

Icebreakers & Teambuilding

Icebreakers and teambuilding are a great way to kick the year off or begin any meeting. They provide an easy way for students to get to know each other and work as a team towards common goals.

1) EGG-CHICKEN-DINOSAUR-KING/QUEEN (ROCK, PAPER, SCISSORS)

Energizer! Everyone starts as an egg—a game of rock, paper, scissors is played (best 2/3). Winner progresses to a chicken, loser to an egg. This continues until all players progress to a king/queen. Participants must make sound effects and actions to go with the creature they are. You can only play rock, paper, scissors vs. those of a like kind.

2) BIG BOOTY

Good for any kind of free time slot! The game is best played in large groups of at least five. Arrange yourselves in a circle, standing or sitting. Establish one player to be "Big Booty," which is essentially just a name for the leader. Number the other players as "Number One," "Number Two," and so on, going around the circle in order. Start clapping and begin the game (assuming you're the leader) by singing "Big booty, big booty, big booty, oh yeah!" This is to be sung in time with the rhythm: Pat, clap, pat, clap. Pick a person in the group by stating the number of any other player in the circle. That player is then to state his own number, followed by the number of a different player (or "Big Booty" if they wish to pass the turn to the leader), and so on. All this is to be said in time with the given patting/clapping tempo.

For example:

- All: "Big booty, big booty, big booty, oh yeah!"
- Big Booty: "Big booty, number seven!" (said with a single pat and a single clap)
- Number Seven: "Number seven, number three!" (said with a single pat and a single clap)
- Number Three: "Number three, number eight!" (said with a single pat and a single clap)

Continue the pattern until someone makes a mistake by doing one of the following (in which case they must go to the end of the circle). Close the circle and reassign new numbers according to the new order of people in the circle.

The player who gets out go to the end of the circle (next to Big Booty) and be the last number. For example, if "Number Three" messes up or speaks out of turn, and there are ten people playing, then he becomes "Number Nine," or "Little Booty" (a standard name for the last player) and everyone moves down. If you play this way, though, there is no winner. However, you can deem the player who holds the position of "Big Booty" the longest as an unofficial winner.

3) NAME AEROBICS

Stand in a circle. Identify the first letter of the name they would like to be called (nickname, last name, etc.). Then think of a characteristic/adjective that starts with that letter. Ex. Crazy Clarence. After name & descriptor have been identified, come up with an action that corresponds to the name. Ex. Crazy Clarence might jump wildly. Reinforce with the group that the action should be one the rest of the group would be comfortable doing. Keep actions "appropriate." Identify a starting point in your circle. The entire groups repeat the starter's name and action. Continue around the circle, each time restarting at the beginning. You can make it more challenging by mixing up the group or going in reverse.

4) THINKING OUTSIDE THE BOX

Every now and again, you'll need a quick icebreaker to rejuvenate your group and get them into the swing of things. Try this one! Draw a simple shape on a chalkboard or a piece of paper – whatever you have at your disposal. Now, ask students to tell you what it is. For instance, if you just drew a squiggly line it could be a salsa dancing worm, a piece of Alaskan linguine shivering because its igloo isn't properly insulated, or a pencil quaking with fear before being plunged into the sharpener. Give out prizes for the most creative answers. You'll not only be helping them think outside of the box, you'll be providing some good laughs along the way, too.

5) ON THE SPOT

Divide your group into small clusters of two to four people. Take an object from your backpack or choose something in the room where you are meeting. Ask each group to work together on the spot to come up with 10 different ways this object could be used. Give them five minutes to do so. For instance, a piece of chalk could be used to create a rendition of Van Gogh's "Starry Night" in the parking lot, to make someone sneeze (by grinding it into powder), to write the specials of the day on a trendy eatery's chalkboard or to draw pseudo milk mustaches on people – the possibilities are without end!

6) DOT.COM ON

Give each group member two or three minutes to imagine themselves as a Web site. What would their address be? What kind of things would people find on their site? What kinds of links would be there? Go around the group and discuss each Web site as a way of getting to know more about what's important to one another.

7) PAPER AIRPLANES

You can usually find a few pieces of scrap paper anywhere on campus. So, if you find yourself with free time, round up some scrap paper and invite each of your group members to make a paper airplane. On their airplane they should write one fact about themselves (where they were born, mother's first name, number of siblings, etc.). Have all group members toss their airplanes at once. (Have a small prize for the plane that goes the farthest). Then have each student pick up an airplane that is not theirs. Sit in a circle and spend the remaining time reading each airplane and guessing who the airplane belongs to.

8) TWO TRUTHS & A LIE

Each person in the group comes up with two interesting facts and one lie about themselves. The group sits in a circle and one at a time each member reveals their three "facts." It's up to the group to decide which one is the lie. The more creative the better.

9) SWITCHEROO!

Choose one person to stand in the middle of a circle. Have the others form a circle of chairs and sit down. Or, if chairs are unavailable, put a piece of scrap paper down for each person to stand on. Now, the person standing in the middle will make a statement that is true about herself such as "Switcheroo for anyone who is taking a biology class in the fall" or "Switcheroo for anyone who owns an Abba CD." Each participant who this applies to must quickly find a new seat. Be warned! They can't just jump to the chair next to them. The person in the middle who made the statement will then find a seat in the circle.

10) WHAT'S IN A NAME

Once your group knows each other a bit, ask folks to share the origins of their names. What does their first name stand for and where did it come from? A baby book, their great-grandmother, a soap opera character? And what about their last name? Ask them to share as much as is

comfortable, from the ethnic origins of their name to how it may have changed over time. This allows you all to learn more about one another on a deeper level.

11) ALWAYS A FRESHMAN

Ask everyone to share something they are a “freshman” at – something new they are learning like racquetball, guitar, yoga, etc. If you have time, ask them to share things they are “sophomores” (limited knowledge), “juniors” (increased knowledge), or “seniors” (experts) at, too. This type of activity shows that we are all works in progress!

12) SUPER HERO SOUP

Most of us have wished to be a super hero at one point or another. There’s just something about having a secret identity and super powers! Well, let your group members make this wish come true by determining what super hero they’d like to be. Maybe Superman or Aquaman or Wonder Woman is their alter ego. Or maybe they’d like to make up a whole new super hero—it’s up to them. Once everyone has decided, ask them to share their alter ego’s name, their secret identity and the powers they possess. What would their super hero do to make the world a better place?

13) BALLOON WALK

Form a single line facing one way. Place an inflated balloon in between each participant and see how far your group can walk without using your hands to keep the balloon in place. To challenge the team, place time goals on each walk.

14) PEOPLE TO PEOPLE

Form a circle, pair off. From the center the leader calls off two body parts (ex. ear to ear, hand to knee, back to back, etc.) and the pairs must connect these parts. The more twisted the better! After a few calls, the leader cries “People to people!” and everyone finds a new partner.

15) HONEY, I LOVE YOU

Form a circle. The leader begins in the center. The object of this game is to get a particular team member to smile. The leader goes up to a player and says, “Honey, I love you. Won’t you please smile?” The target player must say, “Honey, I love you, but I just can’t smile” without smiling. If the target player succeeds, the leader has to keep on trying. However, if the target player smiles (even a little bit!) they become the next one in the middle. The leader may choose not to allow touching to induce smiling.

16) HUMAN KNOT

Form a shoulder to shoulder standing circle. Have each group member raise their right hand and grab hands with another group member. Now do the same with the left hand. Members cannot grab hands of people on their direct left or right or grab both hands with the same person. The object is to untangle the mess of hands and bodies into a circle. The only rule is that you cannot let go of each other’s hands.

17) IMAGINATION

Start with a word like “hamburger” or something else you come up with. The next person says the first word that comes to their mind and it continues around the entire group, building off of the previous word, not the original word. This can continue for as long or short of a period of time as you have.

18) STORY TIME

Someone starts a story and each person in the group contributes their creativity with the next phrase they believe goes with the story. Each section continues with the phrase "...and then..." For example: "I took my dog for a walk...and then" next person might say "I got distracted by a rainbow in the sky...and then" next person might say "I decided to start hunting for the pot of gold...and then" it continues until the last person finishes the story.

19) FROGGER

Form a circle. Choose one person to be the detective and send them out of eyesight. To begin the game have everyone close their eyes while the leader walks around the outside of the circle and pats the frog/killer on the shoulder. The detective is called back in and stands in the middle where she/he tries to guess who the frog/killer is (three guesses). The person chosen as the frog sticks out their tongue (the killer blinks) at other members when the detective isn't looking. When "frogged" the player makes a dramatic death and falls down to watch the rest of the game. After the detective has identified the frog/killer, they get to choose the next frog/killer; the frog/killer becomes the next detective.

20) ZIP-ZAP-ZUP

Form a circle, standing. The leader is a part of the circle and begins the pattern by clapping hands together while pointing with one hand at another person in the circle and saying "ZIP." The pointee responds with the same thing to another person and says, "ZAP." The next person says "ZUP" and so on repeating the series. When someone messes up the zip-zap-zup order or is too slow in responding, they are "out." Play continues until only two people battle it out.

21) STAND UP

Divide the groups into pairs. Have them each sit on the ground, back-to-back with their partner, knees bent and elbows linked. Now have them simply stand up together. With a bit of cooperation and a little practice, this shouldn't be too hard. By the time the pairs have mastered this, have them group into the threes, fours, etc. until the whole group is linked. Have them all sit down as a group and as a whole stand up.

22) HOOP PASS

Have the students form a large circle and join hands. Break the circle and place a hula hoop between two people in the circle. Without releasing hands, the group must pass the hoop around the circle and end at the starting point. Add an additional hoop going the opposite direction or set time trials for the group to meet. This can lead to a discussion on goal setting and achievements.

23) THE M&M GAME

Fill a bowl (or two) with M&Ms and pass them around to the group, telling them to take a small handful (or however much they want).

(a) Once every person has some, announce that each color reflects something that the member has to share about themselves to the group. For example:

1. **Blue:** Your favorite food
2. **Orange:** Favorite outdoor activity
3. **Red:** Favorite superhero
4. **Green:** Favorite article of clothing
5. **Brown:** How many states you have been to
6. **Yellow:** Why you love Wartburg

(b) Use whatever factors you would like in regard to the colors. Give each person a chance to describe each of the M&Ms in their hand in front of the group.

(c) Can be used with any type of multi-colored candy (Jolly Ranchers, Starbursts, Skittles, etc.). Can also use different kinds of candy mixed in a bowl and have each type of candy reflect something different that the person has to share about themselves to the group.

24) THE TOILET PAPER GAME

Pass around a roll of toilet paper and have each person take as many sheets as they would need for a “good wipe.” Then go around the circle and have each person say a fun fact for each sheet of toilet paper they have.

25) WRONG-HANDED PICTURE

Give a pen and piece of paper to each participant. Give the participants 5 minutes to draw a picture. Participants must draw this object with the hand they normal do not use for writing. Have the participants exchange their pictures with someone else. This participant will label the picture according to what they think it is and give it back to the artist.

Questions to ask: How many objects were guessed correctly? How did it feel to use your other hand? How did those feelings affect your picture? How do those feelings compare with the feelings we have regarding the changes we experience in life?

26) THE PB & J SANDWICH

The activity is done in pairs. One person is the instructor and the other is the one making the sandwich, following the directions of the instructor. The object is to successfully make a PB and J sandwich. The instructor must be as specific as possible. This is very important! The person following the directions must do exactly what the instructor says. Nothing more, nothing less. For example, if after spreading the peanut butter the instructor forgets to say, “Put down the knife,” the person following the directions cannot put down the knife. This can be explained to the person following the directions, but it will be more effective if not explained to the instructor. This is an exercise in clear, effective communication.

27) SILENT GAME

Everyone has to do a task without talking.

- Get in order by birthday, starting with January.
- Get in groups according to favorite color.
- Etc.

For more icebreaker teambuilding ideas please contact Ashley Lang, Director of Campus Programming at Ashley.lang@wartburg.edu or x8486.