

ICEBREAKERS

Icebreakers are a useful tool in any group. They save precious time at all kinds of meetings - not just training events - by helping people find common ground and overcome shyness. Spend a few minutes on an icebreaker at your next meeting; it pays off. Here are some tried and tested icebreakers that are simple and quick to run:

Focus

If you are chairing a meeting, begin by asking everyone to state in 10 words what change he or she wants to bring about as a result of the meeting. If nothing is going to change, cancel the meeting!

Nostalgia

Ask each person to produce a coin and find its date. Give them 3 minutes to come up with a memory about something that happened in that year. If time is short, restrict them to three sentences as they share the memory with the group. People will reveal funny and fascinating facts about themselves: one of my favourites was a fellow Roxy Music fan who (almost!) had a fling with Bryan Ferry! It's a great ice breaker because it helps people to express something about them that is unrelated to work and everyone gets to know each other better. The only downside is - you may find yourself, as I just did, giving your age away!



Sexy Sadie

This icebreaker allows people to say something about themselves at the start of an event or meeting; it always makes people laugh and relax. It can be used in groups with people who do, or don't already know one another.

Ask each participant to choose an adjective that begins with the first letter of their first name, and one that they think matches their personality (Sensuous Sam, Energetic Elizabeth, etc.) Let them introduce themselves by this name, and allow a minute for laughter, comment and questions.

Adjectives

This icebreaker needs a little preparation on the part of the delegates. Ask each person to bring (but not wear) a favourite item such as a T shirt, a tie or a piece of jewellery. At the beginning of the session, ask people to work in pairs and explain to their partner what the item says about them. Each delegate then introduces his/her partner using three adjectives only.

Example: "This is Fiona. Like her brooch, she's stylish, modern and very sparkly!"

Truth & Lies

This icebreaker is based on the old TV series "Call My Bluff". Each person has 5 minutes to write down three interesting facts about herself. Two of the facts are true, one is not. The person then introduces herself to the group, making the introduction as interesting as possible, and attempting to convince the others that everything she says is true. It's up to the group to decide which fact is the bluff.

Example: "Hi, I'm Jill. I speak French fluently, I hold six medals for tap dancing and I once stood in for the lead singer in Evita"

This is a good icebreaker to use when people are strangers to one another, but it can also be used with groups of colleagues, where the fun lies in trying to fool people who think they know you.