

6 Favorite Icebreakers

The following list consists of short and simple icebreakers that require little planning and time. They are great to use at the start of a course or after a group change when you want learners to develop rapport quickly.

1. Cocktail Party

- Use this icebreaker with larger groups.
- Ask learners to circulate and get acquainted with another learner.
- After one minute, announce “CHANGE” and ask everyone to find a new person.
- Continue changing every minute until there have been opportunities for people to meet most of the others in the group. Expect that people won’t meet everyone else, but they should meet most of them.

2. Partner Introduction

- Works best with smaller groups (less than 20); it is too time-consuming for large groups.
- Ask each learner to select a partner he/she does not know.
- Allow 10 minutes for partners to find out as much about each other as possible.
- Suggest that they take notes during the interview.
- After the interviews, ask each person to stand in turn and introduce his/her partner to the entire group.

3. Common Ground

- Works best for small groups or for each small group sitting together as a team (e.g. 4 to 6 learners).
- Give the groups a specific time (e.g. 5 minutes) to write a list of everything they all have in common. Tell them to avoid the obvious (e.g. “we’re all taking this workshop”).
- When time is up, ask each group how many items they have listed.
- For fun, ask them to announce some of the most interesting items.

4. Acroname

- Works best for small groups or for each small group sitting together as a team (e.g. 4 to 6 learners).
- Have learners write their first name vertically on a piece of flip chart paper.
- Then, have them write a word that describes themselves for each letter of their name.
- Have each learner share their name and words with the group.
- To shorten the activity, if needed, have learners use their initials instead.

5. True and False

- Works best for small groups or for each small group sitting together as a team (e.g. 4 to 6 learners).
- Ask each learner in the group to list four facts about himself/herself on paper. Three of those facts should be true and one should be false.
- One learner in the group begins by reading his/her four items out loud to the others.
- The group tries to guess which fact is false. The correct answer is then revealed by the learner.
- The others read their four items in turn until everyone has shared their facts about themselves.

6. Me Too

- Works best for small groups or for each small group sitting together as a team (e.g. 4 to 6 learners).
- Everyone in the group gets 10 pennies/toothpicks/scrap of paper, etc.
- The first learner states something he/she has done (e.g. water skiing).
- Everyone else who has done the same thing admits it and puts one penny in the middle of the table.
- Then the second person states something (e.g. I have eaten frogs' legs).
- Everyone who has done it puts another penny in the center.
- Continue until someone has run out of pennies.