

## Icebreaker Grab Bag

<p><b>Overview</b></p>	<p>Icebreakers are typically quick, low-stakes activities that encourage students to become more familiar with their peers. Many instructors do an icebreaker on the first day of class to learn students’ names. However, frequent use of icebreakers on a daily or weekly basis can assist in building community as your students come to know one another better. Having all students speak and participate at the beginning of each class can also positively impact overall participation in classroom discussion. This collection of icebreakers provides a variety of activities to choose from and implement throughout the semester.</p>
<p><b>Goals</b></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) To build classroom community.</li> <li>2) To encourage students to speak and participate on a regular basis.</li> </ol>
<p><b>Implementation</b></p>	<p>These activities can be done at the beginning of class regularly to get students talking and engaging with their peers to prime them for a lively and inclusive discussion of course content.</p>
<p><b>Challenges</b></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Some of these icebreakers may be more suitable for students who are already comfortable with one another.             <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Save those activities for later in the semester.</li> </ol> </li> <li>2) Not all students enjoy icebreakers, and some may see them as a waste of time.             <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Being straightforward with your students about the function of icebreakers may help them recognize the positive benefit of taking class time to do them.</li> </ol> </li> <li>3) Be aware of space limitations and any disabilities that may inhibit a student’s ability to participate fully.</li> </ol>
<p><b>Materials</b></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Vary by activity.</li> </ol>

## Icebreaker Grab Bag Activities

The following 19 activities include icebreakers that you can use at the start of the semester, or throughout the semester, to build community within your classroom. The last two activities, "Connect with Someone," and "Pat on the Back," are activities that are best implemented at a later point in the semester.

<p><b>Uncommon Commonalities</b></p> <p><b>Supplies:</b> <b>None</b></p> <p><b>Time:</b> <b>15 minutes</b></p>	<p><b>This activity is a great way to build community at the start of the semester.</b></p> <p>In groups of two or three, students will get to know each other by attempting to find a commonality between them that is uncommon. For example, three students discover that they each have three older siblings. After finding an uncommon commonality, students in each group will attempt to find a unique trait/experience that they hold in the group. Time permitting, groups can share out their uncommon commonalities to see which group has the most uncommon, shared experience/trait.</p>
<p><b>Blanket Barrier</b></p> <p><b>Supplies:</b> <b>Sheet or Blanket</b></p> <p><b>Time:</b> <b>10 minutes</b></p>	<p><b>This activity is great for students to learn each other's names.</b></p> <p>In this activity, you will divide the class into two groups. You will need two volunteers to hold up a blanket/sheet that will divide each group. Each group gathers on either side of the blanket/sheet so that they cannot see the other group. Each group sends a representative forward (directly next to the blanket) and on the count of 3, the two people holding the barrier drop the barrier. The two people who are in front try and say the other person's name first. The person who fails to say the other person's name must join the winner's team. The game ends when one player is on a team by himself/herself.</p>
<p><b>Ball Toss</b></p> <p><b>Supplies:</b> <b>Ball</b></p> <p><b>Time:</b> <b>10 minutes</b></p>	<p><b>This activity is great for students to learn each other's names.</b></p> <p>Sitting in a circle, start with each student identifying himself/herself. Once everyone has introduced themselves, one student will, with a ball in hand, call out the name of another student. Then s/he tosses the ball to the indicated student. Toss the ball until everyone has received it. Start over. The first person should not throw the ball to the same person s/he started with.</p>
<p><b>Name Story</b></p> <p><b>Supplies:</b> <b>Pen and Paper</b></p> <p><b>Time:</b> <b>20 minutes</b></p>	<p><a href="#">Click here</a> to see a more in-depth lesson plan for this activity.</p> <p><b>This activity is great for students to learn each other's names and to make personal connections through the story of classmates' names.</b></p> <p>Students describe something unique about their name, such as family origin, how they were named, who they were named for, how their name is unique, how the spelling is unique, etc. The details provided make for an interesting and engaging activity.</p>

<p><b>Sun &amp; Moon</b></p> <p><b>Supplies:</b> <b>List of Questions</b></p> <p><b>Time:</b> <b>15 minutes</b></p>	<p><b>This activity is great for students to learn more personal information about their classmates.</b></p> <p>Divide the group into 2 circles. Have half of the students form an inner circle, shoulder to shoulder facing out. The other half of the group forms an outer circle facing inward. The inner circle is the moon and the outer circle the sun. Asking questions, a student from the moon will answer the question to a student facing them from the sun and vice versa.</p> <p>Ask a question from the following list or any question you would like:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If you had one extra hour of free time a day, how would you use it?</li> <li>• Who is a personal hero/someone you admire?</li> <li>• Where did you grow up?</li> <li>• What has been one of your favorite parts of college? Worst part?</li> <li>• What does a perfect day look like?</li> <li>• Where do you like to go on campus?</li> <li>• What do you hope to do after college?</li> <li>• How has your identity shaped your personal beliefs?</li> <li>• What is a memorable place you have visited?</li> <li>• What are some of your personal values?</li> </ul> <p>Tell either the sun or moon to move x paces right/left. Ask another question. Move the other circle, repeat. <i>Make sure to think about how you are moving the circle, or you will have people talking to the same people over and over.</i></p>
<p><b>Common Ground</b></p> <p><b>Supplies:</b> <b>List of Statements</b></p> <p><b>Time:</b> <b>15 minutes</b></p>	<p><b>This activity is great for students to learn interesting facts about classmates.</b></p> <p>Students form a large circle. Explain to students that you will read statements. Each time you read a statement, the students should step into the circle if it is true for them, introduce themselves to the other students in the inner circle, and step out again.</p> <p><b>Statements might include:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I am an early riser.</li> <li>• I drink a hot beverage every morning.</li> <li>• I get more work done at night.</li> <li>• I grew up on the east coast.</li> <li>• I grew up in the Midwest.</li> <li>• I grew up on the west coast.</li> <li>• I grew up in the south.</li> <li>• I grew up outside the US.</li> <li>• I am the oldest child.</li> <li>• I am the middle child.</li> <li>• I am the youngest child.</li> <li>• I am an only child.</li> <li>• I had a male teacher in elementary school.</li> <li>• I grew up in a two-parent household.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Most of my best friends are the same gender as me.</li> <li>• I do not speak English at home.</li> <li>• I attended a predominantly white school.</li> <li>• I have never participated in a dialogue about X (e.g., race, gender, social class) before.</li> </ul> <p><b>Debrief/Wrap Up:</b> You may choose to do a debrief discussion afterward to ask students what they learned from each other and what further questions they might have for each other.</p> <p>Wrap up this activity by summarizing the learning, stressing that we will continue to learn about our commonalities, and differences in this dialogue and encourage participants to follow up with each other about some of these statements.</p>
<p><b>Web of Connection</b></p> <p><b>Supplies:</b> Ball of String or Yarn</p> <p><b>Time:</b> 15 minutes</p>	<p><a href="#">Click here</a> to see a more in-depth lesson plan for this activity.</p> <p><b>This activity is great for students to learn each other’s names and to learn interesting facts about each other.</b></p> <p>Have students form one large circle. A member of the group starts by stating his/her name and answering a question that you have decided on. (What is your favorite memory? What did you enjoy most about this class?) Then s/he holds onto the string and tosses the ball to another participant, who then answers the same question. At the end of the activity, there is a web connecting all members of the group and you can speak to how students are interconnected. If desired, you can bring scissors and cut the web to have each member keep part of the web to remember the connection.</p>
<p><b>Life Maps</b></p> <p><b>Supplies:</b> Paper/Flipchart Paper, Markers</p> <p><b>Time:</b> 15-20 minutes</p>	<p><b>This activity is great for students to reflect on their own life experiences and to share them with classmates.</b></p> <p>Have students think of 3-5 significant life experiences that can be used to divide one’s life into segments. Use drawing, words, etc. to record the experiences. Share with other members of the group afterward.</p>
<p><b>People Bingo</b></p> <p><b>Supplies:</b> Pre-made Bingo Sheet</p> <p><b>Time:</b> 10-15 minutes</p>	<p><b>This activity is great for students to learn interesting facts about classmates.</b></p> <p>Using a typical 5 x 5 bingo grid, design a series of statements (can play a musical instrument, loves to cook, is an only child, loves camping, etc.) that go in each of the 25 boxes (you can make the center box a free space). Have students go around and gather 1 signature from each person to try and connect 5 boxes in a row vertically, horizontally, or diagonally.</p>

<p><b>Family Crest/Shield</b></p> <p><b>Supplies:</b> Paper and Markers</p> <p><b>Time:</b> 15-20 minutes</p>	<p><b>This activity is great for students to learn about the backgrounds of classmates.</b></p> <p>Have participants draw the shape of a shield on a piece of paper and draw a family crest. You can ask questions as they share such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Why did you choose the items you did to indicate your family crest?</li> <li>• Why those colors?</li> <li>• Why those words?</li> <li>• Why those symbols?</li> </ul>
<p><b>Zip Zap Zoom</b></p> <p><b>Supplies:</b> None</p> <p><b>Time:</b> 15 minutes</p>	<p><b>This is an active, fun, low-stakes way to engage with one another and to learn each other's names.</b></p> <p>Students will sit in a circle with one chair too few. The person in the middle points to an individual and says either Zip, Zap, or Zoom. If s/he points and says Zip the person pointed at has to say the name of the person on his/her right. If s/he points and says Zap, it is the person on the left. As the person calls out zip or zap, they count quickly to 5 or 10. If the person cannot answer correctly, s/he needs to move to the center space. If the person says zoom, everyone must switch places.</p>
<p><b>I Have a Link</b></p> <p><b>Supplies:</b> None</p> <p><b>Time:</b> 15 minutes</p>	<p><b>This is an active, fun, low-stakes way to engage with one another and to find commonalities among classmates.</b></p> <p>One member of the group volunteers (or is selected) to go first. Standing in the middle of a circle or at the front of the room, S/he says, "I have a link..." and says something true about himself/herself. Another member of the group that this is also true of comes and joins elbows. Then the new person tries to gain a link. When that person cannot find a link, you switch to the other person with an open elbow until the entire group is linked elbows in a circle.</p>
<p><b>Switch If...</b></p> <p><b>Supplies:</b> None</p> <p><b>Time:</b> 15 minutes</p>	<p><b>This is an active, fun, low-stakes way to engage with one another and to find commonalities among classmates.</b></p> <p>Sitting in a circle with one chair too few, the person in the center of the circle states something true about himself/herself. All the people who this is true about must switch seats (not directly left or right) giving the person in the middle a chance to grab a seat.</p>
<p><b>Candy</b></p> <p><b>Supplies:</b> M&amp;Ms, Starburst, Skittles,</p> <p><b>Time:</b> 15 minutes</p>	<p><b>This activity is a great way for students to open up and share interesting facts about themselves.</b></p> <p>Have members of the group take a handful of candy. For each piece of candy have them tell something about themselves. If you would like to get more creative, you can assign specific questions to answer for each color of candy.</p>

<p><b>2 Truths and a Lie</b></p> <p><b>Supplies:</b> None</p> <p><b>Time:</b> 15 minutes</p>	<p><b>This activity is great for students to learn interesting facts about classmates.</b></p> <p>You can split the class up into groups or do this as a whole class icebreaker.</p> <p>Students are instructed to think about 2 truths and 1 lie about themselves. Then they share with the whole class or with their group members and try to trick the group into thinking one of the truths is the lie and that the lie is the truth. The group tries to guess which is the lie.</p>
<p><b>Bookmark</b></p> <p><b>Supplies:</b> Paper Cutout of a Bookmark, Pens</p> <p><b>Time:</b> 15 minutes</p>	<p><b>This activity is great for students to learn more about how their classmates perceive them in class. Note: Try to encourage non-biting remarks.</b></p> <p>Have students each take a blank bookmark. Write their names at the top. Pass the bookmarks around the group and have people write their first impressions of each other on the bookmark (bulleted points, one per person, anonymously). It is fascinating to learn how others first perceive you.</p>
<p><b>Beef/Bouquet</b></p> <p><b>Supplies:</b> None</p> <p><b>Time:</b> 15 minutes</p>	<p><b>This is a great activity for students to open up and share feelings with classmates regarding a variety of topics.</b></p> <p>Have students share their “beef” (something they are upset with) and their “bouquet” (something they are pleased with). About anything, about the class, about school, etc.</p>
<p><b>Connect with Someone</b></p> <p><b>Supplies:</b> List of Statements</p> <p><b>Time:</b> 20 minutes</p>	<p><b>This is a great activity for students to share their connections and sentiments they have established with one another throughout the semester.</b></p> <p>As noted, this icebreaker is best suited for later in the semester once the students have gotten to know each other better. Before beginning, specify that this activity will involve being tapped on the shoulder. If someone in your group is not comfortable with being tapped on the shoulder, offer a non-contact way to participate. Another option is to have the person hold a piece of paper that others can tug on, so they do not have to be touched. (I would encourage all to participate if comfortable).</p> <p>Have everyone sit in a circle with their heads down and their eyes closed. The facilitator will go out and touch a couple (2-5 depending on the size of the group) of people on the shoulder. If a person does not want to be touched, tug their piece of paper. The facilitator will say, “If I tapped your shoulder please open your eyes and come where I am standing.” These people who have been touched will go out and touch the people they feel are related to the statements that are read off. When this group has touched a good amount of people for three or four statements, they will go and sit down and close their eyes and the process starts again with the facilitator tapping “new touchers.”</p>

When reading the statements off, the facilitator may want to omit certain ones if they feel they do not apply to their group. Additionally, please feel free to add any questions or open it up to your students to add statements at the end.

Statements might include:

- Connect with someone you can depend on in class.
- Connect with someone you would like to get to know better.
- Connect with someone who makes you laugh.
- Connect with someone who helped you this term.
- Connect with someone who motivates you.
- Connect with someone who you think is an inspiration.
- Connect with someone you admire.
- Connect with someone you get along with in class.
- Connect with someone who you look up to.
- Connect with someone who makes you smile.
- Connect with someone who you would call a friend.
- Connect with someone who helps others.
- Connect with someone who you feel close to in class.
- Connect with someone who inspires you.
- Connect with someone who makes a difference in other's people's lives.
- Connect with someone who makes you happy.
- Connect with someone who challenged you in a positive way.
- Connect with someone who is outgoing.
- Connect with someone who opened up during the class.
- Connect with someone who made you cry.
- Connect with someone who encouraged you.
- Connect with someone who showed you support.
- Connect with someone who made you think.
- Connect with someone you admire.
- Connect with someone you want to hear talk more.
- Connect with someone you enjoyed getting to know.
- Connect with someone you liked talking to in class.
- Connect with someone you feel is talented.

**Pats on the Back**

**This is a great activity for classmates to share positive feedback with one another.**

**Supplies:**  
**Tape, Paper**  
**Plates, Markers**

Have students trace their hand on their paper plate and tape the paper plate to their back. Students will then go around the room and share positive feedback with each other in written form.

**Time:**  
**15-20 Minutes**