

- "Sharing Course Trepidations" In pairs or small groups, have students share their trepidations about the course. This may be particularly helpful in a course associated with high anxiety such as math or writing. Follow this up by either having students introduce each other, and/or by asking the groups to share what they consider to be their most significant concerns or fears regarding the course. As the groups share, the instructor can validate and address their concerns as appropriate.
- "Simple Self-Introductions" In a class where speeches or oral presentations are expected, have students take turns introducing themselves by giving their name, major, and perhaps a reason for taking the class (aside from fulfilling a requirement.)
- "Draw a Picture of a Significant Event" Have students draw a picture of a significant event that has occurred over the past six months and then have them share it with a partner. Following this activity have the students introduce each other and share a little bit about their partner's picture.
- Have students draw a picture, symbol or cartoon illustrating why they are taking this class. Students can share these in small groups or in pairs. Follow up by having students introduce each other and share a little about their picture.
- "Common Sense Inventory" Assemble five to 15 common sense statements directly related to the course material, some (or all) of which run counter to popular belief or prejudice. (For example: "Suicide is more likely among women than men.") Have students mark each statement as true or false and share their answers in small groups. Let students debate their differences. Instruct the groups to reach consensus and have a presenter from each group share the answer to at least one question. Either provide the correct answers or take the cliff-hanger approach and let the class wait for them to unfold during the semester. (Nilson, 1998)
- "The Circles of \_\_\_\_\_" Have students draw a large circle on a sheet of paper and other smaller circles radiating from it. Students write their name in the central circle and names of groups with which they identify (e.g., gender, age group, ethnic, social, political, ideological, athletic, etc.) in the satellite circles. Then ask students to move around the room to find three classmates who are most and/or least similar to themselves. This activity helps students appreciate the diversity in the class. (Nilson, 1998)
- "Syllabus Icebreaker" Have students get into groups of 3 to 5 to get to know each other. Then have each group generate a list of 5 to 8 questions that they have about the class. The instructor then hands out the syllabus and the groups go over it together to answer their questions. The class then reconvenes and the groups ask any questions that were not answered by the syllabus.
- "Getting To Know Each Other Through Writing" In a writing class you might have students spend 20 minutes getting to know each other through writing, without speaking.
- "The M & M Breaker" When students enter the classroom, they take an M & M. When they introduce themselves, what they share is dependent on the color of their M & M. For example, a red one might mean they should explain what they hope to get out of the course. Or, on the lighter side, a red one might mean they share a significant accomplishment or success.
- Have students complete a form with spaces for "something you already know about the subject," "something you want to learn," and "something that could happen in this class that would make it possible to learn what you need to learn." Have each student introduce her/himself and share something from the form. Collect their forms to understand, and when possible, address their needs.

- "Who's In Our Group?" or "People Search." Have students take approximately 20 minutes to mingle around the room, meeting briefly with as many students as possible. As they mingle, have them identify a person to pair with a statement and write his/her name next to it. They can use only one person per statement. Ask each student to briefly share a little about his or her experience with the statement selected. The statements can be designed to reflect the course content such as "Find someone who has taken a related course" or "Find someone who knows the order of the planets" or they can be statements such as "Find someone who is wearing shoes without laces" or "Find someone who likes spaghetti with clam sauce." You can grant a prize to the student(s) who gets the most statements completed in the allotted time period.
- "Identification" Have students get into pairs or groups of four. Tell students to introduce themselves and then have each partner or group member look in their purse/wallet/ briefcase to find something that is significant to them. Each participant shares with his or her group members or partner why the item is significant. The exercise continues until all partners or group members have shared. The class then resumes and class members are asked to introduce their partner, or one person from their group, and share something significant about them.
- "Dinner Plans" Have each person complete the following sentence: "If I could have dinner with any person, living or dead, it would be \_\_\_\_\_ because \_\_\_\_\_." (From: [www.resultsthroughtraining.com](http://www.resultsthroughtraining.com))
- "I'm Unique" Ask each person to share one thing that makes him or her unique. This can be incorporated into a classroom exercise for learning names - connecting the uniqueness to the name. (From: [www.resultsthroughtraining.com](http://www.resultsthroughtraining.com))
- "The Magic Wand" You have just found a magic wand that allows you to make three changes. You can change anything you want. How would you change yourself, your job, or any other part of your life? Have students discuss why it is important to make the change. Another variation is to have students discuss what they would change in this classroom if they were the instructor. (From: [www.nwlink.com/~donclark/leader/icebreak.html](http://www.nwlink.com/~donclark/leader/icebreak.html))
- "Marooned" Break class into groups of 4-7 and tell them "You are marooned on a 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 allowed five items per team, not per person. You can have them write items on a flip chart and discuss and defend their choices with the whole group. This activity helps them to learn about another person's values and problem solving styles and promotes teamwork. (From: [www.nwlink.com/~donclark/leader/icebreak.html](http://www.nwlink.com/~donclark/leader/icebreak.html))
- "Finish the Sentence" Go around the room and have each person introduce themselves and complete the following statement: "I am in this class because . . ." (From: [www.nwlink.com/~donclark/leader/icebreak.html](http://www.nwlink.com/~donclark/leader/icebreak.html))
- "Familiar & Unique" Break the class into groups (ideally by counting off). Each small group must come up with 5 things that the group members have in common (all working fulltime, all single parents, etc.). Then they are asked to share something really unique about themselves individually. The group shares their familiar and unique features with the rest of the class. A master list can be made on the board for the class to see and discuss. (From: Victoria Meyers at [cache.grcc.cc.mi.us/ctl/icebreakers.htm](http://cache.grcc.cc.mi.us/ctl/icebreakers.htm))
- "Learning from Experience" Have participants introduce themselves and explain one thing they have learned the hard way about the subject you are covering. Post the learnings on a flip chart and refer to them throughout the class.
- "Challenges and Objectives" Divide the class into small teams. Instruct teams to identify their challenges in the subject area and their objectives for the class. Post responses on flip charts. Have them introduce their team and share their work with the rest of the class.
- "Questions" Have each student write a question they want answered about the class on a Post-it note. Have them introduce themselves and their question. Then post all questions on a wall chart. During, or at the end of class, ask the group to answer the questions.
- "Collective Knowledge" Have students work in teams. Have them introduce themselves and then as a group identify five ground rules for the class. Have each group report out (sharing only what they have that is different from what the previous groups reported) and reach consensus as a large group regarding the adoption of the class ground rules.
- "Charades" Have the class work in teams of 4-5. Instruct the teams to identify one type of person they all find difficult. Then have the team act out that type of person while the rest of the class tries to guess what they

when dealing with difficult people.

- "Who Can Develop?" Have participants identify someone who has contributed to their growth and development as a student. As they introduce themselves, have them explain their relationship to the person that contributed to their development.
- "Developing Yourself" Have each person introduce him/herself and share one action they have recently taken to develop themselves (other than signing up for this class). This can be done as a large group or in small teams.
- "First Job" Have participants introduce themselves, sharing their name and something they learned on their first paying job.
- "Brain Teaser" Use a quiz as an icebreaker. Ask questions that we should all know but may not. Ask members to answer individually, and then give them a few minutes to work in small groups to finish answering the questions. The groups should be able to answer more questions than any one individual. This is a good demonstration of synergy and can lead into a discussion of the concept. Sample questions: What are the names of the planets, starting from the one closest to the sun? What is the most populous state in the U.S.? What 8 states begin with the letter "M"?
- "Good or New" Ask each person to share something good or new they have experienced in the last 24 hours.
- "My Slogan" Explain that many companies have slogans or "mottoes" which reflect their values. For example, Ford Motor Company uses the slogan, 'Quality is Job One.' Ask each student to write (or borrow) a slogan to describe him or herself and share that with the class.
- "The Best Team" Have each person share a description of the best team they have ever been on and why it was the best. Post characteristics on a flip chart. Debrief this exercise by having the team identify ways to maximize the "best team" characteristics. This icebreaker would be particularly appropriate in a class where teamwork is expected.
- "Three Truths and a Lie" Give each individual a 3x5 card and instruct them to write 4 statements about themselves: one of the statements should be false while 3 should be true. Explain that the goal is to fool people about which one is the lie. Allow 5 minutes to write statements; then have each person read the 4 statements and have the group guess the lie. Award a prize to the individual who makes the most correct guesses.
- "Guess Who" At the onset of the class session have each participant complete and return a 3x5 card with 2-3 statements about him or herself. For example: Favorite type of food, best all-time TV show, last movie you saw, last book you read, dream vacation, etc. During the session, read the clues and have the rest of the class guess which person is being described.
- "Something New" On the second day of class, ask each person to share one thing they learned about someone in the class during the previous class session. Have the rest of the group try to guess who is being described.
- "Common Ground" In small groups, have students come up with 6 things they have in common and have them share these with the large group.

## **The Top 10 Icebreakers for Meetings and Training Seminars**

Category: Speaking, Writers, Presenters, Trainers (AU20)

Originally Submitted on 9/25/97.

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Whether it is a small gathering at your home or a large training seminar, we all want to feel that we have established some commonality with our fellow attendees. By creating a warm, friendly, personal learning environment, the attendees will participate more and learn more!

### **1. Favorite T-shirt**

- Ask attendees to bring (not wear) their 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 their personality.

2. Personal Bi...

hobbies, books, vacation spots, number of children, favorite foods, etc). Prepare a bingo card (duplicate the card for all attendees to have the same one) with one tid-bit for each square, and instruct the participants to mingle with the group to identify the person for each square. As the information is uncovered, they ask the participant to sign their corresponding square. Keep moving among the guests until all squares are filled. Rules: only open-ended questions may be used. First person who fills card wins a prize.

### **3. Say cheese, please**

- As each participant arrives, take their picture with a Polaroid type camera and hang their photo on a piece of easel paper in the entrance area of the meeting room in groups of two or three photos (depending on size of meeting - you may have only 2 per group or more if the group is large). Use your creativity and decorate the easel paper to extend a Warm Welcome and set the tone of the meeting. Once all participants have arrived, ask them to find their partner(s) from the photo display on the easel and spend about 5 - 10 minutes getting to know the person(s). Then have them introduce their partner(s) to the rest of the group and share something they discovered they have in common.

### **4. Famous people/cities**

- 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

### **5. Sensuous Sam & Inquiring Ida**

- Ask each participant to choose an adjective that begins with the first letter of their first name and one that really matches their personality. Have them introduce themselves just as they wrote it on the card and allow time for others to ask questions.

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

### **7. Favorite animal**

- 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 Dan

### **8. Birthday Partner**

- Have participants mingle in the group and identify the person whose birthdate (not year - just month and date) is closest to their own. Find out two things they have in common.

### **9. Long lost relative**

- As a group, 1) ask each person to turn to the person on their right and greet him/her as if they really didn't want to be there. Yeah, you know what I mean - you can't wait to get out of there! Then everyone (simultaneously to create lots of fun and excitement) turn to the same person and greet him/her as if (s)he is a long lost, deeply loved relative who has just returned home and you're about to see the person for the first time in years! In fact, you thought you may never see this person again until this very moment. Okay, now ask everyone (again simultaneously) to turn to the same person and greet him/her as if this person just told you that you won the state lottery for 50 million dollars and you have the ONLY winning ticket!~~

### **10. Circle of Friends**

- 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.

## **Blown-Up Fortunes**

Players: 5 or more

**Equipment:** A balloon for each player, and quite a few extras to substitute for the ones that break ahead of time;  
A fortune, written on a slip of paper, for each player

**Preparation:** Push a fortune into each balloon;  
Blow up the balloons and tie their mouths

The fortunes may be funny or serious or silly - anything you think will add to the fun of the party. Here are a few suggestions:

You will marry a robot and have 14 children.

You will be a prisoner in the zoo.

You will get a pleasant surprise before the day is out.

If you don't stop eating so much cake, you'll get fat.

Watch out for clones.

You get the idea. When everyone has arrived, throw the balloons up in the air and let the players catch them. After they have each captured a balloon, tell them to burst the balloon if they want to find out their fortunes. The party begins with a BANG.

### **Zip Zap**

**Players:** 8 or more

**Equipment:** None

**Preparation:** None

One player volunteers to be the leader and stands in the middle. Then everyone in the circle, going clockwise, takes a turn calling out his or her first and last name. Each person tries to remember the name of the player on the right and left. Then the leader suddenly points a finger at a player-say Stan-and says slowly, "ZIP-one, two, three, four, five." At this Stan must answer by giving the full name of the player to his left.

If the leader said, "ZAP-one, two, three, four, five," Stan's answer must be the name of the person to his right. If Stan doesn't give the answer before the count of five, then he has missed and becomes "It," while the previous "It" takes Stan's place in the circle.

If Stan gives the right name before the count of five is reached, then "It" remains where he or she is and points to another player. Make it very clear that "ZIP" means the person to the left and "ZAP" is for the person to the right longest wins.

### **Bean Shake**

**Players:** 10-30

**Equipment:** 10 dried beans for each player;  
A small plastic bag or envelope for each player

**Preparation:** Place the beans in small plastic bags or in envelopes, so that you don't need to take the time to count them out when the party is on.

Give each player 10 dried beans. Then they are to start shaking hands with each other, over and over, as many times as possible. Why? Because each player gives away a bean to every tenth person he or she shakes hands with. The idea of the game is to get rid of all your beans.

This is a very funny scene, with everyone shaking hands. Of course, while you're trying to get rid of your beans, and handing them out to every tenth person you shake with, you're getting beans back from other shakers!

It's a good idea not to let the players know that they will be your tenth person, because they may try to move away from you. However, no one can refuse to accept a bean if he or she is really the tenth person you shake hands with.

You can also play this game in exactly the opposite way. In the second way, the one who ends up with the most beans is the winner. Then everything changes and everyone is anxious and eager to become the tenth player.

First play it one way, then switch to the other. Some of the players will get all mixed up, but it certainly gets everyone acquainted quickly!

## **Musical Crabs**

Players: 12-30

Equipment: Music (from a tape or record player)

Preparation: None

The players select partners and then form two circles - one partner in the outer circle and one in the inner circle. "It" stands in the middle, and someone else takes care of the music.

When the music starts, the circles move in opposite directions. When it stops, the circles stop moving, and "It" calls out a command such as "Head to head!" Then the partners have to find each other quickly and put their foreheads together. If "It" can get his or her head together with a partner who hasn't been found yet, "It" becomes that player's partner when the music starts again. The player left without a partner becomes "It," and issues the next command. The fun is in the many possible commands: Nose to nose. Eye to eye. Cheek to cheek. Foot to foot. Head to toe. Hand in hand. Back to back. Hand to ear. Back to front. Heel to toe. Shoulder to shoulder. Hand to knee.

Make up your own!

## **Follow the Leader**

Players: 4 or more

Equipment: None

Preparation: Set up a few "hurdles" in uncrowded places

This is a good warmer-upper, and it can be played with any number of players. Be sure to put away breakables beforehand and to point out to the leader the limits of the game?which rooms or parts of the house are out of bounds. One person is chosen as the leader and the rest of the group must do everything the leader does. It is a good idea to alert the leader beforehand so that he or she can figure out a number of interesting and unusual things to do.

Each player follows the other in a line close behind the leader. If you are in a large area, such as a hall or a gym, the leader can start by making a large circle, and then close in to make a smaller one. Leaders can skip, jump, run or hop or take any other kind of steps. When the circle is small, the leader can unwind it and run in a straight line. The leader can jump over a rope or some hurdles that are set up ahead of time (logs or cartons will do). The leader can do running broad jumps, somersaults and cartwheels.

Almost any activities are fun to do this way. Keep in mind that they should be different from each other and not too hard or too easy for the players.

After this icebreaker, the players will be ready for almost any active game. Depending on the leader, they may be ready for a rest.

This is also a good way to end a party. The leader can pick up papers, carry used dishes out to the kitchen, put on overshoes, and so on, and all the players must follow.

## **Autographs**

Players: 5 or more

Equipment: Pencil for each player

Preparation: Type or write a list of your guests and make a copy for each player.

This is a good way to get your guests acquainted, when most of them are strangers to each other.

Give each player a copy of the guest list. Each person goes around and tries to find out who everyone is. The printed lists of names give them a start. Then they must learn who belongs to each name.

As they do this, the players get each guest to autograph the piece of paper. For example, if one of the names on the list is Kay Robbins, the other guests will have to get Kay to sign after the typed KAY ROBBINS.

The first player to get the complete list of names with correct signatures wins.

## **Broom Dance**

Players: 7 or more

Equipment: A broom;  
Music

Preparation: None

"The Broom Dance" is always a funny mixer. You need an odd number of people to play and an extra person to start and stop the music.

The players all take partners. The extra person dances with the broom. When the music suddenly stops, all the players must change partners. The person with the broomstick drops it and grabs a partner.

The player who is left without a partner picks up the broom and dances with it until the music stops again.

### **Who Am I?**

Players: 8-10

Equipment: Slips of paper with safety pins on them, one for each player

Preparation: Write the names of well-known people, living or dead, on the slips of paper

As the players arrive, pin the slips of paper on their backs without showing them the name on the front. Of course, they can see the names pinned to everyone else's back, but not their own. Then let them try to find out their own identities from each other by asking any question except "What's my name?" Answers can be given only in the form of "Yes" or "No."

Players cannot ask the same person more than one question at a time. They must go from one person to another. When players think they know who they are, they don't say anything, but go to the leader for confirmation.

For example, a player could ask, "Am I a general?" or "Did I fight against England?" and so on, but not "Am I George Washington?" This type of direct question is saved for the leader, when the player is already fairly sure of the answer.

If players guess wrong, they go back to asking questions. After players guess correctly, they rejoin the game as answerers.

The leader can keep a record of the order in which players guess their identity and declare the winner later. The game is noisy and funny, because everyone is busy trying to be the first one to find out who he or she is. Players must always answer questions put to them by others.

A word of caution: Cover or remove all mirrors.

### **Talk Fest**

Players: 4-30

Equipment: Watch with a second hand or a stop watch

Preparation: None

Divide the group in half and line them up in two rows. Those in one row stand back to back with those in the other row. The players standing back to back become partners.

At a signal, the players turn around quickly and face their partners. They must talk to each other without stopping. They must both talk at the same time - about anything at all - and it doesn't have to make sense! All players must keep this up for 30 seconds.

Sometimes this game is played with only two players talking at a time. They stand in the middle of the room talking fast and furiously while the others watch and laugh. A contest can be set up, and those receiving the most applause are the winners.

### **Multiplication Dance**

Players: 8 or more

Equipment: Music

Preparation: None

Play any kind of dance music, and select 2 players to start off dancing with each other. Then stop the music. The dancers separate and each one selects another partner. The 2 couples dance until the music stops again. Then each one chooses another partner, and 8 people dance. This goes on until everyone is dancing.

music.

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