



Icebreakers



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Icebreakers are discussion questions or activities used to help participants relax and ease into a group meeting or learning situation (Dover, 2004).

Teachers can use icebreakers within their classrooms to create a connected and comfortable learning environment for their students. Icebreakers are necessary for a successful classroom. Icebreakers allow for a student to become emotionally connected with school and increases motivation (Kelly, 2004). There are many important items to consider when working with icebreakers:

- Teachers need to learn what icebreakers work out best according to the age group and number of people.
- According to the Stress and Wellness Specialists a successful icebreaker needs step-by-step instructions and then needs to be demonstrated (*Instant Icebreakers*). Icebreakers are most effective when they are thought out, practiced, and have clear instructions (“Beat the summer heat,” 1998).
- Not all students will like or want to participate in icebreakers, but it is important to keep in mind that most people do like them and not to be discouraged.
- Teachers need to read their class; if something is not working the teacher can adjust or try a different approach to an icebreaker.
- Specialists stress that a teacher should make sure the room is silent before speaking so that they have full attention of their students. A teacher can use a noisemaker like a drum or a whistle to get the student’s attention.

There are two types of Icebreakers:

Facilitating Introductions: Are used to help participants ease into training and helps the participants to learn each other’s names and information (Dover, 2004).

Topic Lead-ins: Are used to identify needs and goals, share information and resources, and/or surface resistance (Dover, 2004).

Facilitating Introductions

The introduction icebreakers are best used on first days of school when trying to learn student's names and a little bit about them. Here are some excellent Facilitating Introduction Icebreakers:

TP Surprise

The teacher will welcome students at the door holding a roll of toilet paper. Students can take however many sheets they want and the teacher will explain what it is for when everyone grabs some. When class begins the students will have to write one interesting thing about themselves per sheet of toilet paper. When they are finished they introduce themselves to the class per sheet of toilet paper (Kelly, 2004).

People Finder Sheet

Make a list of qualifications for your students for example, "Who can speak another language?" or "Who went to Arizona this summer?" With the list of questions the students need to seek out these people with the qualifications and have them initial the sheet until it is full. They can only use a student's initials once per sheet ("Beating the Summer Heat" 1998).

Birthday line-up

Students have to line-up around the classroom in order of their birth dates (Kelly, 2004). This activity forces students to move around and communicate with each other. According to the Stress and Wellness Associates people learn better when they are actively involved (*Instant Icebreakers*).



Name Chain

Introduce yourself to the group adding a word that describes you based upon the first letter of your name. For example, "I am Smart Sarah," or "I am Jumping Jack." Then Introduce yourself, and the person to your right. The person to your right repeats previous introductions, and introduces the person to their right. Continue with the next person to the right, until all names have been repeated. This activity will help students learn each other's names (Dover, 2004).

Topic Lead-ins

These will direct the student into the content that will be taught. The icebreakers can be used to generate interest in a topic and activate the student's prior knowledge. Topic Lead-ins will encourage the sharing of information and resources (Dover, 2004).



Multiple Choice Tests & True/False Quizzes (Prior Knowledge Check)

Giving multiple choice tests or true and false quizzes before introducing a topic or reading engages students, activates a student's prior knowledge, and will encourage the sharing of information and resources. The teacher can discuss the answers with the class before and after the lesson in order to focus on the important parts of the topic being taught (Dover, 2004).

Word Tree

The teacher generates a list of words related to a topic to be taught. The students then have to suggest words related to the topic while the teacher writes it on the board and clusters it by theme (Dover, 2004).

Personalize it

The teacher writes the topic to be taught on the board and then talks about how the topic relates to them by using a personal reference or story. The students are then to figure out how they can relate the topic to a personal reference or story.

Some Great Icebreaker Links



Introduction Icebreakers

This website has some great first day of school icebreakers used in high school classrooms:

<http://712educators.about.com/cs/icebreakers/a/icebreakers.htm>

This website has 14 great icebreakers and activities from education world that can be used on the first days of school:

http://www.education-world.com/a_lesson/lesson074.shtml

This website has some more first day of school icebreakers:

<http://www.kimskorner4teachertalk.com/classmanagement/icebreakers.html>

Introduction Icebreakers and Topic Lead-ins

This website is made up of icebreakers used and created by teachers:

http://www.teach-nology.com/ideas/ice_breakers/

This website has introduction icebreakers and topic lead-ins there audience is directed at adults, but these icebreakers can easily be applied to high school:

<http://adulthood.about.com/od/icebreakers/>

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