

5 Icebreaking Ideas

Musical People

A good starter if people don't know one another. It also mixes people up who know one another and have sat together. All participants sit in a circle. The facilitator stands in the middle, which means there is a chair short. The trainer calls out a statement like "Anyone wearing jeans change places" The object is to get people out of their chairs so anyone wearing jeans has to move. They are not allowed to take the seat next to them or to go back to the seat they've just left. The next person in the middle calls out a statement like "Anyone who has a cat or a dog, change" and so on...

Card Types

To mix people up and get them into groups for breakout exercises: Prepare several sets of small cards in advance with four types of a set (if you want four in a group) – for example: types of flower, colours, cities, weather, cars, clothes (this would be six groups of four so you would have 24 people in the whole group). You need the same number of sets for the number of groups you want to divide people into. So the set of flowers might be daffodil, tulip, daisy and rose. Then offer each participant a card (face down so they don't see what the card says or what the picture is). Then ask participants to find the other people in their set, and to stay with them. You can then move them on to their groups, the place they need to be and the task you have for them.

Secret Signs

Sit everyone around without desks/tables in front of them. Have an object to pass around (say a pair of scissors). The leader passes the object to the next person having studied it carefully explains they must declare it either "crossed" or "uncrossed". The next person does the same but the leader has to say whether they are correct or not. (In fact the crossed or uncrossed is nothing to do with the object but with the person's legs – are they crossed or uncrossed.) Each time the object returns to the leader s/he declares truthfully according to whether their own legs are crossed/uncrossed. Eventually some people will get the correct answer either by luck or by observation but they mustn't tell the others! When most people seem to have grasped the idea, put the others out of their misery!

Birthdays

Another one to mix the group up – ask all participants to line up according to which month they were born in (January to December) – the facilitator just needs to indicate which end of the room is January and which is December. This works best with large groups.

My Personal Shield

Give each person a piece of flipchart paper, folded into 4 or 6 squares. Write up a list areas on the flipchart / powerpoint. Then ask each person to draw how they would depict the subject areas in relation to them.

Ideas for subject areas:

- The best time I ever had
- My greatest accomplishment
- My most prized possession
- What I would do if I had a year off to do anything
- My personal ambition
- My hobby
- A work issue
- What I want from the course

When everybody has had time to draw their response in each square ask the group to pair up and show their sheet to their partner, who then proceeds to guess what the drawings are depicting.

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