



# Ice Breaker Games

# Purpose of Icebreakers

So how do you avoid creating a frustrating, patronizing game that won't make participants feel like they are wasting their time and why should you try?

The benefits of icebreakers far outweigh any negatives. They can take care of **introductions** in a much more fun way than just simply going around the room and stating what's on your business card. They can make people remember **names** easier & help start **conversations**. When done right, icebreakers can quickly build a **sense of community**, **set the tone** for the upcoming session & give participants **ownership** of the learning ahead. They are also a great way for people to share their **expectations**, and for facilitators to **introduce the topic** of the day through the game. It helps participants to loosen up, **understand** each other more and enable better **collaboration** and **networking**. Last, but not least, it is a surefire way to energise the group and have everyone focused and ready to go.

## 1 Ice Breaker Games to Get to Know Each Other

Whenever you have a group of people participating in a meeting, project or event, they need to get to know each other to be comfortable in working together. This does not only mean just memorising names, but also involves getting the facilitator or leader of the session familiar with the group members.

### Just One Lie

This method is an adaptation of the well-known icebreaker 'Two Truths And A Lie' to create an activity that can be run throughout a day of meeting or workshop. Participants mingle and ask questions from each other while noting the answers on post-its. But everyone includes one lie. The result is that you have a board of interesting facts about each participants, among them, one lie. Throughout the workshop you can return to these boards for participants to introduce each other and find out what was the lie. This is an engaging technique to have an ongoing get-to-know exercise during a longer session.

### Diversity Bingo

This game help participants to get information on each other in a fun, competitive way. First, create a bingo card containing a grid of squares with a statement or question in each square that will apply to some members of your group and is in line with the objectives of your class, workshop, or event. After each player gets a bingo card, they mingle around introducing themselves and finding other participants who can sign their cards indicating that a statement applies to him/her. To avoid having people only talk to one or two people and filling up their card, limit the signatures they can give to 1 or 2 per card. When everyone has reached bingo or is super close, you can share something you've learned about each other, yourself and the experience of the game.

## Group Map

Do you have people who come from many different places to your session? A great way to get to know each other is to have participants place themselves on an imaginary map laid out in the room representing the country according to where they grew up. Ask them to share one internal value they got from that place, and why is that important for them. Encourage people to share a short story if they want. Sharing customs and values from your childhood can create more understanding and help form stronger bonds.

<https://www.sessionlab.com/methods/icebreaker-the-group-map>

## Unique and Shared

Create groups of 4-5 people, and let them discover what they have in common, along with interesting characteristics that are unique to a person in the group. This icebreaker promotes unity as it gets people to realize that they have more common ground with their peers than they first might realize. As people become aware of their own unique characteristics, they can also help people feel empowered to offer the group something unique.

## Passions Tic Tac Toe

The goal of this icebreaker game is to help the participants to get to know each other at the beginning of an event or to help identify their values during the later part of a training session. Create a 3 x 3 grid for each participant and have them fill in each block with a different personal passion randomly. After the individual work, have everyone walk around the room and compare notes. When they find the same passion listed in both grids, ask them to sign for each other in the appropriate square. The winner is the participant who manages to have other people's signatures on three lines (vertical, horizontal, or diagonal). You can continue the game to have as many winners as you possibly can.

## Line Up

This is a quick game where players have to form an orderly line without any discussion, or any verbal cues or help at all. The line is formed by a predetermined criteria (like height, or color of each person's eyes etc.). The tasks can get more complicated the more familiar the group is. This exercise helps develop team collaboration and non-verbal communication.

## Quotes

This fast paced icebreaker activity allows participants to get acquainted with each other in a meaningful way. Prepare about a quarter more quotes than the number of participants on individual slips of paper. Put the pile in the center of the room. Each participant picks up one quote, then picks a partner and begins to discuss what the quote says to them, if it is meaningful, and how. Then after a minute or so (very short) the facilitator gives a signal and participants

switch partners, and may switch quotes as well if they'd like. This can continue for 4-5 rounds for around 15 minutes.

## Have you ever? (Stand up if)

Prior to the workshop the facilitator prepares a list of questions which can only be answered with yes or no. These questions should begin with "Have you ever...?" or "Stand up if...". The facilitator reads out the questions or statements one by one. For each statement the participants stand up if they could answer the statement with yes. The questions should be designed to not be discriminatory, intimidating or insulting. Possible topics can be countries visited, dishes, games or sports tried, movies seen etc.

## Blind Square - Rope game

This is an activity that I use in almost every teambuilding session I run--because it delivers results every time. I can take no credit for its invention since it has existed from long before my time, in various forms and with a variety of names (such as Blind Polygon). The activity can be frontloaded to focus on particular issues by changing a few parameters or altering the instructions.



### Materials

- rope (about 20m)
  - blindfolds for everyone
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## Instructions

Before the exercise begins, tie a length of rope (about 20m) into a circle. Also, provide blindfolds for everyone.

To complete this activity, all the team has to do is to form the rope into the shape of a perfect square. You will have 15 minutes planning time, during which no one may touch the rope.

At the end of this time, everyone will be blindfolded and the rope will be placed in your hands.

You will have 10 minutes to form the square.

All the team members must be holding the rope.

Once you think that the square is complete, lay the rope on the floor.

**Ask questions to draw out responses that focus on any of these types of topics:**

- Attention to detail
- Collaboration
- Communication
- Creating a square
- Evaluation
- Planning
- Problem solving

### *Variations*

Don't tie the rope into a circle at the start.

## 2 Fail-safe icebreakers to use in class today



At the start of a new semester, teachers around the world turn their attention to the very first class. With a new group of students to integrate and make comfortable, icebreakers are an activity that are essential to those first days. But what makes a good activity? Ideally, teachers need icebreakers that are low in social risk, matched to your class's proficiency level, and perhaps just a bit silly. A good activity will encourage bonding, participation, motivation, and allow students to relax both mentally and physically. Of course, it's an added bonus if they can

be easily adapted as warm ups or speaking activities during the year. Here are 13 adaptable icebreakers that we love...

## *Moving activities*

### Blobs and lines

This activity is easy, quick, keeps students moving and talking, plus helps them discover what they have in common. The idea is for students to listen to their teacher's prompts and organize themselves in a *line* (for example, in alphabetical order of last name) or in *blobs* according to something they have in common (birth month).

#### **Try these prompts:**

- Line up in chronological order of your birthdays
- Line up in order of how many siblings you have
- Find those who are allergic to the same things as you
- Gather with those who have the same colored clothing as you
- Line up in alphabetical order of your fathers' names
- Gather in four blobs: those who traveled by car to class, those who traveled by bus, and those who traveled another way

### This or that

Along the same lines, in this activity students move to a particular side of the room to represent their opinions on a certain topic. To make this icebreaker work, "yes/no", "true/false", or "would you rather X or Y" questions are best. (A quick Google search will reveal dozens of sites with icebreaker questions to use or adapt.) Examples are:

- True or false (teacher indicates the sides of the room that correspond to each answer): I had breakfast this morning.
- Would you rather be invisible for a day or be able to fly for a day?
- Yes or no: Do you speak more than three languages?

*Tip: If you want to have questions with multiple answers you can assign each to a specific corner of the room.*

### Signatures

Ask the students to invent a "signature" movement or sound. It can be extremely simple: a clap, cough, turn in a circle, bow, word, mime, or gesture. Show yours first and go around the class (the students' signatures shouldn't repeat). Then it's time to remember them, beginning with yours and going around the circle again.

## Classmate bingo

An oldie but a goodie. Create bingo cards with prompts for students to use to ask each other questions. The idea is to cross off all the squares. Use simple prompts like those below, or try more complicated ones for higher level classes:

- Has been to Vietnam
- Prefers Vegemite to Marmite
- Likes snakes
- Is reading a book in English at the moment
- Has more than four siblings
- Does not have a middle name
- Got up late today
- Is allergic to something
- Has had a coffee this morning

## Who's in your circle?

Ask your students to draw three concentric circles on a piece of paper. Give them a topic (food, seasons, sports...) and ask them to write it in the center circle. In the second circle students write "love", in the third "like", and outside the circles "don't like". Under the topic, students individually choose a specific example to focus on (e.g., bananas, spring, tennis). Students then mingle and ask their classmates how they feel about the item they have chosen, writing the students' names in the circles that correspond to their opinions. Repeat with another topic.

## Toilet paper roll

Produce a roll of toilet paper and ask students to take as many sheets as they like, without telling them why. Once the class has their sheets, reveal that each sheet corresponds to a question their small group will ask them. You can also do this with pieces of candy.

## Two truths and a lie

Students write down three sentences with information about themselves, however, one must be a lie. Other students then ask them follow-up questions to discover which statement was a lie.

*Tip: This is a great way for teachers to give information about themselves on the first day of class. Ask students to think of follow-up questions in pairs.*

## Three things in common

Small groups must identify three things that they have in common with each other – the stranger, the better. Put prompts on the board if you would like, then give students time to talk. Later, students report back and vote on which group has the strangest three things in common.

## Time bomb name game

This is a fun, quick activity for students to remember each other's name. Ask your class to form a circle and say their name. Then, throw a tennis ball to one of your students. They have two seconds to say some one else's name and throw the ball to them, before it "explodes" and they are out of the game. Continue until only one student remains.

## Beach ball toss

Before class, write icebreaker questions over a beach ball in permanent marker. Standing in a circle, students throw the ball to each other. When caught, or when the teacher says "stop", the student with the ball must answer the question closest to their left thumb. Repeat until each student has answered at least one question.

## Candy pass

Give each student a small handful of colored candy (such as Skittles). Tell the class that a question has been assigned to each candy color. Write these on the board, considering having a mix of serious and more humorous questions such as:

- Blue: Would you rather be a tiny horse or an enormous chicken? Why?
- Red: What is your ideal job and why?
- Green: Tell the class about your house and who lives in it.
- Yellow: What are three countries you would like to visit and why?

Students are then told to eat all their candy – except for one piece. In this way they can choose the question they will answer.

## Sit down if...

With the class in a circle the teacher asks a series of quirky yes/no questions. Students sit down if they can answer "yes" and the last student standing is the winner.

## Speed dating

This activity allows students to talk to a maximum number of classmates in a short time. To begin, have your class form two concentric circles facing each other. Ask an icebreaker question and tell them they have a minute to discuss it. After one minute, the outer circle rotates counter-clockwise one position – and the activity is repeated with another student and another question. Continue until students have returned to their original partners.

<https://www.sessionlab.com/blog/icebreaker-games/>