

Ice-Breakers & Mixers

Feel free to use any of these during down times or scheduled mixer times.

Accident Report

Equip players with a pencil and paper and instruct the group that on a given signal (such as two pie pans crashing together) they are to bump shoulders with someone close. After bumping, an accident report must be filled out getting each other's name, address, phone number, grade, driver's license number, etc. This can be continued six or eight times throughout the night's activities, each time bumping someone new. This is a good mixer and also a sneaky way of compiling a calling and mailing list for visitors.

Amoeba Mixer

Give students each a card with a question on it—such as, What is your favorite color, favorite place to eat, mother's maiden name, or shoe size. Each student answers the question and returns the card without putting her name on it.

Shuffle the cards and distribute them to the students. Students try to find the person described on the card. When the person on the card is found, students join hands and the front person (who has been found but has not yet found his person) takes the other with him to find the person he is looking for. When the last person is found (she is at the end of the line), the line forms a circle. The game is finished, and everyone may sit down. NOTE—Students are not allowed to ask, "Is this your card?"

Boggle Mixer

Divide your young people into small groups. Each member of the small group writes their first name in large letters on a single piece of paper in a vertical list with a uniform left margin.

Each group then tries to make as many words as possible (three letters or more) from the combined letters of the names. Any combination can be used as long as the letters are contiguous in any direction. Give one point for three- and four-letter words. Give two points for five-letter words and three points for six-letter words. Proper names and foreign words are not permissible. Set a three-minute time limit.

By the Way

You can do this activity anytime and anywhere. Have everyone sit in a circle. Go around the circle and have each person say her name and add, "by the way" plus a four-word phrase that describes something about them. For example, "My name is Pat and by the way my cat is fat." As they move around the circle, each person must repeat what all of the previous people said so that they get to know each other better. This game is really funny because the students get really creative about what they say and how they say it.

Endless Word

Have the group form a circle. One person says a word and then counts to five at a moderate speed. Before this person says five, the person to their right has to say another word that begins with the last letter of the word just said. This continues on around the circle until someone is unable to come up with a word before the count of five. Two misses and the person is out of the game. (Or one miss if you have a very large group.) If it's the person's first miss, she starts it again with any word. No one is allowed to repeat a word that has already been spoken. If no one is being eliminated, have them count to five more rapidly. Or if everyone is getting out, have them count to 10 or 15 instead of five. This game can be quite lively, and you'll soon find out who is out to get the person next to them.

Guess Who?

For an easy get-acquainted activity, ask your kids to write down something about themselves that probably no one else knows. If they have trouble coming up with a unique contribution, suggest an unusual pet they might have or a weird snack or sandwich they like. If you get really desperate, ask for their mother's middle name. Collect all the responses. As you read the clues aloud, have kids try to guess the identity of the cluegiver. Award 1000 points for each correct guess (have kids keep their own scores).

Ice Breakers Questions

Write two lists and ask the students which they prefer:

Jeans or cargo pants?

Hot or cold?

Staying home or going out?

Loud or quiet?

Burger King or McDonald's?

Pizza or milkshakes?

This will get the group talking and debating. Ask the group, "What is the weirdest thing you've ever eaten?" The group will discover that what some people see as weird, others see as normal. Ask the group to talk about their worst cooking disaster—the first time they tried to cook or tried to impress a date.

Interview Mixer

Divide the group up into pairs. Give the group one or two minutes for each member of the pair to answer such questions as favorite subject in school, worst subject, favorite or worst moment, funniest moment, etc. Then call on certain members of the group to introduce their partner and answer the questions for them. Switch partners and use different questions. May be repeated effectively three to five times.

Let Me Introduce Myself

Here's a crowd breaker idea for youths who know each other somewhat. Ask all the teens to write a short paragraph about themselves using the pronoun I. Tell them to be somewhat vague and to try to hide their identity, but to be truthful. Hand the paragraphs to a reader who will read them aloud and allow the others in the group to discuss the paragraph and then guess the writer's identity. Of course, the person who wrote the paragraph will have to remain elusive during the discussion. The object is to try and fool the group, which encourages kids to share things about themselves not already known. This works best with a group of about 10.

More in Common than a Cold

This game works best in large groups. Have students introduce themselves to someone in the crowd. Next, have them find something they have in common in one of these five categories: favorite food, favorite band, favorite TV show, favorite movie, and favorite sport. When they find someone they have a match with, they must stay together, find another pair, introduce themselves, and find a way to link up with the other two. Those four then find another group of four and so on and so on.

My Most Embarrassing Balloon

Spread your group members out so they're two or three feet apart from each other. Blow up an extra-large balloon, and – while you pinch its neck – tell the kids that when you release the balloon and it finally comes to rest, whoever's nearest it must tell the group his or her most embarrassing moment.

Then let the balloon go. While the first victim is collecting their thoughts, a nearby student should blow up a new balloon in order to release it after the first player talks. This icebreaker works best when it continues rapid-fire, so keep it moving.

Name Crowd Breaker

Here's a quick get-to-know-the-names game. Start by sitting on the floor in a circle. Go around the circle with each person saying his name three times. The group responds each time with, "Who?" The speaker usually gets louder each time but given the opportunity to be creative, students have a lot of fun with this. Some students say their name slower or quieter or weirder each time. A sample would go like this: The first person introduces himself in a normal tone of voice, "Mike." The group responds with, "Who?" Mike repeats a little louder, "MIKE!" The group asks again, "Who?" This time Mike yells at the top of his voice, "MIKE!" And then the group says, "Ohhhh, Mike." Then it's the next person's turn.

Psychiatrist

This indoor game for a small group calls for creativity and encourages kids to get to know one another. Sit the group in a circle and choose someone to be the psychiatrist. The psychiatrist has to leave the room while the game is explained.

Tell the participants that their job is to take on the personality of the person to their left. All questions must be answered as if they were that person. You might want to take one minute and have everyone tell as much as they can about themselves to the person who will be them.

Bring in the psychiatrist. He is free to ask any question he wants and must try to figure out what is ailing these patients. If he begins to notice the pattern, the leader may yell, "Psychiatrist!" and everyone will have to scatter and regroup, taking the identity of the new person on his left. When the psychiatrist can guess what the pattern is, the game is over.

One good variation of this is to have three or four kids leave the room, bring them in one at a time, and see how quickly they figure out the game. Time each one with a stopwatch. The one who figures it out in the least amount of time is the winner.

Toilet Paper Confessions

This game requires only toilet paper. Have your group sit in a circle and pass the roll to each member. Tell them to place the roll on their finger and see how many tissues they can get by pulling on the paper once. After everyone takes a turn, then have the players count how many tissue squares they got. Then, they must tell you one thing about themselves for each tissue they got.

Two Truths & a Lie

This is an interesting activity for groups that know each other fairly well. Instruct each person to tell the truth when giving two statements about himself, but to lie when giving a third. The lie should sound reasonable and should not always be given last. Others try to guess which statement is the lie.