

Getting to Know Each Other Icebreakers

Step In/Step Out

(also duplicated in the Teambuilding and Commonalities icebreakers)

Ask participants to stand in a circle facing each other. Explain that you will read a statement, and participants will decide if that statement applies to them or not. If the statement applies, the participant will take one step forward toward the center of the circle. If the statement does not apply, the participant will remain standing where they are. Ask participants to reflect on each statement before making the decision to step forward or not. Remind participants that the interpretation of statements is completely individual, and that there is no right or wrong interpretation.

Read the statements one by one. Give time for participants to make their decision, time for discussion if needed, and then ask participants to step back if they have stepped into the circle.

This is a nice activity to allow participants to identify similarities and differences, whether between cultures, countries of origin, or individuals. You can select statements that relate directly to your topic, or some low-risk statements such as those below:

1. I had breakfast today.
2. I like the snow.
3. I consider where I live to be my home.
4. I like to play or watch sports.
5. I was born in the United States.
6. I speak more than one language.
7. I like to cook.
8. I like to eat.
9. I have children.
10. I like how I sing, even if other people don't.
11. At some point during this exercise I chose not to respond even though the statement applied to me.

Collage Creations of Yourself

Distribute boxes of collage supplies (scraps of paper, pieces of fabric, glue, buttons, etc.) to small groups of participants. Ask participants to construct a representation of themselves to share with the larger group. It can depict their personal life, their professional experience or background, something regarding their school, team, or work environment, etc. Give participants 15-20 minutes to construct something representative of their assigned part of themselves. Bring the large group together and have participants share their collage creations with the large group.

Apartments

(also duplicated in the Grouping icebreakers)

This activity offers an opportunity for people to familiarize themselves with each other, as well as a good way for the facilitator to mix up groups. Tell participants that they have moved into apartments, and the apartments only fit a certain number of people. Call out a number (4, 6, 3, etc.) to tell participants how many people need to be in their apartment building. Once in groups, participants tell their small group their name and one unique thing about themselves. Once it appears that everyone has spoken in each group, call out another number. Encourage participants to mix up and join another apartment, then introduce themselves in the same way. Continue calling out numbers and allowing time for participants to introduce themselves, eventually ending by having participants grouped with the number you need for the next small group activity.

You may also choose to have participants group themselves by particular characteristics (such as hair color, style of shoes, or something else immediately identifiable), and/or complete the exercise in a certain type of formulation (everyone from the same agency or country, no one from the same agency or country, etc.).

Name Alliteration

Especially when working with a group of participants unfamiliar with one another, an icebreaker can be a great way for participants to learn names. One common method is to use alliterations.

Ask participants to spend a minute thinking of a word (or phrase), starting with the same first letter of their name, that is a good adjective to describe themselves. For instance, "Kind Khadeeja," "Detailed Dana," "Hardworking Hlwin Chan," "Strong Salman," "Never-late Naresh", etc.

Ask participants to go around the room and introduce themselves with their name alliteration. (Other options are to have individuals alliterate their name with something they like, an activity they enjoy, etc.)

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Shaping Yourself

This activity requires play dough or clay. (See recipe below if not purchasing play dough.)

Distribute play dough to participants individually or in small groups. Ask participants to mold something with the clay which represents something about themselves, where they come from, their working environment, or about another aspect of their lives which would be appropriate to share with other participants in the group.

Allow participants 10-15 minutes to mold their clay structures. Bring the large group together and have participants present what it is they made to the group.

Recipe for Clay

Note: The measurements below are sufficient for three to four participants.

- 3 cups flour (white flour works best)
- 1 cup water
- 2 tablespoons salt
- Food coloring

Mix the water and food coloring together, one color per bowl.

Mix the flour, water mixture, and salt together thoroughly, as if making bread. Mix each ball individually until the color has spread evenly throughout the ball of clay. Add additional flour as necessary until the desired consistency is reached. Give to participants.

If the clay will not be used for more than 2 hours, store in airtight containers (e.g., plastic containers or sealed plastic bags) at room temperature until ready for use.