

ICEBREAKERS

“The most difficult part of any job is getting started.” – Anonymous

Think back to the last workshop or class you attended where you did not know anyone. Did you have an icebreaker to help people get to know one another? Chances are that if you did, most people groaned about it. But chances are that it also made everyone more comfortable, released tension and started people talking.

If your group is newly forming, adding members or if you just want to add something different to your meetings, use an icebreaker! There are several ideas in books and manuals to use for icebreakers. Don't be afraid to make up some of your own to fit your group, too!

- Poetry in motion. Instruct each person to write a poem about themselves. It must include his name and something about him, and must be a minimum of four lines. Each person reads his poem to the group as a way to introduce himself.
- Start the presses! Break into groups of two and have each set of people interview each other for five minutes. Each person then introduces her partner to the group using the information she discovered in the interview.
- Strike the funny bone. Have the group sit in a circle and tell them this exercise is to be done without laughing. Person #1 says, “Ha.” The person to his right repeats his “Ha” and adds a new “Ha.” Person #3 repeats the two “Has” and adds another. The exercise ends when all participants, trying not to laugh (which is nearly impossible), have repeated and added the “Has”.
- Human Bingo. Make a “bingo card” on paper and have each square list something that someone in the group may have done or may be. For example, “I have traveled outside of the country” or “My favorite type of music is jazz.” Run enough copies for the members of your group. At your meeting, give each person a bingo card and instruct them to get the signature of a person that fits a description in one of the boxes. No one can have the same person's name more than once on his card. When someone has filled her entire card (or it is time to start your meeting), stand in a circle and ask whom people found that have traveled outside the country or listens to jazz.
- Kindergarten relived. Have a group finger-painting session. Stretch a large piece of poster paper over the table(s) and allow each person to have their own little section of the paper. Instruct them to paint their feelings towards the group, a particular project they foresee the group accomplishing, or what they feel the group represents. Hang the completed project in your office or cubicle.
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The farmer and the bunny. Have one person teach the group how to do the bunny hop. Instruct the group to do the bunny hop while they all sing “The Farmer in the Dell.” This gets people laughing and increases energy for the meeting as well.

- Guess who? 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 her back, she removes the sign and sits down.
- Hobby huddle. The group sits in a circle. Person #1 says his name and favorite hobby. Person #2 (to his right) repeats Person #1’s name and hobby, then states her own. Person #3 states Person #1’s and Person #2’s names and hobbies, then adds his own. Go around the entire circle. Encourage people to help each other when needed.
- Food and fun. Each member gets two saltine crackers. The leader randomly selects someone and instructs him 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 himself.
- Create-a-name. 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 pompons to signify a cheerleader.
- Phrases that fit. Every person writes three slogans or sayings that seem appropriate for describing her life or job (i.e. “The early bird catches the worm” for an early riser). Each person then introduces himself and shares his slogans with the group with an explanation.
- Multifunctional spoons. Break into two teams. Each team has a spoon attached to a long piece of yarn. The first person on each team “threads” the spoon down his shirt and out the bottom of his pants. The next person in line threads the spoon up her pants and out the top of her shirt.

Reference:

Forbess-Greene, S. (1983). *The Encyclopedia of Icebreakers*. San Diego: Applied Skills Press.

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