



HEART U™

Ice Breakers

Do you need a clever introduction to your next training or staff meeting? Do you need a unique and fun way to get to know your team better? Then these icebreakers are for you!

Icebreakers are tools that enable a group leader to foster interaction, stimulate creative thinking, challenge basic assumptions, illustrate new concepts, and introduce specific material. Icebreakers can be used when you need to form a group, begin a meeting, or help a team start a specific project.

As with any program, the success of an icebreaker depends largely on you! Make sure to know the intended audience, plan ahead, and run the icebreaker with enthusiasm and energy!

This document will present “in-person” icebreaker activities, as well as activities designed for virtual audiences.

Each activity will include time required, materials needed, and facilitation instructions.

Don't see a favorite on the list? Email us your suggestions at heartu@heart.org.



In-Person
Activities



Virtual
Activities



NEW

Year of the Coin

Format: In Person or Virtual

Materials: A penny for each team member

Time Required: 5 mins

Group Size: Any



1

Hand out a coin to each person and ask people to share something they were doing the year the coin was minted. Be sure to sift through the coins beforehand to make sure your team was born when the coins were minted.

For virtual: simply give the penny year to each person on the virtual meeting.

NEW

Desert Island

Format: In Person or Virtual

Materials: None

Time Required: 5-10 mins

Group Size: Any



2

Announce, 'You've been exiled to a deserted island for a year. In addition to the essentials, you may take one piece of music, one book and one luxury item you can carry with you (i.e. not a boat to leave the island!). What would you take and why?'

Allow a few minutes to draw up their list of three items, before sharing their choices with the rest of the group. As with most icebreakers and relationship building activities, it helps for supervisors to join in too!

If

NEW



3

Format: In Person

Materials: Notecards with one "If" question per card.

Time Required: 5-10 mins

Group Size: Any

Write 20 'IF' questions on cards and place them (question down) in the middle of the table. The first person takes a card, reads it out and gives their answer, comment or explanation. The card is returned to the bottom of the pile before the next person takes their card.

Keep it moving and don't play for too long. Write your own additional 'IF' questions to add to the list.

1. If you could go anywhere in the world, where would you go?
2. If you won \$10,000, what would you spend it on?
3. If you could watch your favorite movie now, what would it be?
4. If you could talk to anyone in the world, who would it be?
5. If you could wish one thing to come true this year, what would it be?
6. If you could live in any period of history, when would it be?
7. If you could change anything about yourself, what would you change?
8. If you could be someone else, who would you be?
9. If you could have any question answered, what would it be?
10. If you could watch your favorite TV show now, what would it be?
11. If you could have any kind of pet, what would you have?
12. If you could do your dream job 10 years from now, what would it be?
13. If you had to be allergic to something, what would it be?



(continued)

14. If you sat down next to Abraham Lincoln on a bus, what would you talk about?
15. If money and time was no object, what would you be doing right now?
16. If you had one day to live over again, what day would you pick?
17. If you could eat your favorite food now, what would it be?
18. If you could learn any skill, what would it be?
19. If you were sent to live on a space station for three months and only allowed to bring three personal items with you, what would they be?
20. If you could buy a car right now, what would you buy?

My New Friend



4

Format: In Person

Materials: None

Time Required: 10-15mins

Group Size: (Broken into small groups of 2)

Ask participants to pair off with someone near them that they don't know well (left, right, across the table, etc.) For the next 5 minutes, have the pairs interview each other by asking questions like "What is your full name?" "What are your hobbies?" "Where were you born?" etc. After the interview, have the participants introduce their "new friend" to the table or to the room by telling some things they learned about them in the interview.

Bodyguards and Secret Agents



5

Format: In Person

Materials: None

Time Required: 10-15mins

Group Size: Any

Ask the group to stand randomly scattered in an open space. Have everyone select a "secret agent" and a "bodyguard" for themselves out of the group of people without telling anyone. After the selection, have everyone slowly move around; however, they must always keep the person they have chosen as "bodyguard" between themselves and their chosen "secret agent." At the end of the activity, have everyone reveal who their "bodyguard" and "secret agent" were.

Pick a Card, Any Card



6

Format: In Person

Materials: 1 Deck of Playing Cards

Time Required: 10-15mins

Group Size: Any

Have each participant pick a random playing card from a shuffled deck. Each suit will represent a different question that the participant must answer either to the people at their table or to the room if it's a smaller group. For example:

- Hearts- What's your dream vacation destination?
- Clubs- What artist, alive or dead, would you like to see in concert?
- Spades- What would you be doing if you had today off?
- Diamonds- What is a talent you have that many people don't know about?

Takeaways*

Format: In Person

Materials: Enough notecards that each participant has one

Time Required: 15-20mins

Group Size: (Broken into table groups of 4-8)



#7

At the beginning of a workshop or presentation, tell the participants that each of them will be responsible for writing one takeaway or important action item from the presentation on their card. Near the end of the workshop, explain that each table will now discuss their written takeaways with each other. If time permits, have a "spokesperson" from each table list the table's takeaways to the room.

**This activity takes place at the END of a meeting or presentation rather than at the beginning.*

Two Lies and a Truth

Format: Virtual

Materials: None

Time Required: 10-15mins

Group Size: 5-20 (ideal)



#8

Ask each team member to prepare a list of three interesting "facts" about themselves, two of which must be made up. These could comprise anything, from a pet they own or a hobby they love to a famous person they say they've met, and so on.

Then, get other team members to decide on the facts they think are true. The team member who receives the most incorrect votes "wins."

Drawing Conclusions



Format: In Person

Materials:

- Simple geometric shapes (square, circle, triangle, cube, pyramid, pentagon, hexagon, etc.) on sheets of paper, enough for half of the participants to have one.
- Enough blank paper for the rest of the participants to have one sheet
- Enough pens/pencils for half of the participants to have one

Time Required: 10-15mins

Group Size: (Broken into groups of 2)

Have participants pair off and sit next to each other at a table. Explain that one person will be the "talker" and one person will be the "doer." Have all the "doers" close their eyes. When their eyes are closed, give each of the "talkers" one of the sheets with a geometric shape. Explain that the "doers" will now draw an object that the "talker" will describe to them. The catch is that the "talker" can never say the name of the object. They can only describe how to draw it, and the "doer" must draw it without looking.



Where are We?



#10

Format: Virtual

Materials: Pre-created map with participant locations marked

Time Required: 15-20mins

Group Size: 5-20 (ideal)

If you have a geographically distributed team, find out the (approximate) locations of the team members beforehand, and make a map with a colored dot for each team member. Show the map during the meeting, and ask team members to see if they can identify which dot represents which member. You might start the meeting by having each person on the call say something about where they are (weather, temperature, urban/rural, fun fact, etc.)

The Social Question



#11

Format: Virtual

Materials: None

Time Required: 10-15mins

Group Size: 5-20 (ideal)

Ask participants "social" questions to find out what they enjoy doing outside of work, or ask if they have a funny stories they can share about something that happened to them recently, and so on. Ask everyone the same questions, or different ones if you want more variety in the responses.

Here are some examples of questions you might ask:

- What is something you've done this week that you feel proud of?
- If you weren't on this call, what would you like to be doing?
- If you could eat any dish right now, what would it be?
- If money and time were no object, where would you most like to go on vacation?

The Napkin Game



#12

Format: In Person

Materials: Napkins

Time Required: 10-15mins

Group Size: (Broken into small groups of 5-15)

Ask participants to form equal size groups. Give each group a napkin and ask them to fold the napkin as small as possible. However, it must be large enough for each team member to place their toe on the napkin. Allow the teams to demonstrate.

Get In Shape



#13

Format: In Person

Materials: None

Time Required: 10-15mins

Group Size: (Broken into groups of 5-10)

Have individuals stand in a circle and hold hands. Ask them to form various shapes as a group without letting go of each other's hands. For example, a circle, a square, rectangle, etc. To add some variation, ask them to form non-standard shapes such as "house," "tree," or "car."

Did You See It?



#14

Format: In Person

Materials: None

Time Required: 5-10mins

Group Size: Any

Every day we walk into work through the same doors and reception area, past the same people, and take the same route to our desk. This staff-meeting icebreaker finds out how much attention we pay to our surroundings.

Have team members take turns asking each other about the workplace. For example, "What color is the receptionist wearing today?" or "What was the special in the lunchroom today?"

The fun of this game is that most people will find these questions difficult to answer. If you wish, define a winner as the one with most correct answers.

Talent Show



#15

Format: In Person

Materials: None/Whiteboard, Paper Depending on Team Member Needs

Time Required: 10-15mins

Group Size: Any

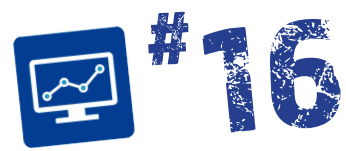
This excellent icebreaker game not only helps team members get to know each other, but also allows them to share a talent they have.

Ask each person to take a turn naming and sharing a talent. It can be anything - singing, storytelling, joke telling, dancing, or drawing. (They can use the whiteboard or paper.)

Keep the performances short, no more than a minute or two. Before they start, have team members introduce themselves.

If there are too many team members for one meeting, or too much to cover in the meeting to accommodate everyone sharing: elect (or ask for volunteers) one team member per meeting to share and use as the start of each meeting.

Take a Picture of Your Shoes



Format: Virtual

Materials: Camera/Video Capabilities

Time Required: 10-15mins

Group Size: Any

Ask team members to take a picture of their shoes and upload it ahead of the meeting. This activity is best for videoconferences, but it can work on teleconference calls if everyone has access to a screen. Share the photo via Skype, or send to team members at the beginning of the meeting.

At the start of the meeting, ask each participant to discuss his choice of shoe, and any "story" behind it. For example, one person might be wearing running shoes - and this might lead to a discussion about his hobbies - or sandals, flip-flops, sneakers, or slippers.

Vary the exercise by asking team members to take a picture of an object on their desks, and getting them to talk about it.

