

# Ice Breakers

**"Human Scavenger Hunt" activity.** - To prepare, pick about 30-40 interesting characteristics and experiences and list them on a worksheet with a little underlined space next to each item. Next, have the students roam around the classroom asking each other to sign on the lines that relate to them. For example, some of your lines might be, "Went out of the country this summer" or "Has braces" or "Likes pickles." So, if a student went to Turkey this summer, they can sign that line on other people's worksheets. I say that it's OK for each student to sign two of any other person's blank spaces.

**Same and Different** - Organize your class into small groups of approximately 4 or 5. Give each group two pieces of paper and a pencil. On the first sheet of paper, the students write "Same" or "Shared" at the top and then proceed to find qualities that are shared by the group as a whole. Make sure to point out that these should not be silly or trite qualities, such as "We all have toes."

**The Pocket/Purse Game** – Everyone selects one (optionally two) items from their pocket or purse that has some personal significance to them. They introduce themselves and do a show and tell for the selected item and why it is important to them.

**The Talent Show** – Everyone selects one talent or special gift that they possess and can demonstrate for the group. They introduce themselves, explain what their special talent is, and then perform their special talent for the group.

**Birthday Game** – Have the group stand and line up in a straight line. After they are in line, tell them to re-arrange the line so that they are in line by their birthday. January 1 on one end and December 31 at the other end. The catch is that they must do all this without talking or writing anything down.

**Map Game** – Hang a large map of the world. Give everyone a pushpin. As they enter, they pin the location of their birth on the map.

**Paper Airplane Game** – Everyone makes a paper airplane and writes their name, something they like and dislike on it (You may also want to add additional questions). On cue, everyone throws their airplane around the room. If you find an airplane, pick it and keep throwing it for 1-2 minutes. At the end of that time, everyone must have one paper airplane. This is the person they must find and introduce to the group.

**The Shoe Game** – When entering, everyone must take off one shoe and leave it in a pile at the door. They keep the other shoe on. After everyone is in. The host will distribute the shoes to people not wearing the same shoe. When instructed, everyone must find the mix and find the person who belongs to the shoe and get some info about them. They then introduce their new friend to the group.

**The Artist Game** – Give everyone a piece of paper and a pencil. In 5 minutes they must draw a picture that conveys who they are with out writing any words or numbers. At the end of 5 minutes the host collects the pictures. Show the pictures to the group one at a time and have them try to guess who drew it. After this allow each of the artists to introduce themselves and explain how their work clearly conveys who they are.

**Three in Common Game** – Break the group into 3's. Their objective is for each group to find 3 things they have in common. But not normal things like age, sex or hair color. It must be three uncommon things. After letting the groups converse for 10 - 15 minutes, they (as a group) must tell the rest of the groups the 3 things they have in common.

**Dream Vacation Game** – Ask participants to introduce themselves and describe details of the ideal, perfect dream vacation.

**Favorite T-Shirt Game** – Ask attendees to bring (not wear) his/her favorite T-shirt to the meeting. Once all participants have arrived, ask each person to show the shirt to the group and explain how the T-shirt best resembles his/her personality.

**Famous People/Cities Game** – As each participant arrives, tape a 3 x 5 index card on their back with the name of a famous person or city. They must circulate in the room and ask questions that can ONLY be answered with a YES or NO to identify clues that will help them find out the name of the person or city on their index card. EXAMPLES: Paris, Madonna, Santa Claus, John Wayne, Casablanca.

**Favorite Animal Game** – As the guests arrive, and before you write their names on a name card, ask them to tell you their favorite animal and three adjectives to describe the animal. As they tell you, write the three adjectives on a name tag BEFORE their name (omit the name of the animal). Ask them to mingle with the crowd, sharing why these adjectives best describe their own personality. EXAMPLES: Loyal, cuddly, playful

**Creative Name Tags** – Give everyone 15 minutes to make their own name tag-they can list hobbies, draw a picture, give a self profile, etc.

**Circle of Friends Game** – This is a great greeting and departure for a large group who will be attending a seminar for more than one day together and the chances of meeting everyone in the room is almost impossible. Form two large circles (or simply form two lines side by side), one inside the other and have the people in the inside circle face the people in the outside circle. Ask the circles to take one step in the opposite directions, allowing them to meet each new person as the circle continues to move very slowly. If lines are formed, they simply keep the line moving very slowly, as they introduce themselves.

**Marooned Game** – You are marooned on an island. What five (you can use a different number, such as seven, depending upon the size of each team) items would you have brought with you if you knew there was a chance that you might be stranded. Note that they are only allowed five items per team, not per person. You can have them write their items on a flip chart and discuss and defend their choices with the whole group. This activity helps them to learn about other's values and problem solving styles and promotes teamwork.

**The Interview Game** – Break the group into two person teams (have them pick a partner that they know the least about). Have them interview each other for about twenty minutes (You can also prepare questions ahead of time or provide general guidelines for the interview). They need to learn about what each other likes about their job, past jobs, family life, hobbies, favorite sport, etc. After the interviews, reassemble the group and have each team introduce their team member to the group. This exercise helps them to learn about each other.

**Story Time Game** – The facilitator starts a story by saying a sentence. It then goes in a circle, each person adding a sentence onto the story-after repeating each sentence that's already been added.

**Ball Toss Game** – This is a semi-review and wake-up exercise when covering material that requires heavy concentration. Have everyone stand up and form a resemblance of a circle. It does not have to be perfect, but they should all be facing in, looking at each other. Toss a nerf ball or bean bag to a person and have tell what they thought was the most important learning concept was. They then toss the ball to someone and that person explains what they thought was the most important concept. Continue the exercise until everyone has caught the ball at least once and explained an important concept of the material just covered.

**Positive Reinforcement Cards Game** – Whenever a participant arrives to class on time from breaks, lunch, etc. give them one playing card. You can also hand out cards to people who volunteer for activities, are helpful, answers a difficult question, etc. At the end of the day, play one hand of poker. Give a small prize to the best hand (you can also pick the top two or three hands if you want to give away more prizes). Note that the more cards a person has, the better the chance of winning.

**Human Bingo Game** – 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, 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 (a candy bar or some other small thing).

**Lucky Penny Game** – Each person takes a penny or other coin out of their pocket and looks at the date. When it's their turn, they tell the year that's on their coin and recall something spectacular that happened that year.

**Straw & Paperclip Game** – Give each group a box of straws (not flexible straws) and a box of paperclips. Check that the paperclips can fit snugly into the end of the straws. Give each group a task (you can use the same one for each group if you want) and let them go. Sample tasks: Build the structure as a group – tallest, strongest, longest, most creative, most functional, etc. Debriefing included describing teamwork and situational leadership skills used as well as how different models are needed to accomplish different tasks.

**Four Facts Game** – Each person writes down four facts about themselves, one of which is a lie. Each person takes turns reading their list aloud and the rest of the team writes down the one they think is the lie. When all are done reading the lists aloud, the first person reads their list again and identifies the lie. The team sees how well they did.

**A to Z Freeze Game** Ask participants to recite the alphabet in unison. Let them go on for a while until you yodel "Stop!" At that point, identify the letter they stopped on and ask everyone to share something they are looking forward to at school that begins with that letter. For example, if the letter is "R," they might say "ravioli in the dining hall" or "rooming with someone cool." Once everyone has shared, have them recite the alphabet again. Stop them on a different letter and ask participants to share a personality trait they possess that begins with that letter. If the letter is "D" they might say things like "diligence" or "doofiness." Come up with different questions to ask for each letter and repeat the process.

Reception Line Game

- Divide everyone into 2 groups. Have them stand facing each other. Each person talks to the person

across from them until signaled (flash lights). At signal, person at end of one line moves to other end.

Consequently everyone has a new person to talk to.

#### Autograph Sheets Game

- Prepare a sheet listing traits or facts about people with a line for them to sign their name next to the

trait if it applies to them (i.e.: someone who wears contacts, someone who has been to Europe, etc.).

People then mingle around the room with their sheets seeking to find people who are eligible to sign

their sheets. A person can only sign once on any sheet. The process may also be reversed by having people seek out the autograph of people to which they think the category applies (i.e.: someone who

looks like they enjoy the outdoors, someone who is from the east, etc.)

#### Puzzles Game

- Give participants a blank piece of puzzle (cut up a sheet of index card stock). Each person writes on

the piece one skill which they contribute to the group. The puzzle is then assembled to show that

everyone contributes to the whole.

#### Human Knot Game

- Divide into groups of 6-10 people. Each group forms a tight circle, standing and facing each other.

Everyone extends their hands into the circle and by intermingling their arms, grasps hands with other

members of the group. Instruct people to "be sure that the two hands you are holding does not belong

to the same person". The groups' goal: untie the knot which results. Member of the group physically

climb over/ under/ through each other's arms to untie the knot of bodies. Note: It's RARE but it is

possible for a knot to be unsolvable or end in two separate circles.

### Find Someone Game

- Each person writes on a blank index card one to three statements, such as favorite color, interest, hobby, or vacations. Pass out cards so everyone gets someone else's card. Have that person find the person with their card and introduce themselves.

### Get in the News Game

- Divide your group into teams of four or five persons each, and make sure each team has the necessary supplies—scissors, tape, pins, and plenty of old newspaper. You'll also need a separate room or corner in which each team can work with privacy (and hilarity). Each group selects one person to be the model. After deciding what kind of costume to make, the team goes to work—cutting, crumpling, bunching, rolling, piecing, pinning, taping. After an appropriate amount of time, call everybody together for a costume show. (And don't forget to recycle your newspaper when you're finished!)

### Kangaroo Court Game

- Try this if there's an incident that irritates members of your group. Announce that a kangaroo court will be held to properly try and prosecute all guilty parties. After you make the announcement, everyone will begin to view the incident in question with a contagious sense of humor. Name the defendants. Select a lawyer for the defense, as well as a prosecuting attorney. Write up formal charges and submit them to the judge. Appoint a bailiff and court recorder. Screen and swear in your jurors.

### Make a Date Game

- 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.

### People Knots Game

- Everyone sits on the floor in a circle with legs extended toward the middle. Each person grabs two

others' hands and holds them. The hands cannot be those of either person sitting on your sides and

also cannot be the two hands of the same person. Now, everyone stands up and untangles each other

into a single circle, without letting go of the hands you have.

### Quick Change Artist Game

- Pair off into partners facing each other. Each player is to observe his or her partner's appearance.

Then the players turn around back-to-back and make two or more changes in their dress, hair

accessories, etc. When they face each other again, each partner must identify the changes made by

his or her partner. This game can be repeated several times by changing partners and increasing the

number of changes made.

**The Quiet Game**•The instructor explains that this exercise will take self control. Members pair back to back. On the

count of three, everyone must face their partner, look each other in the eyes, and then try to remain

solemn and serious. No speaking! The first to smile or laugh must sit down. All who remain standing

then take a new partner and the activity continues until only one person has not smiled or laughed.

(Second round of playing can involve two teams competing to outlast each other.) If you get a pair at

the end who are both keeping a straight face, the rest of the group can act as hecklers to disrupt

them.

**Sunshine Cards Game** – Everyone writes their name in the center of a piece of paper and draws a sun around their name. Pass your paper around to the person on your right. That person will write something positive about you and they do not have to sign their name. Continue to pass your name around until everyone has written something on all the papers.

**Finish the Sentence Game** – Write the start of a question on the board (i.e. My Favorite job was, My Hobby is.) and go around the room with each person finishing the sentence. When the group is finished, post another question and start again.