

Ice-Breakers QUICK TIPS

Icebreakers:

What do they do?
Introduce Members
Create a Comfortable Environment
Explore Thoughts and Feelings
Break up Cliques
Release Tension
Encourage Interaction
Acquaint
Kick Things Off
Evoke Laughter, Fun
Re-Energize
Share Information

Icebreakers are activities designed to foster interaction among members. They are particularly useful in the initial stages of group development, but can be effective in later stages to challenge assumptions, break up cliques, and deal with problems. There are hundreds of ways to “break the ice.” Here are just a few ideas.

Stage 1: Getting to know you

At this stage, group members know very little about each other. Focus on names and low-risk disclosure.

- Name Game: State your name and some bit of information and repeat this information about each person preceding you.
- Grab Bag: Pull out an object from a bag and explain how you are similar to it.
- M&Ms: Pass around a bag of M&M candies and have everyone take some. Each person must tell one thing about him or herself for each piece of candy taken (can also be done with a roll of toilet paper and the number of squares taken.)
- Make “Do-It-Yourself” Nametags
- Inside/Outside: Use a paper bag and magazines; cut out things describing how others see you (outside) and how you really are (for inside of bag).
- Matched Pairs: Tape the name of one member of a famous pair to each person’s back. Participants have to find their “mate” by asking other people “yes” or “no.”
- People Bingo: make bingo cards with titled squares like “has lived in a foreign country,” “owns a pair of cowboy boots,” etc., and find people who fit each description.

Stage 2: Getting to Really Know You

The group may experience hostility as relationships are formed and group roles are established. Focus on getting to know what each member is feeling.

- Continuum: State a value and have participants share where they all on a scale of 1-10 (e.g., “Honesty is important” or “this group is my #1 priority” 1=dis-

agree, 10=agree). Be careful to make sure group members don’t judge each others answers as good/bad, right/wrong.

- Social Activities
- Group Consensus Activities: Consult the many books listing activities e.g. Quicksilver by Butler, or Silverbullets by Rohnke.
- Gift Game: Have each member tell what gift he/she would give each member
- Set Group Goals and Expectations

Stage 3: Beginning to Work

Group moves toward cooperation and better communications

- Personal Shields/Coats of Arms
- Positive Bombardment: one member sits in the middle of a circle while other members say positive things about him or her.
- Pat on the Back: members write positive things about other members on “post-it notes” and put them on each others’ backs.
- Group Consensus Activities

Stage 4: Working Together

The group focuses on problem solving, interdependence, and reaching goals.

- Murder Mystery exercises, etc. where the group has to work together to find the solution.
- Role-playing: Members take on roles other than their own (leader, follower, tension-breaker, etc.) and work together to reach a goal.
- Group Self-Diagnosis and Evaluation
- Nonverbal Problem Solving (broken squares, puzzles, etc.)
- “I Wish I Could...”: Members share skills they wish to develop and how others in the group can provide support.

THERE ARE MANY OTHER EXERCISES THAT CAN FACILITATE A GROUP’S DEVELOPMENT AT DIFFERENT STAGES. FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT ICEBREAKERS, VISIT THE STUDENT DEVELOPMENT OFFICE, BSC.