

An Introduction to Teambuilders and Ice Breakers

What is a “Teambuilder”?

Adopted from the “Teambuilder Handbook” by the University of Mount Union (2007)

- Teambuilders are non-threatening activities that allow group members to have fun and get to know each other.
- The goal of a teambuilder is to make people feel as comfortable as possible.
- Teambuilders are effective tools that help to promote conversation amongst group members in a relaxing and fun atmosphere.

What is an Icebreaker?

An Icebreaker is an exercise that is intended to help group members form a relationship to promote a cohesive team. Icebreakers are typically presented as a game to "warm up" the group by helping the members to get to know each other. They often focus on sharing personal information such as names, hobbies, etc.

Tips for a successful facilitation:

Adopted from “Facilitating reflection: A manual for leaders and educators” written by Julie Reed and Christopher Koliba (2003).

- Promote active listening o Ask open-ended questions
- Ask for specific examples o Paraphrase and summarize as the group discusses o Acknowledge contributions
- Encourage participation from all
- Be a “vibe watcher”
- Never say “find a partner”. Instead use an organized method to help members find a partner (count off, commonalities, etc.)

Here are a few easy teambuilders or icebreakers that YOU can facilitate with your group:

Selective Perception:

1. Place the following sentence on a flip-chart or screen: “FINISHED FILES ARE THE RESULT OF YEARS OF SCIENTIFIC STUDY COMBINED WITH THE EXPERIENCE OF YEARS”.
2. Instruct your participants to count the number of “F’s” in the following sentence and write their answer on a sheet of paper.
3. Allow only 15 seconds.
 - On average, most people will only spot 3 or 4 of the F’s in the sentence. There are actually six. The brain tends to skip the word “of,” or perceive it as “versus.”
 - The point of this exercise is that one’s perception may not always be correct so it’s important.

Rock, Paper Scissors Showdown

Everyone pairs up with a partner initially and plays RPS (1, 2, 3, Shoot!). The person that doesn’t win must become a cheerleader for the winner. The winners then take on a new opponent. Eventually it will come down to 2 people with everyone else cheering on one side or the other.

How Many?

Materials: Roll of TP or bag of assorted candy

Pass around a roll of TP or M&Ms/other candy and however many pieces or squares are taken by that individual, that’s how many facts they have to say about themselves.

Spider Web

Materials: A ball of string, ribbon, yarn, etc. and scissors

Can be done standing or seated. The first person starts with the ball of yarn and talks about strength(s) that they bring to the group and then tosses it to another person across the circle. Once the facilitator should cut the yarn, showing that without everyone's strengths and without communication, the organization would not be as strong. After the game, it can be used to reflect on the interconnections within an organization.

PBJ Sandwiches

Materials: Index cards, bread, knife, peanut butter, jelly, plate, napkins

- This is an exercise that emphasizes the importance of being specific when communicating.
- Pass out the index cards to the group. Ask them to write down instructions on how to make a peanut butter and jelly sandwich. Do not give any further instructions. Collect the cards as people finish. 72
- The job of the facilitator is to try to make a completed sandwich based on the literal interpretation of the directions. Do not add in any assumed directions.

Beach Ball

Materials: Beach Ball with questions on it

Ask the group to form a circle. Pass the ball to the first student and ask him/her to answer the questions that are closest to his/her thumbs. Once he/she has answered these questions, have him/her pass the ball to a new participant who will repeat the same steps.

Famous Couples

Materials: Index cards and tape or nametags

Write names of famous couples on index cards (one person on each). When people arrive place a card on their backs. They have to ask other people "yes and no" questions to identify the name on their back. When they figure out who it is, they then have to find the person who has the card for the other half of the famous couple.

Hand Outline

Materials: Paper and writing utensils.

Draw an outline of your hand and then for each finger write something interesting:

- Thumb - something you do well (thumbs up)
- First finger - something that makes you stand out from a crowd
- Middle finger - pet peeve/something that frustrates you
- Ring finger - something you're passionate about/committed to
- Pinkie finger - a little known fact

Human

BINGO Materials: BINGO sheets enough for one per person, writing utensils

Create a BINGO sheet with characteristics about people that are somewhat unique. The object can be to have a person with that trait sign the sheet until all the spaces are filled or until a "BINGO" is reached horizontally, vertically, diagonally, or other traditional BINGO combinations. Some examples of statements are "only child," "has never been to another country," "likes broccoli," etc.

Two Truths and a Lie

Each member of the group tells two truths about themselves and a lie in any order they wish. The other members have to come to a group consensus of which is the lie. You can give an award for the best liar.

Rumor

Split the group up into smaller teams, appropriate for the group size. The first person from each team is to go out and make up a message together. This message will be used by all teams. Once signaled to start, the first person on each team is to whisper the Rumor to the next person on their team. They will whisper the Rumor to

the next, and so on. The last person to receive the Rumor will run to the provided white board or large piece of poster paper and write the message. The team that is the closest to the correct Rumor wins.

The Movie of Your Life

Give your participants a few minutes to imagine what kind of movie would be made about their life, and who would be cast as them. Ask each person to give their name and share the movie fantasy. Would their life be a drama with Meryl Streep as the lead? Or more like a Jim Carrey comedy? As a variation, you could modify this game by asking participants to share the kind of movie they'd like their life to be.

Hum That Tune

Each person in the group is given a small piece of paper with the name of a nursery rhyme or other song written on the paper. All of the people who are given the song must hum that tune and find everyone else singing the song. Then they form a group.

Zoom

A group tries to create a unified story from a set of sequential pictures. The pictures are randomly ordered and handed out. Each person has a picture but cannot show it to others. This activity requires patience, communication, and trying to understand from another's point of view in order to recreate the story's sequence.

Birthday Boggle

Everyone in the group remains silent. They must put themselves in order of birthday (date, month and year), without talking. After they have gotten themselves into what they believe is the correct order, go through the line and check their dates.

Virtual Icebreakers

- Personal Introductions - students are asked to talk about their professional interests, goals for the course, personal interests, etc. One option is to have students develop video introductions in Canvas.
- Eight nouns - students use eight nouns that best describe themselves.
- Five pictures - students create a collage of five pictures that best describe themselves.
- Two truths and a lie - students must post two truths about themselves and one lie and classmates have to guess which item is untrue.
- One word - students share one word that best describes them and post it in a discussion forum.
- Things - students share an image that reflects why they're taking the course or that represents the
- Common ground (for Zoom) - groups (4-6 learners) have 5 minutes to write a list of everything they all have in common.
- Burning questions - students write 1-3 "burning questions" they have about the organization.
- Create a "virtual watercooler"!