

Icebreakers

Ice Breakers are fun and easy way for not only your staff and incoming students to get to know each other, but to help reduce anxiety and tension as well. When using the following ice Breakers, feel free to change the premise or process to accommodate your group.

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The Scar Game

Process: Each member of the group takes a turn pointing out a scar that they have. Once they have pointed out the scar, each person will tell the story how he/she received the scar.

Additional information: This ice breaker works for any size group. You can also split into smaller groups, and have the person with the best story from each small group tells it to the large group.

M&M's

Process: The group passes around a bowl of M&M's and each member takes as many small pieces of the candy as they wish. When everyone has the candy in front of them, each member of the group takes turn sharing facts about him/her, and the number of candies each person has in his/ her hands is the number of facts he/she must share.

Variation: Any Type of small candy will do. The game can be varied by using certain colors to represent certain types of facts. For example:

- Red = Favorite TV Shows
- Orange= Favorite Foods
- Green= Hidden Talents
- Blue=Pets/Family information
- Brown = beach vacation Spots
- Yellow= Little Known Habits

Additional Information: This activity works for any size group; however, time depends on how many pieces of candy each person takes. From experience, this activity works best with groups of 25 or less.

The Competition

Process: The group is divided into 4-8 smaller groups, depending upon the size of the group. The group leaders then announce the "competition", which can include topics such as tallest, shortest, most cell phone contacts, biggest feet, longest tongue, etc. Each group sends up the winner, and then all winners must introduce themselves as everyone gives them a round of applause. Then, the winners must have the same competition amongst themselves to find the "Top Dog". Each member returns to their original group and another competition is introduced.

Additional information: This activity works for larger groups of at least 25

The Question Game

Process: Each member of the group writes a question down on a piece of paper- the goofier the question the better. Everyone crumples up their paper and exchanges it with another person, then forms a circle. The first group member reads his/ her question aloud. The next person must answer that person's question with an answer to the question on their own piece of paper. The game continues around the circle, resulting in many nonsense answers to goofy questions.

Additional Information: This activity works best with group of 20-25 people.

Beach Ball

Process: Before the game begins, the group leaders blow up a beach ball and write questions all over the beach ball, until the beach ball is completely covered with questions. Questions can include general information, or can include random, goofy, or opinion questions which will assist in sparking conversation amongst the group. The ball is tossed around the group, and whenever a group member catches the ball, he or she must introduce him/her and answer the question their left pinky finger lands on.

Additional information: This activity works for all sizes of groups, but works especially well with larger groups.

Introductions

Process: Each member of the group must introduce him/herself to another person and share not only their name, but also three facts about him/ herself. Then, everyone "becomes" the person they just met, and must re-introduce themselves to another person as the person that they just met. This continues with each person re-introducing themselves as someone new to another person in the group. After a short period of time, person that they are talking about corrects any miscommunications that may have occurred during the repeated introductions.

Pairs

Materials: Prepare several note cards with one member of a pair on each card (i.e. Mickey Mouse/ Minnie Mouse, Barbie/Ken, Aladdin/ Jasmine, Bill/ Hillary Clinton, Pencil/ Paper, etc).

Process: Pass out the pre made note cards containing an "identity" to each member of the group, and each person must find their pair. Once every group member is paired up, the "pairs" will introduce themselves with each other. After a few minutes, everyone takes a turn introducing their match to the rest of the group (name, hometown, etc).

Additional Information: This activity works best with even groups of over 8.

Fact Bingo

Materials: Before the meeting begins, prepare a bingo grid that contains facts such as “has blue eyes”, “is from Chicago”, “has a twin”, “was born in another state”, “has been a waiter/waitress”, etc.

Process: Each member of the group gets a grid and must travel around the group to find people that fit one of the characteristics in the grid, and have the person sign that box. Once time has finished, the facilitator will go through each grid and ask who the members of the group had to sign their square. This activity sparks conversation and insight to personalities.

Additional Information: This activity works best with groups of 10 or more

Hum that Tune

Materials: Before the meeting begins, prepare a sheet of paper with multiple nursery rhymes on it. Cut the nursery into individual sheets of paper.

Process: Each person will get a piece of paper with a nursery rhyme written on it. From there, they must hum the song on their paper, and as they hum, they must find the other person in the group who is humming the same song as them. Once they find their match, they will need to exchange an interesting fact about themselves with their partner. Once all of the pairs have found one another and asked/receive their random tidbit, they will introduce their partner and share their partners’ tidbit with the group.

Additional Information: This activity works best with 10-15 people. If you have an odd number, you can have three people humming the same tune.

The Artist and the Blob

Process: Everyone in the group finds a partner. One person will choose to be the “artist” and the other will choose to be the “blob of clay”. The pair will have some time to create a masterpiece from their “blob of clay”. The artist can shape their clay into anything they want. After two minutes, the artist stops and explains why they made their blob of clay or what it means. The artist and the blob will then switch roles and repeat.

Additional Information: If you have an odd number of people, then there can be one artist and two blobs.

Name Aerobics

Process: The group stands in a circle facing inward. The first person will think of an adjective that starts with the first letter of their first name. They will then think of an action that matches the adjective. Then the person will introduce themselves by performing the action while stating their adjective and name. For example, “Hi, my name is adorable Alisa!” As Alisa is saying this, she will put her fingers up to her face as dimples. The group will then say “Adorable Alisa” and conduct the movement. The icebreaker would continue to go around the circle until everyone has introduced themselves.

Additional Information: If you have a large group, you can separate into smaller groups (to help save time). Also, once everyone has participated, you can go around the circle one last time as fast as you can.

Camping Trip

Materials: 1-2 Rolls of toilet paper

Process: A roll of toilet paper will be passed around to the group. The group can be sitting or standing, but the activity will work best if everyone is looking at one another. The group members are instructed that they are taking a three day camping trip, which they will need to take as much toilet paper they feel necessary to get through the three day trip. After everyone has had a chance to take some toilet paper, they are then instructed that for every toilet paper square they took, they will need to share something about themselves to the group. The group will share their fun facts until everyone has spoken.

Additional Information: This activity can work with any size group.

Rock, Paper, Scissors

Process: The group will pair off as they were playing rock, paper, scissors, and each group will face each other. The loser will share a fun fact about themselves, and the pair will continue to participate in two more games (best of three). Whoever wins best out of three will proceed to find another winner from a different partnership. The person who did not win would sit down and wait until the group has a champion.

Additional Information: This activity works best with an even group.

Two Truths and a Lie (aka Truth vs. Lies)

Materials: Scratch sheets of paper, pen/pencil

Process: Everyone will be given a scratch sheet of paper. Everyone will then think and write down three things, two of which are true and one of which is a lie. Make sure that the lie is believable and not entirely too outrageous. After everyone has finished, go around the room sharing the three things written down on paper. After a person has read all three things, have the group try to guess the person's lie.

Additional Information: This activity works best with groups with more than four people.

If you were a ...

Process: Sit the group down in a circle. Once the group has been seated, ask each person to say what they would be and what they were, a person or a thing. Examples include:

A piece of fruit (I would be a pineapple as I am exotic, sweet, and zingy!)

A historical figure

A household object

A cartoon character (I would be Taz because I rush around!)

A kitchen appliance (I would be a whisk because I like to stir things up.)

Hey, Me Too!

Process: The group will form a circle with one person in the middle who will start off the ice breaker. The person in the middle will introduce themselves and then say something about them. An example would be, "Hi, my name is Megan, and I have a sister!" Everyone in the circle who has a sister goes into the middle and *enthusiastically* say (or scream, whichever) HEY, ME TOO!!, giving everyone a high five. The last person to get back to the outside of the circle will introduce themselves and the process will continue.

Additional Information: This activity works best with groups with more than two people; however, it's more fun with more people.

Silent Identification

Materials: Sheets of paper, markers, pens/pencils

Process: Each participant will be asked to draw pictures on a sheet of paper that describes them. Afterwards, this picture will be placed on their backs. They are to walk around and have everyone look at each other's pictures over. The facilitator will then collect all of the pictures, shuffle them up, and the group will guess which picture belongs to whom.

Additional Information: This activity works best with groups with more than 7 people.

Balloon Game

Materials: Balloons, small pieces of paper, and pens

Process: Have everyone put one piece of information about them in a balloon, then blow up the balloon and throw the balloon in the middle of the circle of participants. One by one, members of the group will walk up and pop the balloons. After reading the piece of paper out loud, the group will guess to whom that piece of information belongs.

Additional Information: This activity works best with groups with more than 6 people.

Animal Scrabble

Materials: On a slip of paper, write the name of an animal that makes an obvious noise (i.e. pig, cow, etc). You will need at least 3-4 different animals. For each animal, make an additional 5-10 sheets (so you will have 5 sheets of pigs, 5 sheets of sheep, 5 sheets of cow, and 5 sheets of wolf).

Process: Give each participant a slip of paper, but tell them to keep their animal a secret. Instruct the participants to find their “own kind” without talking. Within a few moments, they will figure out that they can make animal noises (if they ask, play coy- it’s up to them to figure it out!). Once two of the same kinds find each other, they stick with one another until everyone has found their group.

Variations: You can add a hint of danger by planting a couple of “danger animals” (i.e. snake, lion, tiger, etc) who if incorrectly approached can take you out of the game. The non-dangerous animals must be in a group of 4 to be exempt from being taken out of the game. The last survivor of non-dangerous animals is the winner.

Additional Information: Although smaller groups can do this activity, it is more fun with groups of more than 14.

Human Taco

Materials: Sticky labels with taco ingredients (i.e. meat, cheese, lettuce, etc).

Process: Stick labels with taco ingredients on the back of everyone’s shirt. Have each player mingle around asking yes/no questions to find out the taco ingredient that is on their back. Explain the correct order of ingredients in a Human Taco: Shell, meat, cheese, lettuce, tomato, salsa, and then give the short command, “I’m Hungry! Let’s Eat! Run for the Border!” Each individual must then find out which ingredient they are and then find enough to form a complete human taco.

Variation: This ice breaker can also be used as a team builder by adding an additional variable (like not being able to talk and use all non-verbal communication).

Additional Information: This activity works best with 5-10 participants; if you have more than that, you can make it a competition by separating the participants into smaller groups.

Give Yourself a Hand!

Materials: Paper, markers/pens, safety pins

Process: Instruct the participants to trace their hand on a piece of paper. Once they have completed this task, ask them to safety pin the hand on their back. The whole group will walk around and write one POSITIVE description of the person whose back they are writing on. Allow enough time for everyone to circulate.

Variation: This activity can also be a team builder for an established group and can be used as positive reinforcement. As an ice breaker, however, it is aimed to focus on positive first impressions/forming phase.

Partner Tag

Process: Have the group divide into groups of two; these two people are now partners and will link arms. One pair starts as “it” and separates, with one of the two chasing the other. Everyone else in pairs walks around. The person being chased is “safe” when he/she links arms with anyone, but the person on the other side of the newly linked person is now solo and can be tagged by the chaser. The new person being chased becomes safe by linking with anyone he/she chooses, forcing someone else to unlink and become chased.

Color Jacuzzi

Process: The object of this small group exercise is to get the group to quickly meet the other participants. The facilitator will call out colors of the rainbow, each of which has a different meaning. Each participant will then answer the question/statement according to the color:

Red (stop/turn-off): tell one appropriate thing that turns you off

Orange (motivation): tell one thing that motivates you

Yellow (creativity): tell the best idea you’ve had

Green (money): dumbest thing you’ve done for money

Blue (sky’s the limit): favorite fantasy about your future

Purple (royalty): what you would do if you were ruler of the universe for one day

Pick a Side (aka Ketchup and Mustard)

Process: Participants will be instructed to choose a side. A number of statements will be read (i.e. Ketchup or Mustard) and if the participant prefers one object/thing over the other, they would move to the correct side. Remember, no one can be in the middle. Examples include:

Play before you work or work before you play

Design a car or build one

Jeans or Khakis

Be a bat or a baseball

Texas or Montana

Liberal or Conservative

Morning or Night

Chocolate or Strawberry

Love or Money

New York or California

Hang out with a few close friends or with a large group of people

Variations: This activity can double as a high-risk team builder by adding more personal and deep questions. Questions should be at the discretion of the facilitator.

Clam Free

Materials: Frisbee or ball

Process: Start off by defining the boundaries of the “playing field”. One person will volunteer to be the “nuclear reactor” and activates him/herself with a Frisbee or ball. The object of the game is for the nuclear reactor to contaminate all the clams by tagging them with the Frisbee or ball. Once “contaminated” the “clams” (participants) become frozen in place. As the reactor chases and tags the clams, it would appear that doomsday is just around the corner, at least for the helpless clams that are getting zapped one after another. There is hope, however. A frozen clam can be defrosted if two mobile clams manage to link hands around him/her in a clamshell-like alliance and shout, “Clam Free!” To shut down the reactor, seven clams need to link up in a circle and count to ten.

Flush Tag

Process: Start off by defining the boundaries of the “playing field”. Depending on the size of your group, you can have 1-2 people who are “it”. Like regular tag, the people who are “it” aim to tag and freeze everyone else. Once a participant is tagged, they are frozen in the “toilet” position, which is half-squatted with your right arm parallel to the ground. To become un-tagged, another participant must come and “flush” the person by pushing their elevated arm toward the ground. At this point, both participants must yell “WOOOOSH”. It’s not as fun if you don’t!!! ☺

Commonalities

Process: Get in groups of 4 or 5. Each group has 2 minutes to come up with as many things as they can that they have in common. It needs to be unique to this particular group, and not just things that everyone has in common. The more unique, the better. If groups come up with the same item, they both cross it off and it doesn’t count. As facilitator, you are final judge about what counts and what doesn’t. You can decide that especially good ones get double points.

Pipe Cleaners

Materials: Pipe cleaners

Process: Have each person take a pipe cleaner and use it to form into something that represents who they are. It should be something that they are good at, that they like to do, something about their family, or something along those lines. It can be an actual representation or a symbolic one. When they are done, have them walk around and pair up with someone and try to guess each others’ shape. Then pull the group together and have people share.

What’s in a Name?

Process: This is a better one for a group that knows each other a bit better. Go around and have people share something about their name and what it has meant to them. It could be about how they came to be given that name, what they like about it, etc.

Cocktail Party

Materials: Name tags

Process: Put names of famous people, characters, (alive or dead, fictional or real) on name tags. Put one on everyone’s back. The object is to guess who you are by mingling around and asking yes or no questions.

Life Boxes

Materials: Sheets of paper, markers/crayons

Process: Take a sheet of paper and fold it in half, then in half again. Unfold and you have 4 boxes. Have markers or crayons available and have people write the following headings in the 4 boxes:

- 1) Childhood
- 2) High school
- 3) College
- 4) Future

In each of the boxes they are to draw a simple picture that represents an event or action that was extremely important to that particular time of their life. Have people go around and share their squares.

Commercials

Process: Have people prepare a 30-second commercial for themselves highlighting their skills and what they have to offer other people in the group. Visual aids may be used.

Concentric Circles

Process: Split the group in half with one group forming a circle facing out. Have them partner up face-to-face with someone from the other group. Read off a list of questions that the pair each answers. After a question, have the outer circle move 1 to the left, introduce them, and read a new question.

Piper Poker

Materials: Deck of cards

Process: Pass around a deck of cards having each person take one. They need to answer the question that corresponds with their card.

Food/Animal Name

Process: With the group seated in a circle, have each person state their name and a food or animal that starts with the same letter as their name. The next person repeats their name and adds theirs. Continue until you've gone around the circle. It will be difficult for the last person. You may want to have the first person go at the VERY end, and maybe have people have move around.

Interviews

Process: Divide the group into pairs. Take about 5 to 10 minutes having them interview each other, finding out a little bit more about the other person. Come back to the large group and have them introduce each other.

Acquainting Chairs

Process: Place chairs in a circle. Read off things on a list, like living in Drew Hall this year, and if it applies to any of the members of the group, have them move 1 chair to the left. People end up sitting on each other and hilarity ensues.

Where Ya From?

Process: In a room or set area, indicate north, south, east, and west. The center represents Hamline. Have people move to the spot in the room that would be the location of where they came from. Link up with other people in your geographical area and do intros and inquire where each of you is from.

Creative Name Tags

Process: Give everyone 15 minutes to make their own name tag. They may list hobbies, draw a picture, give a self-profile, etc.

Introductions with a Twist

Process: The master plan of this ice breaker is to give people an opportunity to learn something silly about each other and to divulge something personal about themselves. As a kick-off to the meeting, everyone is asked to introduce themselves by telling something informative (name), something silly (where you'd be if you could be anywhere right now, your favorite dessert, etc.), and something reflective (what you hope to get out of this meeting). Facilitators should, during the rest of the meeting, spontaneously recall specific things people said as a way of maintaining humor and giving members opportunities to connect.

Human Bingo

Process: Before the meeting, make a bingo matrix and at the top of each square put something that someone in the group might have done (for example, voted for Ross Perot, served in the Peace Corps, sunbathed on a nude beach, etc.). Everyone gets a copy and is asked to circulate, getting other group members to sign one square that is true of them. The first person to get "bingo" wins the prize.

Move it, Buddy!

Process: Make a circle of chairs, having one less chair than there are participants. Everyone is seated, with one person sitting in the middle of the circle. Everyone is given 30 seconds to learn the first, middle, and last names of the people seated to their left and right. The person in the middle then approaches any person seated, points to him, says "left" or "right", and counts to five. The person pointed to must give the full name of each person to their left or right before the counter reaches 5. Failure to do so results in that person moving to the middle, while the other person sits down. If someone yells "switch" at any point in time, everyone changes chairs.

Take What You Need

Materials: Roll of toilet paper

Process: The facilitator passes a roll of toilet paper around the room, telling everyone to “tear off as much as you need.” Once everyone has torn off a sheet or two or ten, the facilitator announces that for each square they’ve taken, they must share something about themselves.

Sweet Endings

Process: Remember when you did introductions at the beginning of the meeting, and everyone told their favorite dessert? A terrific way to close the meeting is to bring in a dessert cart and present each person with that favorite thing they mentioned. This, of course, requires a bit of fast footwork during the lunch break, but is well worth it when you hear those squeals of delight.

Poetry in Motion

Process: Instruct each person to write a poem about themselves. It must include his/her name and something about him/her, and must be a minimum of four lines. Each person reads his/her poem to the group as a way to introduce him/herself.

Start the Presses!

Process: Break into groups of two and have each set of people interview each other for 5 minutes. Each person then introduces his/her partner to the group using the information he/she discovered in the interview.

Guess Who?

Process: Before the meeting, write the names of famous people on several pieces of paper (one name per sheet- have enough sheets for each person to have one). Tape one sheet to each member’s back. Each person must go around the room asking yes/no questions about whose name is on their back. They can only ask each person one question then move on to a new person. Once someone guesses the name on his/her back, he/she removes the sign and sits down.

Hobby Huddle

Process: The group sits in a circle. Person #1 says his/her name and favorite hobby. Person #2 (to his/her right) repeats Person #1’s name and hobby then states his/her own. Person #3 states Person #1’s and Person #2’s names and hobbies, then adds his/her own. Go around the entire circle. Encourage people to help each other when needed.

Food and Fun

Process: Each member gets two saltine crackers. The leader randomly selects someone and instructs him/her to eat the two crackers then introduce himself. The leader then selects another member to do the same thing. Continue until each person has eaten their crackers and has introduced him/herself.

Create-a-Name

Materials: Sheets of paper, markers/crayons

Process: Give each member a piece of paper and several crayons or markers. Have each person write her name (large letters) and, with each letter, draw something that is of interest to her. For example, the letter “O” can easily be turned into a smiley face for someone who is a happy person, or a “W” could be turned into a person waving his arms with pompoms to signify a cheerleader.

Phrases that Fit

Process: Every person writes three slogans or sayings that seem appropriate for describing her life or job. Each person then introduces him/herself and shares his/her slogans with the group with an explanation.

Meaningful Musical Chairs

Process: A fun way for students to mingle and learn about each other the first day of class is to play this version of musical chairs. Arrange chairs in scattered pairs, semi-facing each other. Play some upbeat music. Instruct the students that that are to mingle around the room to the music. When the music stops they must find a chair. Beforehand a poster has been displayed listing by number 12 topics for introductory discussion. Now, the teacher rolls the dice and whatever subject the number corresponds to dictates what topic each pair will discuss (they must introduce themselves to their partner before discussing). When the music begins again they know to get up and mingle waiting for the music to stop and the next round of discussion with someone new to begin.

Putting the Pieces Together

Materials: Large squares (8in x 8in) of colored cardboard

Process: Cut one large square (8in x 8in) of colored cardboard for each student. Cut each square into 8 smaller pieces of various shapes (rectangles, triangles, pentagons, etc). Each square should be unique. Divide the class into groups of 5 and give each group the scrambled pieces for 5 of the squares. Each member of the group must be given 8 pieces. Their job is to put the squares together again without talking. Students cannot ask for someone else’s piece. They can only take another student’s piece without asking and give that student one of their things. Students continue giving and taking pieces until everyone in the group has made a square. This should take about 5-10 minutes. When they finish they can talk about what they just did. And they will have a lot to say. If the activity is successful and moving along quickly enough, have groups swap squares and repeat the activity.

Comic Strip Chaos

Materials: Large container filled with comic frames

Process: Each participant takes a turn at picking a comic frame out of the large container. After the entire group has each chosen one, the participants begin to search for other with the same comic strip sequence. After the participants have found everyone in their group, they must arrange themselves so that the sequence of frames is in chronological order to form the comic strip correctly. Upon completion of the sequence, the newly formed group sits down together. This is a great game to break large groups into smaller groups.

Lollipop

Process: Pass out dum-dum lollipops to the group. For every letter that appears in the flavor, the participant has to share something about him/her with the group.

String Game

Materials: String

Process: Participants select pre-cut lengths of string from the group facilitator. Each member holds the string between his/her thumb and forefinger. For each “wrap” of the string around the finger, participants must share on thing about themselves.

Make a Date

Materials: Paper plates, markers/pens

Process: Give each participant a paper plate. Have them draw the face of a clock on their plate with a line next to each number (no digitals!). Then have participants walk around and find a “date” for each hour, writing their name by the hour. The catch is, no one can make a “date” with more than one person per hour. After everyone has made their dates, speed up time and allow 1-3 minutes for each hour. The facilitator then asks a question for discussion on each date. The pairs will have a chance to get to know one another.

Adjective Name Game

Process: The group is formed in a circle, and each group member is required to think of an adjective that describes him/her AND rhymes with the individual’s first name. Each group member will amplify their new creative name, and the rest of the group will repeat that name and all the names of the previous people.

Blanket Name Game

Process: Have your group divide itself into two groups. Tell them to sit on the floor facing each other. Hold up a blanket between the groups so that each team cannot see the other. A member of each team is quietly selected to move up to the blanket. On the count of three, drop the blanket so that each of the selected members is facing each other. Whoever says the other person’s name first, wins. Whoever loses goes to the other team.

Line Dance

Process: The game begins with the group lining up shoulder to shoulder. One member starts off the game by doing a motion across the line (to the other end of the line) and saying his/her name at the same time. The group responds by saying, “Hi _____!” The game continues as each member goes across to the other end of the line. Once that is complete, the group pairs off with the person next to them and they do a motion together (and say both of their names) to get to the other end. The group

does this in pairs until complete. Depending on the size of the group, individuals then group in fours, sixes, etc... then in half, and then whole. The group works together to pick out a motion and should say each name as they get to the other end. The game continues until the whole group is working together.

Additional Information: This activity can be done with a group of any size. It is best, however, if the group has more than 10 members. This is a good game to use to show the power of individuals coming together as a team.

Motion Name Game

Process: Have the group stand in a circle. Anyone can begin the game by saying his/her name and demonstrating a physical motion to go with it. When the person is done, the entire group repeats the name and the motion. Then, the second person (on either side of the first) introduces him/herself and does a motion. The entire group repeats that name and motion and then the first name and motion. This will continue until each person has given their name and done their motion, and the entire group has repeated everyone's names and motions.

Name Tag Mania

Materials: Name tags, markers/pens

Process: Participants are all given a name tag and a magic marker. They are asked to print their name on the upper portion of the name tag and then to draw three objects that represent that they are on the bottom portion of the tag. After completing the activity, participants are then asked to share their names and what they drew on the tag.