

Icebreakers

Icebreakers help to create a relaxed environment, build rapport and foster a productive learning environment. In order for icebreakers to be accepted it is vital for the person facilitating the activity to be enthusiastic and confident about the activity.

Considerations when planning Icebreakers:

- What do you want to achieve with an icebreaker? Do you want to set the tone for the session or lead into course content in engaging ways?
- Think about your group when choosing an activity. This includes group size, demographics, levels of knowledge, extent to which they know each other and more.
- Sometimes the word "icebreakers" is enough to put people off. Alternative synonyms include: warm up, rapport building, speed meeting, networking and introductions.

Getting to know (ideal for smaller groups)

Put questions up on a screen/flipchart/piece of paper and pass around a bag of M&Ms / Starburst / coloured cards. Each person introduces themselves and then asked a question based on the colour of the sweet/card they have taken:

Red - My favourite TV/Netflix programme is...

Orange - To me, the hardest thing about university is....

Yellow - In my spare time I like to...

Blue - My favourite animal is...

Green - The country I would most like to visit is...

Brown - In the future I'd like to....

If I were a . . . (ideal for smaller groups)

Go around the group and asks each person to say what they would be and why if they were:

- A cartoon character
- An historical figure
- A household object
- A plant/tree
- Any other group (something relevant to the course or something you are aware the group is interested in - i.e. Computer games, athletes, TV/film)

Alliterative name game (Ideal for small to medium sized groups)

- Everyone sits in a circle and goes round introducing themselves using their name and an alliterative adjective. For example: Hi I am Methodical Mick / Delightful Deeba / Smart Sadiq.
- Once they have introduced themselves they pass onto the next person.
- Each person must then say everyone else's name and adjective before introducing themselves.

String toss (Ideal for small to medium sized groups)

- Everyone stands in a circle.
- The first person introduces themselves and says one thing about themselves.
- Keeping hold of the end of the string they throw the ball/spool to someone across the circle from them and game continues until everyone has introduced themselves.
- It is important to keep reminding people that they need to keep hold of part of the string before throwing it on in order to create a web.
- At the end you can explain to the students that the web they have created is a visual representation of the way groups network/work together and how it would look totally different if someone was missing/didn't contribute.

Speed meet (ideal for bigger groups)

- The group form two lines facing each other (so everyone has a partner opposite them)
- The pair have 1-2 minutes to introduce themselves to each other
- At 1-2 minute intervals ask the person on the end of one of the lines to go to the other end and that line all move up.
- You can repeat this as many times as you like

Group map (ideal for bigger groups)

- The facilitator stands in the centre of the room explaining that the whole room is a map of the world, with Sheffield in the centre. The facilitator will need to indicate which way is North, South, East and West.
- The group must arrange themselves in the room relative to Sheffield as to where they are from.

The facilitator will go round the group and ask them to shout out:

- Their name
- Where they are from
- One detail about their hometown

10 things in common (any group size)

- Split everyone into pairs and hand each pair a piece of paper. Each pair is responsible for finding 10 things they have in common with one another.
- Move students around every five minutes so they get the opportunity to speak to different people.
- You can introduce a competitive element by seeing who can find 10 things in common first and then feeding this back to the whole group.

People Bingo (ideal for bigger groups)

- Create and print a table of questions, one per person.
- Give a time limit to speak to as many people as possible and find someone who fits with each of the statements.

Likes cats better than dogs	Doesn't know what sort of job they want	Wants to work abroad	Watches Game of Thrones
Listens to podcasts	Plays a sport	Watches the news everyday	Likes computer games
Can name three marsupials	Watches Eurovision	Can juggle	Doesn't drink coffee
Was born in another country	Has met someone famous	Plays an instrument	Can speak more than two languages

High speed card sorting (split into groups of 3-5 (warm up/rapport building))

You need a pack of cards and stop watch/phone timer per group

- Without any instruction or time to discuss the task get each team to take the shuffled pack of cards and sort them into four piles - by suit and in ascending order
- Compare the teams times and ask them how they did it
- Now give them one minute to discuss as a team how they might do it again but faster and then re-run the exercise

1-11 (ideal for medium sized groups (warm up activity))

- The aim is for the group to count from 1-11 with one person saying each number.
- If more than one person says the same number then it starts again at one.
- All groups do this at random to start with but some will realise the easiest way is to go ground in order.

1,2,3 (any sized group, split into pairs (warm up activity))

- Ask each pair to count to three, taking it in turns to say a number. As there are two people and three numbers it keeps shifting so they have to concentrate
- Once they have got the hang of this get them to swap one of the numbers for a sound (i.e. an animal noise or something distinctive). If the group is particularly engaged you can ask them to do an action as well
- After a short time have them swap another number and then the last number - this will result in - "roar! honk! meow!" etc