

ICEBREAKER/ENERGIZER/ACTIVITY RESOURCE GUIDE FOR TEAM LEADERS

Characteristics of good icebreakers/energizers:

- Don't take too much time- optimum length is 15-30 minutes
- Involve everyone
- Encourage trust and cooperation within a small group or the entire group of members- some icebreakers should be cooperative rather than competitive
- Encourage us to reveal ourselves
- Make us feel a little bit challenged, but not uncomfortable
- Result in our feeling more a part of the group
- Start conversations and interactions
- Increase our respect and liking of other group members, especially those who seem on the surface to be different than ourselves
- Show us interesting new things about people we have known for some time

When to use icebreakers/energizers

- At the beginning of a training to help members get acquainted and start off with a fun activity
- After lunch, to chase off the sleepy after-lunch feeling
- After a difficult or intense session to release tension
- After assigning members to work in groups with people they don't know very well to facilitate group interaction

SAMPLES:

ICEBREAKERS

➤ **PEOPLE BINGO**

Develop a list of statements that are likely to be true for at least several of the members in your group. Write the statements in boxes on a piece of paper- everyone should get the same sheet, so make enough copies. Give members 10 minutes to find someone other than themselves for whom the statement is true and have them initial inside the box. Whoever completes all the boxes first wins a prize. Your statements can be general- for example, find someone who:

- was born in March
- lives in a co-op building
- has seen the Grateful Dead, live in concert
- has a daughter
- owns a Prince album
- has eaten grits

Your statements can also be AmeriCorps focused- for example, find someone who:

- called the national **1-800** recruitment line
- plans to use the educational stipend to become a lawyer
- expects to work for a nonprofit organization
- hopes to stay in AmeriCorps for a second year

➤ **TWO TRUTHS AND A LIE**

Have members come up with two true things about themselves, and one lie. Share the truths and lie with the group. Have group guess which statement is the lie.

➤ **FOOTRACE**

Separate into two teams and have each team form a line standing shoulder to shoulder. Have them “stick” their feet together and race to a designated finish line. If their feet become unstuck during race they must return to start and begin again. To make the race more challenging a second time around, don’t allow talking, or turn every other person around and have him or her face backwards,

➤ **HOG CALL**

Have members pair up and decide on a two word phrase. Have each pair go to opposite sides of room (or if outside, spread out so they are about 15-20 yards apart and facing each other). Each person is blindfolded and they begin by calling out their portion of the two-part phrase. For example- if the phrase is “hot dog”, one person yells “hot” and the other person yells “dog” until they find each other. When they all get together, interview partner and introduce them to the group.

➤ **HUMMING**

Give everyone in the group a song to hum. Find the person that is humming your same song. Make this icebreaker more difficult by blindfolding and finding person who is humming the same song. Interview your partner and introduce them to the group.

➤ **I’M THE ONE WHO...**

Give out small slips of paper. Tell everyone to write on the paper, “I’m the one who” and have them fill in the blank with something about themselves, For example “I’m the one who loves to water ski.” Fold up slips of paper and throw into a pile in the middle of the floor. Everyone then picks a slip of paper that is not their own and mingles around whispering “are you the one who-whatever is written on the slip of paper they chose?” When they find the owner of the slip of paper, link arms. Keep going until everyone has linked arms.

➤ **M&M OR TOILET PAPER INTRODUCTION**

Pass around a bag of M&M’s and tell everyone to take as many as they’d like. When everyone has some, tell them they then need to tell the group something about themselves for every M&M they took. Same goes for toilet paper. Pass around a roll of toilet paper and tell them to take as much as they think they’d need for a five day trip in the wilderness. For every square of it they took, they need to tell something about themselves to the group.

➤ **JOY**

Ask each member to think of three things that she/he would like to share. Use the letters of the word ‘joy’ to structure what is to be shared:

- J: something in your life that JUST happened
- O: ONE thing you would like to do for yourself
- Y: a part of YOU that makes you a very special person

Point out that the keywords say, ‘JUST ONE YOU!’

Listen attentively as each member takes an aim sharing.

➤ **BUMPETY-BUMP-BUMP**

Form a circle standing up, with a chosen “it” in the center. The “it” walks up to you and stands in front of you and says one of the following:

“Center, bumpety-bump-bump”

“Self, bumpety-bump-bump”

“Right, bumpety-bump-bump”

“Left, bumpety-bump-bump”

You must say her/his name (if “it” says “center”), your name (if “it” says “self”), or the person’s name to your right or left of you (if “it” says “right” or “left”) before “it” completes saying “bumpety-bump-bump”; otherwise you become “it.”

➤ **EXTENDED NAMETAGS**

Distribute 5x8-inch cards. Ask each member to print her or his first name or nickname in the center of the card, and directly under it the quality she or he most values in people. Then have each member write in the following corners:

Upper left- a place where she/he spent their happiest summer or favorite place on earth

Lower left- the name of the person that taught them something important or their best friend

Right- the year they last spent three great days in a row or the year they went on a big trip.

Upper right- three things they do well or a goal they have for the future. Have the students meet in triads: Explain that the triad will talk about the upper left corner of their card for 3 minutes, which means each person has 1 minute to talk. Ask them to keep track of their time and share equally. After 3 minutes, have the triads give statements of appreciation, such as “You’re a lot like me when...” or “I like that you...”. Have members form triads three more times and follow the same above procedure for the remaining three corners of the card. At the end, form a circle and invite members to share something interesting or special they learned about a fellow member.

➤ **NAME GAME**

Instruct members to write their first full name vertically on a piece of paper. Then have them write an adjective that describes themselves that begins with each of the letters of their first name. After everyone has completed their list of adjectives, give each member time to share their name and adjectives with the whole group. Entire activity should not exceed 10 minutes.

➤ **PUBLIC INTERVIEW**

One person in the group is chosen as the interviewee. Everyone else in the group can ask any question about the interviewee they want for 1 minute. The interviewee can refuse to answer questions if they don’t want to. Take turns being the interviewee.

ENERGIZERS

➤ **KNOTS**

Have everyone stand in a circle shoulder to shoulder. Ask everyone to reach out and grab two other hands (you cannot have both of the hands of one person, and you cannot have the hands of persons on each side of you). If possible, try not to criss-cross. Now tell everyone to try to untangle so they are standing in a round circle without letting go of each other’s hands while they are untying.

➤ **TRUST CIRCLE**

Make a circle with a small group of members. Have one person stand in the middle with eyes closed and feet planted firmly. Have the group in the circle gently push on the shoulders of the

person in the middle, making sure she or he does not fall, but does keep moving. The group supports the person as she/he rotates around the circle

➤ **WINK**

Have members stand in a circle with their eyes closed. One person walks around the circle and quietly taps the back of one person who will be the “winker.” Everyone opens their eyes and begins to mill around the room. If a person has been winked at, she or he must count to ten silently and then make a scene to let others know she or he is out of the game. The object is to catch the winker before everyone loses. If a person suspects the winker’s identity, she says, “I have an accusation!” However, there must be two accusers to step the game. When someone else becomes suspicious, she or he shouts, “I have an accusation!” Then both accusers count to three and point to the player they think is the perpetrator (no discussion is allowed). If they both point to someone who is innocent or to different people, they are automatically out of the game. If, however, they both point to the true winker, the game is over.

➤ **ALLIGATORS**

As many members as possible stand on a bench, board, or in a marked area (small and narrow). They are told they are in a lifeboat and there are alligators in the water. If any of them fall in, the alligators will know they are there and they will all die. Their job: line themselves up in order of height, by birth dates, etc. To make the game more difficult, use blindfolds.

➤ **HAGOO**

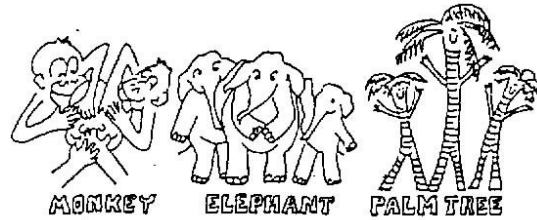
Divide into 2 teams and form 2 lines. Have people stand shoulder to shoulder, facing a person on the other team. Stand a yard apart. One person from each team will volunteer to walk past each person in the row of the opposite team. The people on the team try to make the volunteer from the other team smile as she or he walks by. No touching is allowed. If the volunteer cracks up, she or he must join the opposite team. If she or he makes it to the end straight-faced, she or he goes back to the original team.

➤ **I LOVE YOU, HONEY**

Have everyone stand in a large circle. One person in the middle walks no to one person in the circle and says, “I love you, honey.” The chosen “victim” is to respond, I love you too, but I’m not allowed to smile,” without smiling. It can be said twice to the same person in the same way. Guess what happens? They smile! The smiler may then trade places with the person in the center OR join the person in the center in tempting others to smile.

➤ **MONKEY, ELEPHANT, PALM TREE**

Form a large circle with one person standing in the middle as “it.” The person in the center first demonstrates positions for people to take when she or he calls out one of the animals or the palm tree. They are illustrated below. The person in the center then twirls around and points a finger at one of the people in the circle and shouts out: “Monkey,” or “Elephant” or “Palm Tree.” The person pointed to and the two people on either side of her or him take the appropriate positions with their bodies. The member of the trio that flubs up becomes the new “it” and goes into the center of the circle to continue on with the game.



➤ **RED-HANDED**

Everyone forms a circle and one person chosen as “it” stands in the center. While “it” closes her or his eyes, the other players pass a small object (like a marble or stone) from person to person. The sneakiest method of passing is to hold the marble in one fist, palm down, and drop it into the palm up hand of the next person. Then she or he passes it from one fist to the other and on. With a little practice, you’ll be able to accomplish a sneaky pass without even looking. “It” signals and opens her or his eyes. If she detects a suspicious look on someone’s face, she walks up and taps one of his fists. If he’s empty-handed she moves on. Meanwhile, everyone has been passing the marble around, virtually under “It’s” nose (fake passes, as decoys, by people who don’t have the marble are an integral part of the game). If you have the marble and “it” catches you- congratulations, you’re the new “it!”

➤ **ALL MY NEIGHBORS WHO...**

Arrange chairs in a circle- enough for each participant minus one. One person stands in the middle of the circle, everyone else sits in the chairs. The middle person calls out, “All my neighbors who have had braces.” Everyone, including the person in the middle, who has had braces must find a new seat as quickly as possible- yet safely. The one person left without a chair becomes the caller in the middle of the circle. Callers can be as creative as they want. Some ideas- all my neighbors who: use Crest toothpaste, have been to Europe, can swim butterfly, enjoy public speaking, etc.

➤ **BIRDIE ON THE PERCH**

Have everyone in the group find a partner. One set of partners forms a circle, and the other set forms another circle on the outside of first group. Each partner should be facing each other, and in opposite circles. Start playing music and have the inside circle walk one direction and the outside circle walk the opposite direction. When the music stops, the pairs must find each other and form the birdie on the perch (one partner kneeling on one knee, and second partner sitting on that person’s knee- as gently as possible). The last pair to form the Birdie on the perch is out of the game. Continue playing until only one pair is left- they are the winners!

➤ **CAN PASS AROUND**

Have everyone sit in a circle and take off their shoes (you can also try this with their shoes on). Give a coffee can to one participant and have them start passing the can around the circle with their feet only. If it drops, it must start again with the first person. See what kind of speed record you can set for sending the can around the entire circle!

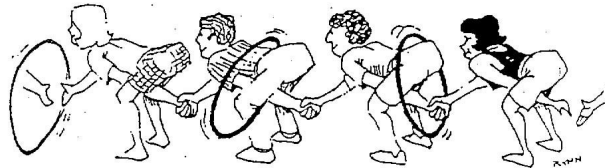
➤ **ELBOW TAG**

Players stand in a circle, facing in, and link an elbow with one partner. One partnership volunteers to start the game and breaks up; one of them becomes the chaser and the other becomes the runner. The runner runs around the inside of the circle, and the chaser tries to tag her. To become safe, the runner must link elbows with one of the players standing in the circle:

This makes that players partner the new runner! If the chaser tags the runner, they switch roles! What if a chaser just can't tag anyone? He just yells, "switch!" and becomes the runner, while the runner becomes the new chaser!

➤ **HOOP RELAY**

Divide the group into two parts and ask each half to line up facing you. The folks in each line should be holding hands front-to-back (i.e. reaching backward through their legs to grasp the free hand of the person behind them). This relay requires two starters, each standing at the front of the line, designating the start, and each holding 3-4 hoops. Each starter, on a signal, begins the action by placing a hoop over the head of the first person in line. As soon as that hoop has been moved to the third person in line, the second hoop is started, etc. If the starters want to become a part of the action, they simply start the last hoop and become the first person in line. When the first hoop reaches the last person in line, that individual runs to the front of the line with the hoop, grabs the hand of the now second person in line, and starts the hoop moving toward the end of the line. Continue until the original front line person returns to that position.



TEAMBUILDING ACTIVITIES

➤ **BLIND POLY**

While blindfolded, the group is asked to form a perfect square using themselves and the rope they are holding onto (rope should be approximately 50-75 feet). Start with all members standing in a line and holding the rope. The participants may not let go of the rope with either hand for the entire activity (facilitator may make activity more challenging by selecting particular members and not allowing them to talk during activity). Other shapes may also be formed- triangle, pentagon, trapezoid, etc.

➤ **TRUST WALKS**

One person is blindfolded and the other person leads her/him to a designated place, or just around for about 5 minutes, all the while taking very good care of the blindfolded person. After 5 minutes, or after reaching designated point, switch roles. Variations to make this activity more challenging are- one person can talk and one cannot, a line of blindfolded people with a leader at the beginning and end to lead the group.

➤ **NEWSPAPER TENTS**

Supply newspaper and masking tape. Have teams build tent out of newspaper- large enough so that one person could sleep inside (10-15 minutes per group often).

➤ **TEAM RESUME**

Groups focus on collective strengths by developing a team resume. Write down personal and professional characteristics all together. Report back and talk about strengths by saying, "we did this" rather than "I did this."

➤ **SCAVENGER HUNT**

Send members on a scavenger hunt. Give everyone same list and same amount of time to complete in.

➤ **OBSTACLE COURSE**

Design an obstacle course that draws on people's strengths. Make the course include many different elements such as physical, intellectual, sports, cooking, etc. Talk about how the more diverse a team is, the stronger it will be,

➤ **SPIDER WEB (A CLOSING ACTIVITY)**

Have everyone make a circle. One person starts with the end of a ball of yarn and says something he or she learned from the training (or whatever you are doing), learned about themselves, etc. They then pass the ball to someone else (other than the person next to them), while holding their end: Proceed until everyone has had a chance to speak and a spider web is formed! The web symbolizes unity and how everyone is connected.

➤ **APPRECIATION PAPERS (A CLOSING ACTIVITY)**

Give everyone a piece of paper, piece of tape, and a pen or marker. Have them tape the piece of paper to their back. Tell everyone to walk around the room and find 5 (or more/less depending on size of your group) people's backs to write on. They should write something they appreciate about the person whose paper they are writing on. After everyone is finished, tell participants to take the paper off their back and read!

◆ *For more information on ice breakers, energizers, team building activities, contact the National Service Resource Center @ 1-800-860-2684*