

Icebreakers

Icebreakers are activities that help students get to know each other. The term “icebreaker” comes from the idiomatic expression, “to break the ice,” meaning “to attempt to become friends.” These icebreaker activities are intended to help a teacher, especially in that first week of a class, in order to establish classroom rapport and help students to feel comfortable with each other. Icebreaker activities are essential precisely because language is a skill that must be practiced within groups, and that you must establish groups wherein learners feel comfortable to share, make attempts to speak new grammatical items, and even make mistakes and take risks. Icebreaker activities are also a good idea when a new learner or learners enters a classroom, or whenever you view that learners are not speaking freely with each other. Most icebreaker activities simply have a number of interesting and personal questions, and offer ways to have students stand up and move around a classroom. A good icebreaker generally gets students thinking and moving, and elicits a desire to share not only about yourself, but about other classmates.

1. More Than Name Tags



Use a worksheet like More Than Name Tags to help learners ask about fellow classmates. More Than Name Tags is, in some sense, a giant name tag that gives interesting information about each student.

First, invite learners to write his or her name in the square that is surrounded by four other squares. Then tell students to fill in the other four squares: places, people, things, and dates. You may wish to model this for students by having a name tag that you have created about yourself.

As students fill out their names tags, you may need to help them find the right words for each category. After students have filled out their form, have them pin it to the front of their shirts and ask them to go around and introduce themselves, making clear that they should ask questions based on the four squares. You may need to model questions on the board:

- What places have you lived?
- Who are those people?
- Why did you write down those things?
- Why are those dates important (to you)?

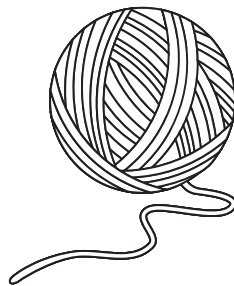
As a variation, invite students to be in pairs, and tell the pair that they will introduce a partner by sharing one or more things that they learned about the person.

2. String Get-to-Know-You

This game requires a ball of uncut yarn and 10 get-to-know-you questions. Invite students to stand in a circle. Instruct the students that they must answer a questions if they are holding the ball of yarn. Begin with the ball of yarn, making sure to hold on to the end of the string with one hand, and throwing the ball with the other hand. When the student catches the ball, make sure that you ask them to make sure that the string between the student and you is tight, like a line, connecting the two of you together. Now ask the student one of the 10 get-to-know-you questions. Here is a small list of examples:

- How long have you been studying English?
- What are your hobbies?
- What do you like to do in your free time?
- What hobbies do you have?
- What kind of people do you like?
- What kind of people do you not like?
- What languages do you speak?
- What's something you do well?
- What's your favorite food?
- Do you have any pets?
- Are you married or single?
- Do you have brothers and sisters?
- Do you like baseball?
- Have you ever lived in another country?
- Have you ever met a famous person?
- How do you spend your free time?

The students must then pass the ball of string to someone else, making sure that each person holds the string with one hand, so that eventually the string forms a web. It is fun to watch and fun to catch and is a great metaphor for how we are all connected through language.



3. Find Someone Who (Information Gap Game)

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Provide each student a handout (feel free to see the template at the back of this manual). Tell students that they will be “finding someone who” matches the description on the list.