

## Ice Breakers & Team Builders

**Name Game:** Sit in a circle. One person starts by using an adjective starting with the same letter as their first name, followed by their first name (i.e. Clever Claire, Kind Karen) the next person and following has to repeat the first person's adjective and name and then add their own. It goes around the circle and the last person has to repeat all other names in order and end with their own.

**Human Knot:** Have a group of 10-15 stand very close together. Tell them to reach out their arms so all hands are jumbled and intertwined. Tell them to grab one hand for each of their hands, but not the one of the person's next to them. Now they are a human knot and must use teamwork to untangle themselves into one circle without letting go of their hands.

**Two Truths and a Lie:** Go around group and everyone has to say two true statements about themselves and one false. The rest of the group has to guess which one is false. You may be surprised. You can learn some crazy things about each other!

**Balloon Game #1:** Have everyone put one piece of information about them

**Seeing the Future:** Give each person a piece of paper (11x17 preferred), folded into 4 squares. Have them draw in one square how their life is now. In another square, how their life would be in a year. In another square, how their life would be in 5 years; in the last square, their life in 10 years. Have them share with the group about all 4 squares. The time frame of each square can be adjusted as desired by the facilitator.

**Where Were You:** Take little slips of paper; write a different year on each of them; put in a jar. People pull one out and tell what they were doing/where they were at that time.

member is disqualified. After each round, more of the bag is cut. The last team member, who successfully picks up the



with anyone who be interested in \_\_\_\_\_. The one thing I want to be remembered for is \_\_\_\_\_. As far as future plans are concerned, I hope to be \_\_\_\_\_ someday.

**Sentence Stems:** Form dyads (2) or triads (3) and have participants complete the rest of the sentence. The leader can read the sentence to all of the participants or all participants can have sheets of paper with these listed and take their own time in covering them. (Excellent for roommates!) Here are some examples:

Before I came to Maryville, my main interests were...

The way I would describe my family is...

The thing I remember most about high school...

My fondest memories of another person are...

My most unusual friend is...

The things I value most are...

My favorite pastimes are...

Some of the things that make me happy are...

Where I hope to be five years from now...

The thing I would most like to accomplish this year...

The thing that concerns me most about college is...

Good starters for roommates might be:

The first day we met, the things I noticed about you were...

Since then, some things that surprised me about you were...

Something I like about you is...

It appears to me that an important difference between us is...

I think we might have to compromise on...

What I think I will get out of having a roommate is...

I think the most important thing I have learned from this discussion is...

**Shoe Factory:** Have the group stand in a large circle shoulder to shoulder. Then have everyone remove their shoes and put them in the center. After the group has formed a pile with their shoes, the leader has everyone choose two different shoes other than their own. They should put them on their feet (halfway if they are too small). The group then needs to successfully match the shoes and put them in proper pairs by standing next to the individual wearing the other shoe. This will probably result in a tangled mess - and lots of giggles!

**Shoe Game:** Have the group stand in a large circle shoulder to shoulder. Then have everyone remove their shoes, tie them together, and place in center. Have one volunteer choose a pair of shoes other than their own and make one statement about the owner of the shoes (i.e. "The owner of these shoes must be very thrifty and economical to wear shoes in this condition!"). The owner of the shoes then comes forward, introduces him/herself, and picks out another pair of shoes to introduce. Game continues until all participants have introduced themselves.

**Solemn and Silent:** The instructor explains that this exercise will take self control. Members pair back to back. On the count of three, everyone must face their partner, look each other in the eyes, and be serious. No speaking! The first to smile or laugh must sit down. All who remain standing then take a new partner and repeat the exercise. The exercise continues until only one person remains standing. The last person standing is the winner.

five seconds after they are stung. The more dramatic the death, the better! When someone thinks they have discovered who the stinger is, they may announce that they know. If they get a "second" from someone else in the group within 10 seconds, the two of them may make an accusation. If the person does not get a second, he/she must wait to challenge again, after another person dies. If another person does step forward to second the challenge, both point to who they think it is on a count to three. If they do not point to the same person, or they both point to the wrong person, the

**Blanket Name Game:** The Blanket Name Game is a simple name recognition/identification game. Go around the room and make introductions (share your name and other information such as your hobbies, major, etc. if desired). Separate into two groups and have two people hold a large, thick blanket separating the two groups so that neither group can see the other. When the blanket drops, the first person to correctly call out the name of the other group's designated person wins the round (which typically means the loser of the round must leave the game, though if you prefer to avoid 'elimination' then you don't have to do this). The group may strike different humorous poses to distract the attention of other group's person. As a variation, several people may be facing the other group with one person being chosen to call out the information of the other group's people.

**Celebrity ID Game:** The Celebrity ID Game is a good way to get a large group to mingle and break the ice by interacting with lots of people rapidly. To set up, the moderator prepares several labels with famous celebrity or well-known names (e.g. Tom Hanks, Mickey Mouse, Barry Bonds, etc.) The moderator sticks a label on each person's back. Then, the moderator announces it is time for the game to begin. At this point everybody mingles and introduces themselves to each other, and then each person asks yes or no questions to gain clues about the name. When a person correctly identifies the name, he or she removes the label and continues to mingle until a preset amount of time.

**First Impressions Game:** To set up First Impressions, pass out the large sheets of paper and writing utensils. Have each person write their name on the top of a sheet of paper. Tape each person's sheet to their back so that they can't see it. Instruct everyone to mingle with each other and to converse. Tell everyone to say hello and to introduce each other for a few moments. After a minute or so, ask each person to write an adjective (their "first impression" of the person they just spoke with) on each other's papers. Then have each person continue mingling with new people, repeating the process. After 10-20 minutes (depending on how large your group is and how long you want this activity to run), each person should have several adjectives and descriptive words listed on their backs. Go around the room and introduce each other, reading the words written on your neighbor's paper. This should be pretty humorous, and if people did this activity correctly, there should be lots of kind things said about each other. Important note: instruct everyone to write nice (or encouraging) words ONLY! Do not allow any mean, rude, or critical words to be written. For example, one can write words such as "beautiful smile," "great sense of humor," "smart and witty personality," "gifted listener," etc.

**Giants, Wizards, & Elves:** Teach everyone how to become three characters: the giant, the wizard, and the elf. Each character features hand motions and a noise.

For the giant, each person stands on their tippy toes, lifts up their arms, and makes an angry growling noise: "Rooooar!"

For the wizard, each person crouches a little bit, flutters their fingers as though they are casting a spell, and they make a magical noise: "Wooooo!"

For the elf, each person gets down very low on their knees, cups their hands around their ears, and makes a high pitched elf noise: "Eeeeeee!"

Practice each motion together a few times. Divide everyone into two teams and have them separate into opposite sides of the room. The game involves several rounds. For each round, the following takes place:

1. Each team forms a huddle and decides to become a giant, wizard, or elf.
2. Both teams then line up and face each other, about 5 feet apart.
3. The facilitator says "3..2..1..Go!"
4. Each team acts out the giant, wizard, or elf (whatever they decided to become).
5. As soon as they act out their character, the winner tries to grab the loser and pulls as many people over to their side as they can. The loser tries to run away, back to their side, in order to be safe. The winner of each round is determined by the following. The giant defeats the elf because giants "squash" elves. Elves defeat wizards by outsmarting them, chewing at their legs. The wizard defeats the giant by "zapping" them with a magic spell. Identical characters are a draw (no one wins). This process keeps repeating for multiple rounds until one team is entirely consumed (or when time runs out.)

**Human Sculptures Game: *Competitive Version:*** The facilitator should announce a category (e.g. famous movies or famous songs — the more specific the better). All players are then divided into smaller groups and one team leader is given a pen and paper. Each group brainstorms an idea that goes along with the topic and each team leader must write

down the idea on a sheet of paper and turn it in to the lea



It's okay if someone doesn't have anyone else who has the same answer. Just try to avoid two groups with the same answer (means they didn't mingle very well!) Some examples of mingles: your favorite dessert; the type of toothpaste you use; if you could attend one huge event (e.g. the Superbowl, Oscars, World Series, Nascar Opening Day, etc.) what would you choose; your least favorite chore growing up as a kid; if you could be the very best at something, what would it be?

**Telephone Charades:** The Telephone Charades Game (also sometimes called "Charades Down the Line") is an icebreaker/stationary game that is a hilarious blend of the classic "telephone down the line" and "charades" game. This group game is fairly simple to play. Select five to six participants and ask them to leave the room. The audience chooses an action that is specific, silly, and obscure to act out (e.g. "a nerd's romantic first date", "washing an elephant", "going skydiving", etc.). Once the clue has been decided, bring in all the participants and instruct them to face the right side. The moderator reveals the clue to the first person, who taps the second person on the shoulder and acts out the topic using charades rules (no talking allowed, no noises). The second person then taps the third person and acts out his or her understanding of what was acted out. This continues until it reaches the last person in line, who must guess what the action is. This game is funny because the action mutates and changes based upon each person's interpretation of what is going on, often leading to confusion and silly motions.

**Wink Murder:** Sit the youth in a circle, facing each other. Choose one youth to be the 'detective'. Send this youth out of the room or get him to shut his eyes and look away. Ask the remaining youth to close their eyes and put their heads down. Pick a 'murderer' by tapping one of them on the shoulder. The role of the murderer is to outsmart the detective by killing off everyone without being discovered. To do so, he must make eye contact and wink at someone without the detective seeing him (note: no one knows who the murderer is besides the facilitator who chose him). After someone is winked at, he or she must wait five seconds, then loudly 'die' and lay back on the floor. The detective has three chances to guess who the murderer is. If he does not accurately identify the 'murderer' in three guesses before everyone dies, the murderer wins.

**Squeeze Murder:** Choose someone to be the 'detective'. Send this person away from the group. Ask everyone else to close their eyes and put their heads down. Select the 'murderer' by tapping someone on the shoulder. Tell the youth to begin walking around, shaking hands with everyone, and ask the 'detective' to come back into the room. The role of the 'murderer' is to outsmart the detective by killing off everyone without being discovered. To do so, she must squeeze the person's hand while shaking it. The person whose hand was squeezed must wait five seconds (while still walking around shaking hands), then loudly die and fall to the floor. The detective has three guesses. If he does not accurately identify the murderer in three guesses and before everyone dies, the murderer wins.

**Balloon Master:** Have everyone blow up a balloon and tie a string (about 2 feet long) to it. Now have everyone tie the other end of the string around their ankle. Players must run around and try to pop others' balloons by stepping on them. The last person with an unpoped balloon wins!

**Clump:** Have the participants walk around and mingle. Randomly call out a number. The participants must try and get into groups of that number. Any participants that do not end up in a group are out of the game.

**String You Together:** Arrange everyone in a circle, standing or sitting. Begin by stating your name and one unique fact about yourself (for example: "I have 7 siblings, I have a pet iguana, I can lick my elbow...", etc.). Hold onto your end and toss the ball of string to someone else in the circle. This person now must say her name and one unique fact about herself. Holding onto her place on the string, she then tosses the ball to someone else. Continue this until everyone is holding a piece of the string.

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**Mine Field:** Guides must lead a blindfolded individual through an obstacle course (mine field), using verbal cues only. Ask the participants to find a partner and decide who will be the guide (they can take turns). Tie a blindfold around the remaining individual and spin him around a couple times to disorient him. The guide must lead the blindfolded individual through the course without stepping on any mines (for example: "take three big steps forward. Take two little steps to the left," etc.). The guide learns how to be responsible for team-mates while the blindfolded person learns to rely on team-mates.

**Get A Clue:** Stick a piece of paper naming an animal (or other category) on each participant's forehead or back, in a way that allows







## Icebreaker Facilitation Tips

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Here are some specific tips to think about when presenting:

- Keep rules and verbal instructions to a minimum to avoid boredom and confusion, most people learn best by watching and then doing.
- If possible, avoid being a spectator or sideliner; get involved and play as many games as you're comfortable with.
- Don't worry about sticking to the rules. Change them and bend them as you go.
- Look for signs of "enough" and then introduce a new game before interest begins to wane.
- If possible, keep players in the game, avoiding or altering rules that permanently eliminate people.
- Start an activity or session that brings the whole group together.
- Alternate between active and quiet activities.
- If people are tired or just waking up start with quiet activities. If players are young or have