

# TOOL KIT

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ICEBREAKERS

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# PURPOSE

## GOAL

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An icebreaker is an activity, exercise, or experience designed to break the ‘ice’ that typically limits or inhibits interactions of a group of people who may or may not know each other.

# DESCRIPTION

## INSTRUCTION

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A group is exhibiting “ice” if there is little or no talking, reluctance to make physical contact, and poor eye contact. Additionally, group members stand alone, displaying a lack of initiative and absence of trust.

To qualify as an icebreaker, an activity, exercise, or experience should have most of the following criteria; An icebreaker should be:

- fun.
- non-threatening.
- highly interactive.
- simple & easy to understand.
- success-oriented.

# INSTRUCTION

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An effective icebreaker is an activity, exercise, or experience that successfully prepares a group for what is ahead, especially if you are going to address a sensitive topic. For an effective icebreaker, you need:

- A comfortable location and a relaxed atmosphere.
- Participants in comfortable clothing, if possible.
- An excellent leader or facilitator familiar with the icebreaker
- Clear, concise, relatively easy-to-follow directions.

The facilitator or leader plays an important role in the success of an icebreaker game or activity. Explanations must be given clearly and group progress directed. The same icebreaker activity facilitated in different ways with different groups can (and will) lead to a wide variety of different experiences and outcomes.

Some icebreaker games require large or special spaces, special materials and tools or quietness.

# EXAMPLE



## **Two Truths and a Lie**

Ask your youngsters to write on a paper three statements about themselves, one of which is false. Now ask the group to walk around and start to interact in couple, trying to guess which one is the lie. When a couple has finished it splits and start walking again to find a new “partner”. Give them enough time to interact with different persons.

As well as getting to know each other as individuals, this exercise helps to start interaction within the group.

## **Common Ground**

In small groups, have participants come up with six things they have in common and have them share these with the large group.



## Circle Challenge

Form your group into two teams and have them stand alternately in a large circle.

Provide each team with a different coloured ball of the same size, or place easily seen markings on the ball so players can tell them apart.

Then the leader says, “Go!” the balls are passed in the same direction from team member to team member.

The goal is to move the ball quickly enough that it overtakes the ball from the opposing team.

Each time this happens, a point is given the team that does so and the game starts over.

The first team scoring three points wins.

Make sure the players know they cannot touch the opposing team’s ball.

## Birth Map

Hang a large map of the world on the wall. Give everyone a pushpin. Have them pin the location of their birth on the map.



## **Creative Name Tags**

Give everyone 10 minutes to make his or her own nametag. They can list hobbies, draw a picture, or write a self-profile.

## **Paper Airplane**

Everyone makes a paper airplane and writes their name and two questions to ask someone else.

On cue, everyone throws their airplane around the room, picks up others' airplanes, and keeps throwing them.

The facilitator says stop after a minute.

Everyone must take one paper airplane.

They have to approach the nearest person and ask the questions on the airplane.

Give youngsters a moment to answer the questions in couple and start over again.



## **Silent I.D.**

Give each person a piece of paper with instructions to write words or draw pictures that describe themselves without talking. Then they pin their paper on their chest, walk around, and look at each other. Pictures are collected and shuffled and youngsters try to identify to whom each picture belongs.

## **Interviews**

Ask youngsters to form couples. Each person then interviews his or her partner for a set time (10 min) while paired up. When the group reconvenes, each person introduces their interviewee to the rest of the group. You can provide some questions or let them free to explore the other person freely.

## **Hot and Cold**

Two members of the group are chosen to be “it” and sent out of the room. The remaining people choose a task for them to do (stand on the table, do a somersault, etc.). When the chosen two return, it is the group’s job to encourage them to perform the task. However, the only encouragement allowed is applause when they’re “hot” (close to the solution) and make hisses when they are “cold”. You can repeat this as many times as you wish.

# PROS



Icebreakers play a significant role in any event or activity in which communication and participant comfort level are important. Icebreakers help ensure that all attendees are equal participants by breaking down barriers. Some reasons for using an icebreaker are:

- Icebreakers help participants get to know each other.
- Icebreakers warm participants up and get discussions flowing comfortably.
- Icebreakers help participants who know each other break the ice that can occur when individuals do not want to share personal information, or youngsters are shy or feel excluded.
- Icebreakers help participants who are strangers to start interacting, communicating and sharing thoughts in a comfortable, simple way.
- Icebreakers help participants warm up prior to a more serious discussion about specific topics.
- Icebreakers help participants who are diverse – various family backgrounds and ethnic groups – start talking and laugh, thereby increasing the initial level of warmth within the room.
- Icebreakers move youngsters outside of their comfort zones and get them to talk, socialize, and work with others.
- Icebreakers can be used in a wide variety of age groups, situations and social settings.



# CONS



Just as a great session can smooth the way for a great activity, a bad session can be the ingredient for disaster. A bad session is at best simply a waste of time, or worse an embarrassment for everyone involved.

As a facilitator, the secret of a successful icebreaking session is to keep it simple: design the session with specific objectives in mind and make sure that the session is appropriate and comfortable for everyone involved.

- Some people hate icebreakers: you need to decide, as a facilitator, whether you want youngsters to participate and interact according to their own time, or you want to force them to interact from the start.
- Icebreakers take time: the best ones are fast (less than five minutes), and they should have some connection to the purpose of the activity. Many facilitators use any old icebreaker regardless of the content, and that's a mistake. You want to have a fun experience, but also a learning one that is relevant for youngsters.



- Make icebreakers inclusive: keep in mind that certain types of activities are hard to do for some people. For example, icebreakers that require movement can be difficult or even impossible for some people with physical disabilities, or an activity could touch sensitive spots. If you ask people to do something they can't do, they get upset, and feel embarrassed

## TIPS



When designing your icebreaker, think about the "ice" that needs to be broken.

If you are bringing together youngsters from different groups, the "ice" may simply reflect the fact that they have not yet met, or they are not used to work together.

If you are bringing together youngsters with different backgrounds or cultures, then the "ice" may come from people's perceptions of each other.

You'll need to handle these differences sensitively. Only focus on what's important to your objective.



And as you move on to design and facilitate the activity, it's always best to focus on similarities (rather than differences), such as the shared interest in the topic addressed.

The key to success is to make sure that the activity is specifically focused on meeting your objectives and appropriate to the group of youngsters involved.

# SOURCE

## RESOURCE

- <https://icebreakerideas.com/what-is-icebreaker/>
- <https://icebreakerideas.com/quick-icebreakers/>
- [http://thetrainingworld.com/faq/starticebreakers  
.htm](http://thetrainingworld.com/faq/starticebreakers.htm)
- [https://www.mindtools.com/pages/article/newL  
DR\\_76.htm](https://www.mindtools.com/pages/article/newLDR_76.htm)

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