

# Ice Breakers

## How to use ice breakers successfully:

1. **Know your audience**- before choosing your ice breaker activity assess your group for: age, familiarity with one another, purpose of the group gathering, and potential considerations for physical abilities.
2. **Build intensity**- begin with activities with limited movement, minimal physical contact, and simple rules. You can then progressively increase each of these factors with subsequent activities.
3. **Flexibility**- tailor each activity to the strengths of the group, it's okay to adjust the instructions!
4. **Be enthusiastic** –ice breakers can be uncomfortable for group members, but the whole point is to break down those barriers and learn something about the group. Be sure to actively participate in the ice breaker, setting a precedent for all group members. Attitude is contagious!

## Ice Breakers

### My name is?

Go around the group and ask each young person to state his/her name and attach an adjective that not only describes a dominant characteristic, but also starts with the same letter of his name e.g. generous Grahame, dynamic Dave. Write them down and refer to them by this for the rest of the evening.

## Conversations

Each person is given a sheet of paper with a series of instructions to follow. This is a good mixing game and conversation starter as each person must speak to everyone else. For example:

- Count the number of brown eyed boys in the room.
- Find out who has made the longest journey.
- Who has the most unusual hobby?

- Find the weirdest thing anyone has eaten.
- Who has had the most embarrassing experience?
- Who knows what 'Hippopotomonstrosesquippedaliophobia' is a fear of?

Nearest guess wins. If that's too easy you can try Arachibutyrophobia, Alektorophobia, Ephebiphobia or Anglophobia.

### **The question web**

You need to have a spool of string or wool for this game. Ask the group members to stand in a circle. Hold on to the end of the string and throw the ball/spool to a group member to catch. They then choose a question from 1-20 to answer. A list of 20 sample questions is given below. Adapt for your group. Holding the string they then throw it to another member of the group. Eventually this creates a web as well as learning some interesting things about each other! At the end of the game you could comment that we all played a part in creating this unique web and if one person was gone it would look different. In the same way it's important that we all take part to make the group what it is, unique and special.

1. If you had a time machine that would work only once, what point in the future or in history would you visit?
2. If you could go anywhere in the world, where would you go?
3. If your house was burning down, what three objects would you try and save?
4. If you could talk to any one person now living, who would it be and why?
5. If you HAD to give up one of your senses (hearing, seeing, feeling, smelling, tasting) which would it be and why?
6. If you were an animal, what would you be and why?
7. Do you have a pet? If not, what sort of pet would you like?
8. Name a gift you will never forget?
9. Name one thing you really like about yourself.
10. What's your favorite thing to do in the summer?
11. Who's your favorite cartoon character, and why?

12. Does your name have a special meaning and or were you named after someone special?
13. What is the hardest thing you have ever done?
14. If you are at a friend's or relative's house for dinner and you find a dead insect in your salad, what would you do?
15. What was the best thing that happened to you this past week?
16. If you had this week over again what would you do differently?
17. What is the first thing that comes to mind when you think about being a Bearcat?
18. What's the weirdest thing you've ever eaten?
19. If you could change one problem in the world today, what would you like to change?
20. What book, movie or video have you seen/read recently you would recommend? Why?

### **Desert Island**

Announce, 'You've been exiled to a deserted island for a year. In addition to the essentials, you may take one piece of music, one book, and one luxury item you can carry with you i.e. not a boat to leave the island! What would you take and why?'

Allow a few minutes for group to draw up their list of three items, before sharing their choices with the rest of the group. As with most icebreakers and relationship building activities, it's good for the group leaders to join in too!

### **Would you rather..?**

Questions may range from silly trivia to more serious content. On the way you might find out some interesting things about your group! Place a line of tape down the center of the room. Ask the group to straddle the tape.

When asked 'Would you rather?' they have to jump to the left or right as indicated by the leader. Below are 20 starter questions, just add your own and let the fun begin.

Would you rather..?

- Visit the doctor or the dentist?

- Eat broccoli or carrots?
- Watch TV or listen to music?
- Own a lizard or a snake?
- Have a beach holiday or a mountain holiday?
- Be an apple or a banana?
- Be invisible or be able to read minds?
- Be hairy all over or completely bald?
- Be the most popular or the smartest person you know?
- Make headlines for saving somebody's life or winning a Nobel Prize?
- Go without television or fast food for the rest of your life?
- Have permanent diarrhea or permanent constipation?
- Be handsome/beautiful and dumb or be ugly and really smart?
- Always be cold or always be hot?
- Not hear or not see?
- Eliminate hunger and disease or be able to bring lasting world peace?
- Be stranded on a deserted island alone or with someone you don't like?
- See the future or change the past?
- Be three inches taller or three inches shorter?
- Wrestle a lion or fight a shark?

## Flags

'Flags' is a get-to-know-you activity, helping people express what's important to them or more about themselves. Provide large sheets of paper, crayons, markers and paints. Ask each young person to draw a flag which contains some symbols or pictures describing who they are, what's important to them or what they enjoy. Each flag is divided into 4 or 6 segments. Each segment can contain a picture i.e. favorite emotion, favorite food, a hobby, a skill, where you were born, your family, your faith. Give everyone 20 minutes to draw their flags. Ask some of the group to share their flags and explain the meaning of what they drew.

## People Bingo

Great for new groups. Make a 5 by 4 grid on a piece of card and duplicate for everyone in your group. Supply pens or pencils. Each box contains one of the statements below. Encourage the group to mix, talk to everyone to try and complete their card. If one of the items listed on the bingo card relates to the person they are talking with, have them sign their name in that box.

End the activity after 10 minutes and review some of the interesting facts the group has discovered about each other. You can add your own statements appropriate for your group.

- Has brown eyes
- Has made the longest journey
- Has eaten the weirdest food
- Plays Tennis
- Is wearing blue
- Speaks a foreign language
- Knows what a muntjak is (it's a small deer)
- Plays a musical instrument
- Has 2 or more pets
- Has been to the most foreign countries
- Hates broccoli
- Has 2 or more siblings
- Name begins with an 'S'
- Loves Chinese food
- Loves to ski
- Knows what a quark is (A quark is a tiny theoretical particle that makes up protons and neutrons in the atomic nucleus. So there!)
- Loves soccer
- Likes to get up early
- Someone who's favorite TV show is CSI
- Someone over 6ft tall

### **Chain of Connectedness**

One person starts out by introducing him or herself to the group by saying, "Hi, my name is James and I like to go hiking." When someone in the group hears something that James is saying that they have in common with him, that person walks to James and links arms with him. He or she will then say, "This is James and my name is... and we both like to hike." And then he or she will continue by talking about him or herself. The pattern continues and the last person has to find something that they have in common with the first person. Eventually, everyone's arms will be locked in one gigantic chain.

### **You're a Bearcat Too**

This is similar to the concept of musical chairs and is best played sitting, but can be done standing with "place markers". The group sits in a circle facing each other with one Bearcat in the middle of the circle. The person in the middle says their name and makes a statement about themselves. For example, "I'm a Bearcat, you're a Bearcat too if you... love to swim... were born in Ohio... have an older brother... favorite food is pizza." Anyone in the circle that has that in common must move to another chair in the circle. The one person without a chair must repeat the process by saying something about themselves.

### **Sticky Name Tags**

Have participants put on removable nametags, sticker nametags are easiest. Have participants introduce themselves to one other person. Suggest 2-4 questions for the pairs to talk about and learn about each other (favorite food, hometown, major, hobbies, etc). After a couple minutes have the pair switch nametags and switch partners and introduce themselves to someone else. Each person should introduce themselves according to their nametag, not who they actually are. Once participants have switched at least 3 times, have each person introduce themselves to the large group, according to their nametag. The real person may correct any inaccuracies at this time too.

*Inspired and adapted from:*

<http://www.ultimatecampresource.com/site/camp-activities/ice-breakers.html>