



Ice Breakers

The first day of school is usually spent in part by getting acquainted and establishing goals. Icebreakers are techniques used at the first session to reduce tension and anxiety, and also to immediately involve the class in the course. Use an icebreaker because you want to, not as a time filler or because teaching guides say one should be used. Listed below are several examples of icebreakers.

- **INTRODUCE ANOTHER** ~ Divide the class into pairs. Each student talks about him/herself to the other, sometimes with specific instructions to share a certain piece of information. For example, "The one thing I am particularly proud of is..." After five minutes, the students introduce the other person to the rest of the class.
- **CHARACTER DESCRIPTIONS** ~ Have students write down one or two adjectives describing themselves. Put these on a stick-on badge. Have class members find someone with similar or opposite adjectives and talk for five minutes with the other person.
- **I'VE DONE SOMETHING YOU HAVEN'T DONE** ~ Have each student introduce themselves and then state something they have done that they think no one else in the class has done. If someone else has also done it, the student must state something else until he/she finds something that no one else has done.
- **FIND SOMEONE** ~ Each student writes on a blank index card one to three statements, such as favorite color, interest, hobby, or vacations. Pass out cards so everyone gets someone else's card. Have that person find the person with their card and introduce themselves.
- **FAMOUS PERSON** ~ Students write a famous name on a piece of paper and pin it on someone else's back. Each person tries to guess what name is pinned on his/her by asking others around the room yes or no questions. Variation: Use famous place instead of famous person.
- **MY NAME** ~ Students introduce themselves and tell what they know about why they have their name (their mother wanted to name me after her great aunt Helen who once climbed Pike's Peak in high heels, etc.). It could be the first, middle or nickname.



- **HOW DO YOU FEEL?** ~ Ask the students to write down words or phrases that describe their feelings on the first day of school. List the responses on the board. Then ask them to write down what they think you as the teacher are feeling this first day of class. List them on the board in a second column and note the parallels. Briefly comment on your feelings and then discuss the joint student/teacher responsibilities for learning in the course.
- **COMMON GROUND** ~ This works best for small groups or for each small group sitting together as a team (4-6 learners). Give the group a specific time (perhaps 5 minutes) to write a list of everything they all have in common. When time is up, ask each group how many items they have listed. For fun, ask them to announce some of the most interesting items.
- **ME TOO** ~ This also works best for small groups or for each small group sitting together as a team (4-6 learners). Everyone in the group has 10 pennies/ toothpicks/scrap of papers, etc. The first student states something he/she has done (e.g. water skiing). Everyone else who has done the same thing admits it and puts one penny in the middle of the table. Then the second person states something (e.g. I have eaten chocolate covered crickets). Everyone who has done it puts another penny in the center. Continue until someone has run out of pennies.

These are just a few of the hundreds of icebreakers. Be creative and design your own variations. Don't be afraid to experiment and try different approaches, and above all, have fun and start that most important first day of class on the right foot!

