–90 minutes, then hold a debrief to capture lessons and improvement actions.”

Mention time discipline and that you may cut discussion to keep the scenario moving.

5. Set expectations for participation and outcomes

End the briefing by aligning expectations and highlighting the benefit of candid input.

Script example:

- “Active participation from everyone is essential – quiet voices often spot the biggest issues.
- It is fine to say ‘I don’t know’ or ‘we don’t have a procedure for that’; that is exactly what we need to hear.
- Evaluators will later turn today’s discussion into a short after-action report with a few clear improvement items for our weather and crowd-safety plans.”

Check for final questions, then transition with: “If there are no more questions about objectives or rules of play, let’s begin with the initial scenario.”