

Icebreakers

At the start of any program, whether in-person or virtual or a combination of the two, should include opportunities for participants to get warmed up, break the ice, get to know their fellow participants and begin to connect with each other and the program. The icebreakers below provide a great start for programs involving youth from five to 18 years old and can even be used with adult participants, too.

Activity Name	Age Group	Supplies Needed
Reach As High As You Can	All ages	None
Name Travel	All ages	None
Change 1 (or 3 or 5)	All ages	None
All About You	All ages	None
Listen Carefully	All ages	None
Get to Know You Questions	Ages 10+	Caboodle Cards or other get-to-know-you questions
Snowflake	Ages 10+	One piece of white paper per person
Index Card Interview	Ages 10+	One index card or piece of white paper per person; pencil or pen
Quotation Share	Ages 13+	Caboodle Cards or other quotations
Commonality Challenge	Ages 13+	Caboodle Cards or list of recognizable people

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GEORGIA STATEWIDE AFTERSCHOOL NETWORK

Reach As High As You Can

All ages

Virtual & in-person (same)

This is a great warm up and intention setting activity as you start a new lesson. Ask everyone to "reach as high as you can." Ask participants to pay attention to where their hand is and how far they reached.

Then, ask everyone to look at the spot that they reached to – and imagine themselves reaching farther and higher. You can ask them to picture it, close their eyes and imagine it, etc. Use language and visualization techniques appropriate for your age group.

Then, ask everyone to “please try it – reach as high as you can – and try to reach higher than you did before.”

The following discussion then centers on why participants were (most likely) able to reach higher the second time when they were asked the first time to reach as high as they could. What changed for them when asked to "reach even higher?" As appropriate for different ages, discuss the power of picturing yourself succeeding, the idea of “try, try again” and/or not giving up.

Name Travel

All ages

Virtual & in-person (variations)

Explain that some of the best icebreakers help us get to know each other’s names and this one will do just that.

Virtual Adaptation:

Then say, “Because it’s important to learn names, we’re going to do that now! We will start by going around and saying our first names loudly and clearly for everyone to hear. Since we have limited time, we are not doing introductions beyond our names.” Ask for a volunteer to start.

Once everyone has introduced themselves, explain that they’re going to go around again in the same order saying their first name. This time will be a little different; because each person will also come up with a corresponding motion to do while they say their name. Give an example (i.e., say your name and raise the roof). Remind them that their cameras should be on!

Then explain that after someone does his/her motion, everyone will repeat the first person’s name and motion in unison. Continue until everyone in the group has said their name and shown their motion followed by the whole group repeating it.

In-Person Adaptation:

Ask the group to form a circle. Use the introduction above, but instead of everyone repeating the person’s name and action, explain that after someone does his/her motion, the person to their left repeats the first person’s name and motion, then the person to left of the second person does the same until the name has traveled (or rippled) completely around the circle. When it has completely

traveled around the circle, the person to the left of the first person says their name and does their motion. Continue until everyone in the group has said their name and shown their motion.

If your group goes through everyone's names and actions quickly, try going through the circle and saying everyone's names and actions consecutively. To see a video of this activity, visit [GUIDE's blog](#).

Change 1 (or 3 or 5)

All ages

Virtual & in-person (variations)

The premise of this icebreaker is that participants work to identify what 1 (or 3 or 5) things that someone changes about their appearance or (for an added challenge with older youth) their background/environment. This can be done either with the whole group or pairs, triads or other small groups depending on your ability to break them into groups.

Virtual Adaptation:

Please ask participants to make sure they are on speaker view because they will need to be able to see the speaker! Explain how to do this if needed.

For "Change 1" – or it could be "Change 3" or "Change 5" depending on how hard you want it to be – you're simply going to call on someone to introduce themselves out loud with their video and microphone on to start off.

Tell your participants, "As the person introduces themselves, we're going to observe them. After they've introduced themselves, they will turn their video off and change ONE thing about their appearance."

When they have changed that ONE thing, they will turn their camera back on and say, "Hello, I'm back! Can you figure out what I changed?" It is important that the person talks so their video shows back up for everyone!

Everyone else will try to guess what they what it was that they changed. The first person to type it into the chat box wins the round.

You can play as many rounds as your participants like. If they totally get it, go ahead and move to changing 3 things or, for an added challenge, people could change something about their environment instead of their appearance.

In-Person Adaptation:

Participants could pair up and stand together, observing, and then turn back-to-back to make the changes and then guess in their pairs. Another option is for one person to introduce themselves in the front of the room and then leave the room to change, coming back to let the whole group guess what they changed.

All About You

All Ages

Virtual & in-person (same)

Tell the group this activity will provide an opportunity to learn about each other and identify common interests. They should pay attention what their fellow participants do (and do not do) during the activity.

Explain to participants that you are going to read several statements that might apply to them. Ask them to follow the directions in the statements.

Facilitator's note: Don't read the statements too fast. You can start slow and get faster as you go on, but don't speed read or your participants won't have time to engage.

Everyone who is happy, clap your hands. If you have brothers, blink your eyes. If you have sisters, stomp your feet. If you have a dog, raise your right hand. If you have a cat, raise your left hand. If you have a different kind of pet, raise both feet off the floor. If your favorite color is green, flap your arms like a chicken. If your favorite color is blue, cover your eyes. If your favorite color is red, oink like a pig. If your favorite color is purple, pull your ears. If you have a different favorite color, wave hello. If you like to be outside, snap your fingers. If you like to watch TV, hoot like an owl. If you have played a video game in the past month, hop on your right leg. If you have read in the last month, hop on your left leg. If you like school, wink with one eye. If you like to volunteer, stand up. Give yourselves a round of applause!

Facilitator's note: You can adapt the statements to better fit your group based on age, common interests, the focus of the group, etc.

Upon finishing, you can debrief by asking the group:

- From watching others, what do you know now that you did not know before? What did we learn about each other?
- What were some of the things in which everyone or most everyone responded? What were some in which very few or no one responded?
- Why is it important for us to get to know each other? How can we use this new knowledge?

Listen Carefully

All Ages

Virtual & in-person (same)

Tell participants to listen carefully and follow the directions. Read "Listen Carefully" at a normal pace at first, increasing reading speed as you go. (But don't get so fast that they can't keep up!)

Encourage participants to move their chairs back from their computers (virtual) or their desk/table (in-person) so that they can actively engage in this warm-up!

Listen Carefully

Everyone stand, please. Everyone wearing green sit, please. If you are wearing black shoes, please clap once. If you are wearing no shoes, please clap twice. Everyone with brown hair, stand please.

All black haired people please sit. If you are wearing white stand, please. Everyone with blue eyes wave, please. Everyone wearing red spin around, please. If you have brown eyes, please stand. Everyone wearing blue laugh, please. If you are wearing sandals, sit please. If you were born in December, stand please. If you are happy, shake your right hand please. If you are wearing rings, sit please. If you are very smart, please dance. If you are wearing yellow, clap please. If you know a good joke, call out “ha, ha,” please. If you have green eyes, whistle please. If you have red hair please sit and stamp your feet. If you are getting tired, sit please. Everyone stand, please. If you are glad this is over, clap please. Everyone sit, please.

Upon finishing, laugh with your group - it can get kind of silly if you are reading fast! – and congratulate them on a job well done.

Get-to-Know-You Questions

Ages 10+

Virtual & in-person (variations)

Using get-to-know-you questions is a common and useful icebreaker. These types of questions can be used in a number of different ways, and a variety of props can be utilized for them. For both virtual and in-person programs, Caboodle Cards can be a valuable tool. Caboodle Cards can be purchased from [GUIDE's website](#) and can be used a number of ways. Programs can also write get-to-know-you questions on index cards, post-it notes or other tools.

Virtual Adaptation:

Using Caboodle Cards virtually requires you to take pictures of a few Caboodle Cards to place in a PowerPoint or otherwise share with your participants. It does not matter which cards you take photos of as long as the question in the top left corner is visible and you have determined they are age-appropriate. You can choose the questions that would work best for your group.

Share the photo(s) of the question(s) you have picked on the screen, making sure the text is big enough for participants to read. Allow participants to pick which question they would like to answer and type their answer in the chat box or share their answer verbally.

Additional Variations:

- Choose only one question and ask all participants to answer the same one.
- Using a "Breakout Room" type of feature in your online platform, ask participants to remember the question they want to answer and then put them into small groups to discuss their answers. Remember to give them a time limit and to check in on the groups as they discuss.
- Use the questions as a way for participants to introduce themselves by assigning two to four questions ahead of your first meeting and asking them to come with an introduction prepared or submit a video ahead of time in which they introduce themselves and provide their answers to the questions.

In-Person Adaptation:

Using Caboodle Cards in-person means you can use the whole deck or pick only a few cards to work with. It does not matter which cards you use as long as the question in the top left corner is age-appropriate. You can choose the questions that would work best for your group.

Distribute one Caboodle Card per person. Ask participants to find a partner and give them a few minutes to share their questions and answers with each other. At the end of the time allotted, have them say goodbye to their current partner and find a new partner. Give them a few minutes to share their questions and answers with this new partner. Continue as long as time allows.

Additional Variations:

- Play in a circle. Have a participant draw a card and answer that question in front of the whole group. Rotate around the circle with each participant drawing a new card and answering the question provided.

- Put them into small groups and give each group a small stack of Caboodle Cards. Give them time to each draw a card and discuss their answers. Remember to give them a time limit and to check in on the groups as they discuss.
- Use the questions as a way for participants to introduce themselves by assigning two to four questions ahead of your first meeting and asking them to come with an introduction prepared ahead of time in which they introduce themselves and provide the answers to the questions.

Snowflake

Ages 10+

Virtual & in-person (same)

For this activity, each participant needs an 8.5 x 11 sheet of paper. It can be scrap paper (doesn't have to be blank) or plain printer paper. If you're leading this virtually, ask the participants to come with these materials available. If you are leading the activity in-person, hand out sheets of paper to each participant. You may also choose to have participants cut their paper instead of tear it if you are working with older youth.

Tell them that you will give them instructions about what to do with the paper, that they should focus on their task only, not look at what their neighbor is doing, and that they cannot ask questions.

Facilitator's note: If you are using scissors, substitute cut for tear in the instructions. If you are tearing, be forewarned that it will be difficult in some spots, and participants should do the best they can.

While you are giving participants the instructions, you should either be following along and also completing the activity or you should have already completed one so that you have an example "snowflake" to show at the end. If you are doing the folding and tearing as you go, don't show what you are doing to the participants so they can interpret only your WORDS not copy your ACTIONS.

Give participants the following instructions (or make up some of your own):

- Fold your paper in half.
- Fold your paper in half again.
- Tear a small square from the top left corner.
- Fold the paper in half lengthwise.
- On the fold edge, tear a small piece, a larger piece and then a small piece, with space between each.
- Unfold the last fold you made.
- Fold the paper in half in the other direction as your last fold.
- Tear two half-circles out of the fold side.
- Unfold the last fold you made.
- Tear a thin semi-circle from the top fold side.
- Tear a triangle from the fold side.
- Unfold your paper completely.

Ask participants to hold up their creations and to look around at the others. Show off the one you made.

Debrief by asking them the following processing questions:

- As we look around, we see that not everyone's looks the same. I gave the same directions to everyone, so why don't they all look the same?
- How does the fact that we all interpret things differently come into play in a setting like our program?
- How can we use this to help us have an effective, fun or meaningful time together?

Index Card Interview

Ages 10+

Virtual & in-person (variations)

Index Card Interviews give participants a chance to connect one-on-one with a peer and find out more about them. Then, following the interview, the pairs return to the large group to introduce each other.

Virtual Adaptation:

Ask participants to come with an index card or a piece of paper and a pencil or pen.

Show the "index card" layout on the screen so that they know what information to put where on their paper or card. Give them time to jot down the information you have requested. When paired up, partners should interview each other to find out the following information, which should be written on the index card as indicated below. Partner A writes down the information for Partner B and vice versa so that A can use the information to introduce B to the whole group later.

Using a "Breakout Room" type of feature in your online platform, create two-person rooms to allow pairs to interview each other. Remember to give them a time limit (about 10 minutes should be enough) and to check in on the pairs as they discuss.

When time is up, have all participants return to the main room and take turns introducing their partners.

Additional Variations:

- Send the "index card" layout, the partner assignments and contact information out ahead of time and require participants to connect with each other via phone or video before you meet as a whole group to do their interviews. In this case, have them come prepared to immediately introduce their partner to the whole group.

In- Person Adaptation:

Give each person an index card or a piece of paper and a pencil or pen. Have participants pair up with the person they know the least, a person they have never met or someone they want to find out more about.

Tell the pairs they will have 10 minutes for the following part of the activity. When paired up, partners should interview each other to find out the following information, which should be written

on the index card as indicated below. Partner A writes down the information for Partner B and vice versa so that A can use the information to introduce B to the whole group later.

When time is up, have all participants return to the main room and take turns introducing their partners.

Index Card Layout

Your dream vacation	Favorite color
FULL NAME	
BIRTHDAY	
PLACE OF BIRTH	
Ideal pet or pet you have	Interesting fact

Quotation Share

Ages 13+

Virtual & in-person (variations)

This activity involves participants choosing a quotation that represents them. Quotations can be used in a number of different ways and a variety of props can be utilized for them. For both virtual and in-person programs, Caboodle Cards can be a valuable tool. Caboodle Cards can be purchased from [GUIDE's website](#) and can be used a number of ways. Programs can also write quotations on index cards, post-it notes or other tools.

Virtual Adaptation:

Using Caboodle Cards virtually requires you to take pictures of a few Caboodle Cards to place in a PowerPoint or otherwise share with your participants. It does not matter which cards you take photos of as long as the quotation along the bottom is visible and you have determined they are age-appropriate and relevant. You can choose the quotations that would work best for your group.

Share the photos of the quotations you have picked on the screen, making sure the text is big enough for participants to read. Allow participants to pick which quotation they most identify with, that speaks to them or that they like the best. Ask participants to share the quotation and why they picked it in the chat box or have them share their answer verbally.

Additional Variations:

- Using a “Breakout Room” type of feature in your online platform, ask participants to remember the quotation they like best and then put them into small groups to discuss their answers and why. Remember to give them a time limit and to check in on the groups as they discuss.
- Use the quotations as a way for participants to introduce themselves by asking participants to bring a quotation to the first meeting that they like. Ask participants to come with an introduction prepared or submit a video ahead of time in which they introduce themselves and share the quotation they picked and their reasons for picking it.

In-Person Adaptation:

Using Caboodle Cards in-person means you can use the whole deck or pick only a few cards to work with. It does not matter which cards you use. You can choose the quotations that would be most relevant for your group.

Lay the Caboodle Cards out on a table and allow participants to look at all of them, picking the quotation that best represents them or speaks to them in that moment. Ask participants to find a partner and give them a few minutes to share their quotation and reason for picking it with each other. At the end of the time allotted, have them say goodbye to their current partner and find a new partner. Give them a few minutes to share their quotation and reasons with this new partner. Continue as long as time allows.

Additional Variations:

- Play in a circle. Have each participant pick a quotation as described above and then allow them to share it and their reasons for picking it in front of the whole group. Rotate around the circle, giving each participant a chance to share.
- Put them into small groups and give each group a small stack of Caboodle Cards. Give them time to review the cards provided and pick their quotation before asking them to share it with their small group. Remember to give them a time limit and to check in on the groups as they discuss.
- Use the quotations as a way for participants to introduce themselves by asking them to bring a quotation that they like to the first meeting. Ask participants to come with an introduction prepared or submit a video ahead of time in which they introduce themselves and share the quotation they picked and their reasons for picking it.

Commonality Challenge

Ages 13+

Virtual & in-person (variations)

This activity involves participants having the name of a person that is recognizable to all program participants. This can be from a Caboodle Card (where a famous, historical, athlete, performer or fictional character is located on the left side in the middle), from a list you prepare or from index cards or post-it notes on which you write them. Caboodle Cards can be purchased from [GUIDE's website](#) and can be used a number of ways.

Virtual Adaptation:

Using Caboodle Cards virtually requires you to take pictures of a few Caboodle Cards to place in a PowerPoint or otherwise share with your participants. It does not matter which cards you take photos of as long as the person listed on the left side in the middle is visible and you have determined they are age-appropriate, recognizable and relevant. You can choose the quotations that would work best for your group.

Share the people's names you have picked on the screen, making sure the text is big enough for participants to read. Allow participants to pick a person, or assign them a person. Give them time to jot down the person's name. Pair up participants in any manner you choose. Explain that when they get to their pair share time, they will take both of the names they have chosen (or were assigned to them) and brainstorm at least five things that they have in common.

Using a "Breakout Room" type of feature in your online platform, create two-person rooms to allow pairs to discuss with each other. Remember to give them a time limit (about 10 minutes should be enough) and to check in on the pairs as they discuss.

Facilitator's note: Depending on the pair of names, this may be very hard or very easy, but all pairs should be able to come up with at least five things in common. Your participants might come up with things like "they're both men," "they were both on TV," "they both have hair" or "they are both dead..." any and all answers are accepted and creativity should be encouraged!

When time is up, have all participants return to the main room and take turns sharing their pairs and the commonalities they brainstormed.

Additional Variation:

- Either following or instead of pairs, increase group sizes to three, four or five to increase the challenge.

In-Person Adaptation:

Using Caboodle Cards in-person means you can use the whole deck or pick only a few cards to work with. It does not matter which cards you use. You can choose the ones with people that would be most relevant for your group.

Distribute one Caboodle Card to each participant. Ask participants to find a partner and give them a few minutes to brainstorm at least five things that the two people on their cards have in common. At the end of the time allotted, have them share their pair and their commonalities with the whole group. Applaud creativity and thinking outside of the box.

Additional Variations:

- Either following or instead of pairs, increase group sizes to three, four or five to increase the challenge.