

Icebreakers !

Select any of the following as activities for your advisory to help them get to know each other.

Snowball Fight

This activity works with all ages -- including adults. Students write on a piece of paper three things about themselves. Then they crumple the paper up into a 'snowball' and have a one-minute snowball fight. At the end of the minute, everyone grabs the closest snowball and has to try to find the person who wrote it. They then introduce that person to the rest of the group, sharing the three facts.

Non-Musical Chairs

Set up chairs in a circle with one less chair than the number of participants. The advisor can start the game by being the person in the middle without a chair. Each person in the circle starts by introducing themselves to their two circle neighbors on either side. The advisor then introduces themselves to a member of the circle and asks that person who his or her neighbors are. After the student responds, the advisor invites the student to ask a yes or no question of the whole group. That question must relate something true about the student. For example, a student who surfs might ask the group if anyone has ever been surfing. Members of the class who have surfed respond yes not by talking but by getting out of their seats and finding a new seat at least two chairs away. Then the cycle starts again. Students introduce themselves to their neighbors, the person left standing introduces himself or herself to a new person, and the game continues.

Match Game

Line up your students in two lines facing each other. If you have an odd number of students, then the advisor can play with the unmatched student. Give the students exactly 30 seconds to look at the person with whom they're paired and to study everything about that person. Then the students in one line turn around and close their eyes while the students in the other line change something about themselves. For example, one person may take off an earring, switch shoes, or put their hair behind an ear. Then the kids in the other line turn around and try to name what has changed. Switch roles and play the game again.

Alliteration Activity

Students form a circle then introduce themselves with their names and something that they like that starts with the same letter as their names. The person who starts the game states the alliteration; then it's the next person's turn. That person repeats what the first person said, then adds his or her name and alliteration and so forth around the circle. For example, "*My name is Gloria and I love green grapes!*" The next person in the circle says, "*Her name is Gloria and she loves green grapes. I am Susan and I love silly stories.*"

Candy Gets Kids Talking!

Bring in Skittles or M & Ms. Tell the kids to take as many as they want. Most are pretty apprehensive -- after all, it's the first day of school! -- so they usually take about 10-15 Skittles. Then the teacher takes some too. Next, pick out some fun music, and for each Skittle they took the students must say one thing about themselves while moving to the music. The teacher demonstrates first, of course. An option: Each color of candy represents a category students must speak about, e.g., orange = scary memories; red = great vacations; green = something about your family; blue = favorite hobbies.

A Tangled Web

Gather students in a circle sitting on the floor. Hold a large ball of yarn. Start by telling the students something about yourself. Then roll the ball of yarn to a student without letting go of the end of the yarn. The student who gets the ball of yarn tells his or her name and something good about himself or herself. Then the student rolls the yarn to somebody else, holding on to the strand of yarn. Soon students have created a giant web. After everyone has spoken, you and all the students stand up, continuing to hold the yarn. Start a discussion of how this activity relates to the idea of teamwork (for example, the students need to work together and not let others down). To drive home your point about teamwork, have one student drop his or her strand of yarn; that will demonstrate to students how the web weakens if the class isn't working together.

Classmate Scavenger Hunt

Provide each student with two index cards. Ask each student to write a brief description of his or her physical characteristics on one index card and his or her name on the other. (Physical characteristics usually do not include clothing, but if you teach the primary grades, you might allow students to include clothing in their descriptions.) Put all the physical characteristic index cards in a shoe box, mix them up, and distribute one card to each student (making sure that no student gets his or her own card). Give students ten minutes to search for the person who fits the description on the card they hold. (There is no talking during this activity, but students can walk around the room.) At the end of the activity, tell students to write on the card the name of the student who best matches the description. Then have students share their results. How many students guessed correctly?

Toothpick and Lifesaver Relay Race

Teams are formed into lines. Each member gets a toothpick. The first in line starts by passing a Lifesaver to the next person and they pass it on down the line. Players must use only one hand. If the Lifesaver is dropped, the team must start over from the beginning.

Cracker Relay Race

Set up a chair in front of each team. Place a package of crackers near by. Each person runs out to the chair, takes a cracker, sits down and eats it. As soon as they can whistle, they can run back and tag the next person in line. A variation is to use bubble gum instead of crackers. The students must chew the gum and blow a bubble before tagging the next person.

Mime Down the Alley

This activity gives students an opportunity to communicate an object or idea to each other so that the last person has the same “message” as the first. Participants are divided into groups of eight to ten people. Each group sits in a straight line, facing backward except for the first person. Participants are not allowed to talk at any point in the game. The first person in each line is given an object to mime (i.e., a toaster, a computer, a jack-in-the-box) – the only requirement is that it can be shown in pantomime in a seated position. The first person taps the second person in line on the shoulder so that they turn to face each other. The first person mimes the object, and when the second person thinks he knows what the object is, he nods. Then the object is mimed to the next person, traveling down the line to the last person. The objective is for the pantomime of the object to be clear enough each time that it stays the same object all the way down the line. Usually, the object changes into something entirely different – the interesting thing is to see how it changed along the line. Each person should tell the others what they thought the object was, and discuss what they saw the others demonstrating.

Notes: There are many variations that can be played with this game, by changing the object to a movie or book title, or incorporating concepts from a curricular area into the game. For example, the pantomime could be of a preposition or a science concept.

Name Game

A game for the first day of class, so that everyone learns each others’ names. The participants sit or stand in a circle. The leader says, “We are having a party, and everyone has to bring something for the party that begins with the same first letter as their name. My name is JANINE, and I am bringing a bag of JELLYBEANS.” The person to the leader’s right says his name and item, and then repeats the leader’s name and item: “My name is ERIK, I am going to bring EGG SALAD. This is JANINE, who is bringing JELLYBEANS.” Each person in turn introduces himself, announces their item, and repeats the name and item of everyone who preceded them. This means that the last person has to remember everyone in the group, or at least try. The leader should encourage others to help out when participants get stuck on someone’s name or item, with verbal or pantomimed clues.

I Never

Materials (optional): 10 or so tokens for each student A student begins by stating something they have never done, for example “I have never visited California.” Each student who has done that thing acknowledges it to the person who made the statement by giving a token to the person or by standing up. The game continues around the circle until each person has said “I never.....”

Me, TOO

One student says something that is true about him/herself, for example “I love to play basketball!” or “I have two brothers.” People for whom this is also true snap their fingers in unison or stand up (choose one or the other) and say, “Me, too!” The game continues around the circle until each person has said something about her/himself.

The Wind is a-blowin'

One person stands in the middle, and his/her chair is removed. S/he then says, "The wind is a-blowin' for anybody who ..." and finishes the sentence with something about her/himself. Everybody who fits that category has to move and find a new seat, including the person in the middle. The person who ends up without a seat starts the next round.

Frog Detective

All heads are put down and a "frog" is chosen. The frog sticks her/his tongue out at other students in the circle as if catching flies, avoiding being seen by anyone but the target. When the frog does this to a student, that person is "put to sleep" and is out of the circle for this round. The rest of the group are detectives who try to determine who the frog is. When someone thinks they know, they tell the person who chose the frog in the first place. If the guess is wrong, the guesser must go to "sleep." When three have correctly guessed who is the frog, that round is over and a new round starts.

Pass the Chicken

Equipment: a rubber chicken or other object to pass; prepare the topic cards for this game-in advance. Topics can relate to curriculum or be general-information topics.

In this game, nobody wants to hold the chicken. Everyone sits in a circle. Select someone to be It; that person starts with the chicken. The teacher or "caller" says to It (for example), "Name five American Presidents. Pass the chicken!" As soon as the caller says "Pass the chicken," It passes the chicken to the right and begins answering the question as the chicken gets passed around the circle. If the chicken returns to It before It correctly answers the questions, they remain It. If It answers correctly before the chicken returns, the person holding the chicken when the answer is completed becomes It. Suggested topics: rivers in the U.S., vegetables, combinations of numbers that add up to 21, etc.

Count Up

Students count to 10 as a group, one person spontaneously calling out a number at a time. Students may not form a pattern to get to 10, and the counting must go in numerical order. If more than one person speaks at one time, the game starts over from one.

In the Manner of the Adverb

One student is in the middle of the circle, and the chair they vacated is removed. The student approaches someone and asks, "Is this seat taken?" If the answer is yes, the two exchange places. If the answer is no, they must ask someone else. As the person is asking the question, people behind them are quietly changing places. If the person in the middle catches them changing seats, they try to take one of the empty seats.

Win, lose, or Draw

One student is given a word to illustrate on a chartpad (big!) while the rest of the group guesses what the word is. Whoever guesses correctly illustrates the next word.

Arm Hockey

Equipment: One or two balls ("pucks")

Everyone stands in a circle with legs a little more apart than shoulder width. Neighbors' feet touch. Students are allowed to use one arm (the "hockey stick") to try to hit the ball between someone's legs (the "goals"). The ball must be hit with an open hand and cannot bounce off the floor. When a ball goes through someone's legs, the game can simply begin again, or the player through whose legs the ball escaped can leave the circle until another person is out, then take that person's place in the circle. Variation: 3 or 4 "goalies" try to block the ball while others see how many goals they can score in a set time.

Ra-di-o

Students sit in a circle, with room to stand outside the circle. Each syllable of the word radio has a hand gesture: -ra- is one hand on the head pointing right or left; -di- is one hand under the chin pointing right or left; -o- is a finger pointed to anyone in the circle. The game begins with somebody gesturing -ra-. If the person points to the left, the action is "passed" to the person on the left, and that person must pass -di- to the left or right by using the chin gesture. The person receiving the -di- points the -o- to anyone in the circle by pointing and looking at someone in the eye. If a mistake is made (the wrong person responds, or the person pointed to doesn't respond immediately), the mistake-maker is out. That person stands outside the circle and becomes a Heckler, whispering words to confuse the group. As others become out, they join the Hecklers. You can continue until there is only one person left, or stop when time runs out. Regularly stopping short of a "winner" emphasizes fun rather than competition.

Crazy Chairs

Students sit in a circle. One person is “It” and stands in the middle, which means one chair is empty. It tells the people on either side of the open chair which direction the circle should move. People move one at a time in that direction, when the chair next to them becomes empty. It tries to take an open chair. When the student succeeds the chairless person becomes It, and the game continues. Variation: Someone can slap a chair to reverse the direction in which the circle moves.

Impulse

Two equal teams are formed, and each chooses a leader, who stands at one end of the team line. Members of the team hold hands, as the “impulse” will be passed by a squeeze. A ball or beanbag is within the reach of the last person in each line. The facilitator flips a card or a coin and calls out “red,” “black,” “heads,” or “tails.” When “black” or “heads” is called, each leader squeezes the hand they are holding. The squeeze is passed through the line until it reaches the end. The last person reaches for the ball or beanbag. Whoever gets it wins, and goes to the other end of his/her line, becoming the leader. Then another round is played.

Ice Breakers

This activity sheet is great to use with new groups of students as a way to get them ready to learn or do an activity together.

1. Get 20 different autographs on the back of this sheet. Include first, middle and last names.
2. Untie someone’s shoes and tie them again. Have the person initial here _____
3. Find someone who has a family member whose birthday is in the same month as yours. Have them write the person’s name here _____
4. Get someone to roll a somersault and sign his/her name here _____
5. Have someone do 5 push-ups for you and sign his/her name here _____
6. Play “Duck Duck Goose” with everyone in the room. Be sure everyone gets a turn.
7. Do 25 jumping jacks and have someone count them off for you. Have them sign here _____
8. Do the “Bunny Hop” with four other people. Have two of them initial here _____

ZIG ZAG ZOP

1. Everyone sits in a circle. One student starts by saying ZIG and looks at another student.
2. That student now says ZAG while looking at another student.
3. Now the third student says ZOP while looking at another student and pointing to them with a fully extended arm. Only ZOP has the arm motion. If a student does not move their arm on ZOP he/she must sit down.
4. For an advanced version – speed it up. If a student hesitates he/she is out.

Ball Toss

Requires a soft ball or a bean bag that is easy to catch.

1. Ask students to stand in a circle and one at a time toss the ball to each other.
2. They can choose the order, but everyone should receive the ball only once.
3. The last person should throw the ball back to the person who began the tossing.
4. Time them and see if they can do it faster each time.
5. Try to break your “speed” record.
6. This game stresses teamwork and concentration.

Pig Drawing / Partner Match-Up

Requires paper and pencil.

1. Say “When I tell you to begin, I want you to draw a pig. You have 30 seconds – GO”
2. Time them for 30 seconds and then ask them to put their pencils down.
3. Ask them to look around the room at all the drawings and then partner-up with a person who has drawn their pig in a similar way.

Partner Introductions

1. With your partner spend three minutes talking to each other to find 3 things that you have in common. Talk fast.
2. Time them for three minutes. (They may come up with food, books, activities they both like, sports they both play or they may have the same number of brothers or sisters, etc)
3. When the time is up have them introduce each other to the rest of the class and include the things they had in common. At the end, you may also observe the things the whole class had in common or were very similar.

Ring Game

Requires a large circle of rope and a ring.

1. Students form a circle sitting on the floor/ground.
2. Each student puts both hands on a large circle of rope.
3. One student stands in the middle.
4. The goal of the game is for the students in the circle to pass the ring (passed through the rope) around the circle using their hands and a rhythm so that the person in the center doesn't see where the ring is.
5. Students can get a rhythm going by counting "1..2, 1..2" "oooh, aaah" or "School is cool"
6. As they are chanting, their hands come together on one word and go out on the other and they are passing the ring around the whole time.
7. Students should all practice this.
8. Choose one student to go to the center and watch carefully. After a little while say "stop" and the person in the middle tries to guess who has the ring.
9. They should have several tries.
10. At any point a new person can go to the middle.

Spoons Card Game

You need a deck of cards and some spoons (plastics will do fine).

1. Students sit on the floor to play.
2. Deal 4 cards to each person.
3. Put enough spoons for each person in the center of the circle – MINUS ONE
4. Everyone in the circle wants to collect four of a kind.
5. The dealer takes a card from the top of the remaining deck and decides whether or not to keep it.
6. If the dealer wants to keep the card...they choose another card from their hand to pass to the left.
7. The person to the right passes their unwanted card to the person to their left (all the way around the circle)
8. The dealer continues to draw from the deck and pass on unwanted cards until someone gets four of a kind.
9. As soon as someone has four of a kind, they take a spoon (in a very unsuspecting way) from the center of the circle.
10. When the rest of the group notices a spoon is gone...everyone grabs a spoon...the person who does not get a spoon gets an "S."
11. If a person gets all the letters in the word "SPOONS" they lose the game.

Ranking Traits

Ask students to rip a piece of paper into ten strips. On each they write a word or phrase that describes themselves. Assure students that no one will see what they have written, so a student can be extremely honest. Then the student arranges the traits in order from what he most likes about himself to what he least likes.

When done, say, "Do you like what you see? Do you want to keep it? Now give up one trait. How does the lack of that affect you?"

Now give up another. Give up three. Now what kind of person are you?"

After giving up six of the qualities, I have students regain the traits one by one. You may hear comments about how incomplete the student feels without those traits, and a new understanding of the importance of those traits, as they are regained.