

Tool Kit: Icebreakers

52 Card Shuffle

(For Large Groups) ~ This activity helps a large group of people mingle and meet new people. Each person receives a card from a normal deck of cards; include the jokers as wild cards. If the group is more than 54 people, add as many decks of cards as needed.

TO LEAD ACTIVITY:

1. Have all group members stand in an open area, holding their cards.
2. Instruct the group to move into a variety of configurations and introduce themselves to the new person or group of people. Give the group a short topic to discuss, such as favorite food, book, movie, etc.

Ideas for configurations: Cards with the Same Number, Suits, Straight, Full House

(Note that some people will be left without a match. The group leader should help these orphans to make a group of their own or join an existing group.)

Ask Me About...

Each person gets a regular size post-it note. They should write a keyword response to a prompt such as, "Something that you know a lot about?" "Something about summer break?" "A teaching idea?"

After everyone has an idea, the group informally mingles around and asks each other about the topic. This is a great conversation starter. "Ask Me About..." can be part of the name tag.

Candy Bar Matching

Write clue on paper and have the group individually or in teams attempt to match up the candy name with the clue. (Answers are next to the clue.)

Bumpy Street----Rocky Road
Famous Baseball Player----Babe Ruth
Feminine Pronoun----Hershey
Charlie's Girlfriend---Peppermint Patty
Happy Nut----Almond Joy
Our Galaxy----Milky Way
King's Ransom----100 Grand
Toe Attendance---Tootsie Roll
Funny Laugh---Snickers
Relaxed Automobile----Carromallow

Coin Toss

Place a list of topics on butcher paper in the middle of the room. Participants throw their coins on the butcher paper one at a time and talk about themselves according to the category, such as family, hobbies, childhood, embarrassing stories, dreams, etc. Can also work with a spinner or dice.

Conversation Wheel

Have the group form an inner and outer circle causing people to pair up. Ask the group a question and give them 1-3 minutes to introduce themselves and discuss each person's answer. When the question is complete they cue the participants to thank their partner and have one of the circles move a determined number to the left. Once with a new partner, ask another question.

Creative questions to ask include:

- 1) What kind of music do you like and why?
- 2) Explain how you got your name.
- 3) Tell about your favorite toy as a child.
- 4) Who is the nicest person that you know?
- 5) What was your favorite grade in school and why?
- 6) Tell about an embarrassing moment.
- 7) If you could have one superpower, what would it be?
- 8) What is something that you always wish you were better at and why?
- 9) Describe your most cherished pet.
- 10) If you could donate one million dollars to a charity, who would you give it to?

Eyeball Tag

Group sits in a circle in chairs with one person in the center. The people sitting in the chairs randomly look at someone in the circle. If they make direct contact with another person, they must switch chairs. The person in the middle tried to grab one of the empty seats. It is amazingly fun and fast-paced, as people are constantly changing seats.

Fast Fingers

Form pairs. Both partners have their hands behind their backs. On the count of 3, each person puts out both hands, with 0-10 fingers extended. Both people try to add the total fingers and blurt the total first. Keep track of points.

Funny Face

Each person in the pair thinks about a funny face they know how to make. Then, the simply teach that funny face to their partner.

Group Juggle

Group passes objects through the air and says the name of person with whom you are throwing. Add objects, go faster, and/or no talking will increase the difficulty of additional rounds. Koosh balls, small stuffed animals, and bean bags work well for this activity. (Underhand throws only, please.)

TO LEAD ACTIVITY:

1. Stand in a circle with hands out to catch the object. When you catch the object, put your hands down so you can tell who still needs to receive it once. As leader, you start it and also catch it last.
2. Leader starts by calling a person's name, making eye contact, and throwing them the

object. That person then catches the object and says "Thank you, ____". They then throw to someone else by calling their name and making eye contact. Again, they say "Thank you, ____". The "thank you's" help the group learn names.

3. As the leader sizes up the group, they can add more objects into the mix. This gets several objects flying at the same time. Sometimes it's easier if you stop the thank you's at this point or it gets too crazy. Other options... go backwards or send one backwards and one forward at the same time.

Human Map ~ Set perimeter according to a state/city map and have members stand where they live.

Group Scrabble

Use a white board, overhead, or chart paper. Start the group off with a word that ties into the location, purpose, or theme of the day. Then turn the pen over to a group member and see if they can hook each group member somewhere into the board like a Scrabble game. Can be with participant's name, school, or a word that describes them.

"Hi, My Name Isn't"

Go around the group with each person introducing their real name, school, and position, then an introduction of themselves as, "My name isn't ____". The person must also explain why they chose that name.

People will share stories about family names, names they wished they were, names they are glad they don't have, etc., allowing the group to get to know each other a little better. This activity is also fun with a group of people who already know each other.

Hula Hoop Pass

In one large circle, group member hold hands to connect the circle. Place a hula hoop into the circle by disconnecting two people's hands, placing the hula hoop on one person's arm and then reconnecting their hands. The object is to pass the hoop around the circle by stepping and wiggling through it. The goal is to go completely around the circle without breaking hands.

Ice Breaker Gum

Pass out Ice Breaker brand bubble gum as an opening "ice breaker activity." :]

"I'm an Only Child"

Low Risk, No Equipment Needed, Sit Group in a Circle

1. Each person tries to think of something unique about themselves, something no one can claim. This unique aspect makes them an "Only Child."
2. One person begins. "I'm an Only Child because...." (completes statement)
3. If the statement is unique, continue to next student. (Discuss statement as desired.)
4. If someone else in the group shares the aspect, they immediately reply, "No, no. I'm your

Bro!" (if male) or "What's this? I'm your sis!" (if female)
5. Continue around the circle as long as desired.

In the Bag

This activity is one that is performed without rehearsal or preparation. The student relies on personal knowledge and experience to give a quick, impromptu speech to the group/class. Decorate a bag with the words "In The Bag" and make it look fun and creative. Copy phrases on strips of paper and place them in the bag. Students draw their topics from the bag and give a quick speech to the class. Let each student pick a topic and remind them that they have 30 seconds or less to talk.

Examples of phrases that can be used as topics for a speech:

1. Why students should never have homework
2. An unusual animal
3. The ideal age should be
4. How to be happy
5. My idea of a perfect day
6. The worst type of pollution
7. A fun way to travel
8. The best bargain
9. The best job in the world
10. The greatest book ever written
11. My favorite Olympic sport
12. How to avoid doing the dishes
13. How I view the future
14. The worst habit to have
15. How to clean a bedroom in ten minutes
16. How to mess up a bedroom in five minutes
17. The best place in the world to live
18. A great gift
19. The most important invention
20. Something I couldn't live without

Just Say Hello

Have each person in the group say hello in a different way. The challenge increases with more people as people search for foreign languages, slang, and gestures to say hi to their fellow group members.

Life with the Wright Family

[Life with the Wright Family Directions/Story](#) (Adobe Acrobat PDF file)

Link Up

One person stands and talks about themselves. When someone in the group has something in common with something they've said, they get up and link arms with the person speaking person. Only one person at a time. They declare the thing that they had in common and then begin talking about themselves until someone else comes up with something in common with them. The activity continues until all group members are "Linked Up."

Look Up, Look Down

All in the group are in a circle. The "leader" yells "Look Down." Everybody looks at the floor (and picks out the feet of their "victim.") The leaders than says "Look Up." Each person looks at the face of their victim. If the two people happen to be looking directly at each other, they must die dramatically and exit the circle. The leader continues "Look Down" "Look Up." until the last two remain the winners.

A variation to the game is to call it "Dude." If you are found to be looking directly at the person they both yell "Dude!" and put one hand over their one eye. They continue to play until they lose both eyes and then exiting the circle with a loud, pronounced "Dude!"

Name Tag Switch

When passing out items before a meeting or event, give each person the name tag or folder with someone else's name on it. It is then the task of that person to find the owner of the item to return it. This causes people who do not know each other to approach many people before finding the correct match.

Name Wave

The group stands in a circle. As the group leader, model for the group by going first. Say your name while making a motion with your body. For example, an arm swing, disco point, hop, swivel hips, etc. Freeze the motion where ever it ends up. As soon as you are finished, the person to the right repeats your name aloud, the motion you made and holds the position which starts the next person. This continues around the circle back to the first person. Everyone should be frozen in the same position. When it gets around, the next person starts from that position, makes a new motion while saying their name and holding it at the end. This repeats around the circle. It should go pretty fast and is a good way to remember everyone's name.

Pass the Knot

Like a group juggle, start the group in a circle with a circle web or rope large enough so that group members can stand shoulder to shoulder and grip the web in front of them with both hands. The group goal is to pass the web around the circle so that the knot in the webbing is in front of each person in alphabetical order. While the knot is being passed around everyone in the group says the name of the person it is going to. "andy...andy...andy...andy...andy...(knot gets shifted in front of andy) now it moves to barbara...barbara....barbara ... and so on.

Peek-A-Who

Divide a group into 2 teams. Two group leaders are needed in the middle of the groups to hold the two sides of a large blanket or sheet up. Each team should group behind the blanket so that they can not be seen. Once set up, each team sends a representative to a chair set up against the blanket. When ready, the group leaders chant "Peek...A...Who!" and drop the blanket on "Who." Only the two people facing each other in the chairs can answer. The first person to shout out the other person's name is the winner and captures that person to add to their team. The game continues until one team has all but one of the players.

People Scavenger Hunt

Put group members in small groups. The hunt is a competition between groups. The leader calls out either a literal item or a characteristic. The group must send that person up to the front of the room as quickly as possible. The first person to tag the designed spot wins the round for the group. Groups can also simply have the person stand and yell something to avoid running around. Items that may be called for include: Person with the most letters in their complete name

Person with the longest shoe laces

When adding up the ages of all siblings, person with the greatest sum

Person who has traveled the farthest.

Picture + Caption Matching

Take a picture from a magazine with a caption and cut them apart. People have to search through the group to find their match. Once the match is found, the pairs have to share something about themselves or the picture in pairs. Repeat several times.

TO LEAD ACTIVITY:

1. Each person starts with either a picture or a caption. (Note: Must have even number of people.)
2. Establish a 20-second mingle period where the group just moves around in a blob trading papers. This is a random activity that looks like a swarm of bees.
3. Lead says "Stop!" and the group finds their match.

Pipe Cleaner Partners

Group members pair up to introduce themselves to each other . Each person forms a pipe cleaner into a shape that represents what the other person has told them. Each person introduces partner and pipe cleaner to the group.

EXTENSION:

Each member of the group gets one pipe cleaner. They form a shape which represents what they've been up to lately. The shape can be literal or abstract. As they introduce themselves to the group, they share their symbol.

Postcard Puzzle

Cut one or more postcards into puzzle pieces giving each person a piece to assemble. With a larger group, you can use several postcards. Can also be done without talking.

Sandwich Boards

Have group members design a sandwich board to introduce themselves that they can wear around the room for a period of time. Sandwich boards can be made out of tag board with string that connect the two flaps so they can be worn front and back with the string as shoulder straps.

Sentence Relay

Divide the group into team with butcher paper on the wall or a chalk board for each group to write. Line up the groups about 10 feet from the paper. When the leader says go, each team member runs up to the wall and writes one word on the team's paper. Each successive team member is to run to the wall and add a word to the sheet. When each member of the team returns to the line, the next person may go. The object is to be the first team to complete the run with all people and to successfully write a complete, logical sentence. Sentences can be cued to a theme or related topic.

Silent Introductions

Place people in pairs that are not allowed to talk to each other. Each person gets a piece of paper and a pencil. In a given time give partner #1 that chance to draw things about themselves for their partner. The only written word allowed in the person writes their name at the top. After about 5 minutes, have the partners switch. Once complete, the partners must introduce each other to the group using the information that have gathered from the drawings. Be sure to allow each person to "rebute" or explain what they were trying to tell their partner. This activity can also work with miming.

Switch-a-Roo

When handing out name tags or folders at the beginning of a group event, give people a name tag that is not their own. This will force them to search out the owner of the name tag, introduce themselves, and return it to the correct owner.

That's Me!

(Works with any size group) Have a predetermined list of 5–10 questions to ask a group. Questions can be catered to a specific group. Instruct group members that if the criteria

listed fits them, they are to stand up or raise their hand and say, "That's me!" aloud.
TO LEAD ACTIVITY:

1. Practice with the group as a whole to break the ice a bit. The "That's me" should have a timing that everyone can come in on. Like Question...1...2...3..."That's Me!"
2. Sample questions: "Who has children?" "Who had pets?" "Who has pets that they treat like children?" etc.
3. End with a question that everyone will answer "yes" to.

TP Talk

Pass a roll of toilet paper around the room and have each person take some. Be very vague and casual about how much each should take. Once the roll has been passed, each person must tell something about themselves to represent each square of toilet paper that was taken.

Two Truths and a Lie

Each group member shares two things about themselves that are true and one thing that is a lie. The rest of the group tries to guess which is the untrue statement.

What's On Your Plate?

Start a group training by giving everyone a plate and some permanent markers. Have them write on their plate in pictures, words, or phrases the things and responsibilities in their lives that fill up their time. Math-type people even like to make it into a pie graph. People then introduce themselves and tell what's on their plate.

ALTERNATIVE SHARING: If the group is too big for everyone to explain their plate individually, you can have them raise their plates to various categories. Like "Who has kids on their plate?", "Who has _____", etc..

Who Can It Bee Now?

Each member of the group makes a list of three things that other people in the room don't know about them. Individuals can write their names at the top and fold the paper over so that you can't see the name. Throughout a training you randomly pull a name and try to guess. This is good for starting back up after breaks. For added fun, play the song "Who Can It Be Now?" by Men At Work (1982)