

Ice Breakers

1. Ha

This exercise asks the participants to pass the word 'ha' around a circle. This activity is generally more effective when used during the later stage of the training program or session. It takes about 7 minutes and is best suited for a group of 20 or less participants but you can do it with more.

Ask the participants to form a circle. When they are ready explain that the object of this activity is for the participants, without laughing, to pass the word "ha" around the circle.

Designate one participant to be the head of the circle. That participant begins by saying "ha". The person to his or her right must repeat the "ha" and then say another "ha." The third person must say ha ha and then give an additional "ha." IF there are 20 people in the circle, the last person says "ha" 20 times. In this manner the "ha" continues around the circle. It ends when all of the participants, trying not to laugh (a virtual impossibility), have repeated the "ha's" that preceded them and then added their own "ha."

2. Always Better with Two

Pair people up together. Ask them to spend 2 minutes each talking about themselves. At the end of 4 minutes we will come back together as a group and you will introduce each other. Ask them to tell the persons name, their position and how many years experience they have at camp. All participants get to hear about other participants from of a third party instead of hearing from the person themselves. Depending on the session content, it is fun to add up all the years experience in the room and close with something like "Combined, we have 100 years of camp service."

3. Birthday Partner

Have participants mingle in the group and identify the person whose birth date either by day, month or year depending on how detailed you want to get, is closest to their own. Find out two things they have in common.

4. Circle of Friends

This is a great greeting and departure for a large group who will be attending a session or meeting for more than one day together and the chances of meeting everyone in the room is almost impossible. Form two large circles (or simply form two lines side by side), one inside the other and have the people in the inside circle face the people in the outside circle. Ask the circles to take one step in the opposite directions, allowing them to meet each new person as the circle continues to move very slowly. If lines are formed, they simply keep the line moving very slowly, as they introduce themselves.

5. Dinner Partners

Pair people up together. Ask them to spend 2 $\frac{1}{2}$ minutes each talking about themselves. Ask them if they could have dinner with anyone, alive or dead, who would it be and why. Tell them that at the end of 5 minutes we will come back together as a group and you will introduce each other. Ask them to tell the persons name, their position and their dinner partner.

Note to facilitators - this is a great exercise to help you understand the personality of the class. For example you may have a lot of people who want to have dinner with political figures or movie stars it gives you a clue that politics are important to this group or they are movie goers. If you have a lot of people who want to have dinner with religious figures again it helps you understand the basic personality of the group.

6. Dream Vacation

Ask participants to introduce themselves and describe details of the ideal, perfect dream vacation.

7. Family Heritage

Have each person introduce themselves by ethnicity (Irish, Chinese etc.) and have them speak about their ethnic heritage or their ancestors. They could speak of family stories about coming to the U.S. or family traditions.

8. Five Things in Common

Split the group up into pairs. Each pair will have 30 seconds to find 5 things they have in common. At the end of the 30 seconds, put two pairs together and give the foursome a minute to find something all 4 students have in common. Finally, each group can present the list of things they have in common. You can use this activity to form groups.

9. Name Tag Match Maker

Each group member will need a 5" x 7" card for a name tag. Then give the following directions:

Put your name in the center of your card.

In the upper left corner, write three things that you like to do.

In the upper right corner, write your three favorite singers or groups.

In the lower left corner, write your three favorite movies.

In the lower right corner, write three adjectives that describe you.

When everyone finishes, have them mingle with the group for a few minutes. Without talking, they are to read the upper left corner of the other group members' cards. When time is up, they are to find one or two people who are most like them and visit for a few minutes. When time is up, they are to mingle again reading the upper right corner of the other group members' cards. They then find the one or two people most like them and visit. Repeat with the lower left corner and lower right corner information.

To make sure everyone visits with several people, you could implement a rule that no two people can be in the same group more than once.

10. M&M's

Pass around a bag of M&M's. Tell the participants to take as many as they want. Once everyone has M&M's, tell them that for each M&M they took they have to say one thing about themselves. For instance, if a person took 10 M&M's, they would have to say 10 things about themselves. If people passed on the chocolate and didn't take any, then they have to say 5 things about themselves. If they took more than 10, they only have to list 10 things.

11. Guess Who?

Have all participants write down an "interesting or unique fact" about themselves on a piece of paper.

Ask them to fold it up several times

Collect them in a designated box or bowl (it's great to have a fun one made ahead of time to go with the theme of your class)

Inform them you will pick one out of the box and read it. The person who guesses the author will win 5 points

Depending on the length of your class or workshop, you can continue to reveal the remaining at that time or in increments after breaks

The person with the most points can win a prize (for large classes, you can divide up people in teams)

If participants already know each other:

ask them to write down a fact about their childhood that their others might not know

-what was their 1st job where they were gainfully employed?
