

Desert Island

Each person goes around the circle and says one thing they would take with them on a desert island. The next person must then name the items before them and add their own item on. Keep going until someone makes a mistake!

Name Pictionary

Have students write their names by drawing pictures of objects that start with the correct letter. For example, someone with the name Ann would draw an apple, a nose and a nest. Then, have the group try to spell and guess each person's name.

Two Truths and a Lie

Two Truths and a Lie is a classic icebreaker game in which one attempts to identify which of three statements is bogus. Instructions: Have everyone sit in a circle. Each person prepares three statements, two of which are true and one of which is a lie. In any order, the person shares the three statements to the entire group. The object of the game is to figure out which statement a lie. The rest of the group votes on each statement, and the person reveals which one is the lie.

The Number Game

Have the students sit in a circle and attempt to count to 10. Explain that there is no set order or time for calling out the numbers. Anyone can call out the next number, BUT if they say the number at the same time as someone else, the group must start over. Once the group reaches 10, try to get to 20!

Rainbow Categories

Have two students stand up. Let the group pick a category (like animals) and a color (like orange). The students must then alternate, trying to name orange animals for as long as possible until one hesitates. When one person stops, the other student wins.

Pows and Wows

This is a great game to help a classroom or team of students build camaraderie. Have each person share one good thing and one bad thing from their day. It's simple, but effective!

Who Am I?

Put a notecard with the name of a well-known figure on each student's back. Next, have the students walk around asking each other yes-or-no questions. First person to figure out who they are wins!

World's Worst

This game is good if you want to laugh. Pick a profession and have each student say something that would be said by the world's worst person in that profession. For example, the world's worst dentist might say, "Please, take a bag of candy from the toy chest as you leave."

Scars

This game is best in small groups. Have each student show a scar and explain how he got it. For instance, "I got this scar from a paper cut when I was in 5th grade..." The students may have funny stories or they may have personal ones. Either way, you will all learn a lot about each other.

Toilet Paper

Pass a roll of toilet paper around and tell each student to take as much as they would like. Then, after some students have taken a huge amount, reveal that for each piece of toilet paper they must say a fact about themselves!

Autobiography

For groups that need to be close knit, like a sports team or a drama cast, have each person sum up their life in one sentence. It's difficult — but you'll learn a lot about your new friends!

Candy Confessions

Buy colorful candy — like Skittles — and have each person take a handful. Then, unveil that for each color, they must reveal a different type of fact about themselves. For example, for each yellow Skittle, they must say a favorite food.

Blindfolded Self-Portraits

Blindfold all the students and have them (attempt to) draw a self-portrait. Finally, take off the blindfolds and try to match the portraits to the people!

Facts About Me

Give each student a blank template of a person. Then, the leader gives the students instructions on how to draw on the self-portrait based on facts. For example, the leader might say, "If you have a dog, draw a green shirt." At the end, shuffle the pictures and see if the students can match them to the correct person.

Tattoo Parlor

Have each student draw a tattoo that they think accurately describes them or includes one of their favorite things. Then, pin the pictures up and try to match the “tattoos” with the people who drew them.

The following class builders require space to allow for movement around the room

Blobs and Lines

A set of questions that asks students to line up in some particular order (by birthday, for example) or gather in groups based on something they have in common (similar shoes, for example). This game keeps students moving and talking and helps them find things they have in common right away, building a sense of belonging and community in your classroom.

Sample prompts:

- Line up in alphabetical order by your first names.
- Line up in alphabetical order by your last names.
- Gather with people who have the same eye color as you.
- Gather with people who get to school in the same way as you (car, bus, walk).
- Line up in order of your birthdays, from January 1 through December 31.
- Line up in order of how many languages you speak.
- Gather into 3 blobs: Those who have LOTS of chores at home, those who have A FEW chores at home, and those who have NO chores at home.
- Gather with people who have the same favorite season as you.

Concentric Circles

Students arrange themselves in an inside circle and an outside circle, the inside facing out, forming pairs. Pairs discuss their answers to a getting-to-know-you question, then rotate for the next question, forming a new partnership. This game gives students the chance to have lots of one-on-one conversations with many of their classmates and helps them quickly feel more at home in your class.

Prompts:

- Do you play any sports? If so, which ones?
- Do you consider yourself shy or outgoing? Why?
- What was the last movie you saw? Did you like it?
- Describe your perfect dinner.
- What would you do with a million dollars?
- What is one thing you're good at?

This or That

This game has students informally debate on light topics such as "Which animal makes a better pet...dog or cat?" Students have to choose a position--there is no middle!--and stand in a part of the room that best represents their opinion. This game is a HUGE hit with students: Not only does the argumentation help them learn a lot about each other in a short amount of time, it's also just fun.

Prompts:

- Would you rather live in the country or the city?
- Should all students be required to learn a second language?
- Which is worse: bad breath or body odor?
- Would you rather be indoors or outdoors?
- Which is better: Playing sports or watching sports?
- Would you rather travel every single day or never leave home?

Move if You...

Have students sit in a large circle with one person in the middle. The middle person calls out for a certain group of people to move — for example, "Move if you have brown hair" or "Move if you have been to another country." If the students fit the criteria, they must run to a new seat in the circle. The one student left standing is in the middle for the next round.

Play Catch

Have students stand in a large circle and play catch with a large beach ball. The trick? Write get-to-know-you questions all over the beach ball and whoever catches it must answer the question their hand rests on.

Shuffle Your Buns

Make a circle of chairs with one empty seat. One person in the middle of the circle must try to sit down while the seated students all shift down, moving the empty seat down the line. The twist? Have someone call "switch" every so often, forcing the people in the circle to switch directions and shift the other way. If the middle person manages to sit in the empty seat, the person that was supposed to be moving into it is in the middle.

Giant Knot

Create a shoulder-to-shoulder circle, and then have each student grab two other hands from two different people across the circle. Now the entire circle must figure out how to untangle the giant knot of arms and people without letting go.

Race for the Truth

Have each person stand on the starting line while a leader lists off general facts. (For example, I have a dog.) If the stated fact is true for any of the students, those students must move forward a step. Whoever crosses the finish line first wins!

More sources:

<https://www.cultofpedagogy.com/classroom-icebreakers/>

<http://www.signupgenius.com/school/icebreaker-activities-middle-school-high-school.cfm>

<http://www.teachthought.com/critical-thinking/10-team-building-games-that-promote-critical-thinking/>