

Ideas...

Produced by:
Students as Partners,
Teaching, Learning and Support Office

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The University
of Manchester

Students as Partners: Peer Support Icebreakers



Who Is This For?

This booklet will come in handy for any group facilitator, but has been primarily designed for use by PASS Leaders, Mentors and Students as Partners staff. Too often we see the same old ice-breakers and energizers used at training courses/first meetings; the aim of this booklet is to provide you with introductory activities that you might not have used or taken part in before!

This booklet is an on-going publication– if you have an icebreaker that you think should be included then send an email with your ideas to studentsaspartners@manchester.ac.uk so that future students can benefit from them!

Why Use Icebreakers?

Icebreakers are discussion questions or activities used to help participants relax and ease people into a group meeting or learning situation. They are great for learning each other's names and personal/professional information.

Icebreakers:

- create a positive group atmosphere
- help people to relax
- break down social barriers
- energize & motivate
- help people to think outside the box
- help people to get to know one another

Whether it is a small get together or a large training session, we all want to feel that we share some common ground with our fellow participants. By creating a warm and friendly personal learning environment, the attendees will participate and learn more. Be creative and design your own variations on the ice breakers you find here. Try different things and most of all... have fun!

Ideas...

Ideas...

Hints and Tips

A well-chosen icebreaker game can relax the mood, but a poorly chosen icebreaker can have the opposite effect, making people feel nervous and uncomfortable. When choosing your icebreaker, be conscious of your group dynamic. It is important that your activity does not make anyone feel unnecessarily uncomfortable. No one should be forced to reveal extremely personal information or participate in an uncomfortable environment.

Know your audience. Before deciding which activities to use, assess the group for the following: age, familiarity with one another, purpose of the group gathering, and potential considerations for physical abilities.

Change your routine. When you learn a new game, you present it with contagious enthusiasm. When an activity seems stale while you are presenting it, it's time to change your routine and learn a new game to become enthusiastic about!

Don't only use activities that require resources! For example, you may not always have a tennis ball for a name toss. So, instead of tossing an object, use high fives or winks, etc. Alternatively, remember a few icebreakers that don't need equipment so that you can adapt dependent on the situation.

Icebreakers on the web

There are also a wealth of ideas on the internet. Below are a few sites with a wide range of different ideas:

<http://wilderdom.com/games/Icebreakers.html>

<http://www.mwls.co.uk/icebreakers/>

<http://www.icebreakers.ws/>

How to use this booklet

This booklet is split down into sections based on how long the icebreakers take to prepare and set up. The three sections are as follows:

1 Quick and Easy (Page 6)

These activities will often not need any prior preparation and planning, nor will they need any resources. They are the kind of activities you can do on the spot if you need something to bring a group together. They are great quick starters for a session.

2 Resources Needed (Page 16)

This section requires you to buy, bring or make some simple resources but are still relatively quick and easy to do. They might require a little more time to complete but are generally more interactive and more focussed on building bonds.

3 Prior Preparation & Planning (Page 25)

The activities in this section will require more time and more forward planning to make them work but will be rewarding. They are often good for induction activities and teambuilding for groups that will come back together and work with one another on a number of occasions.



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Each activity will also have at least one letter by it which explains what it is good for. The key to the four subcategories is listed below.

Energising

These activities are particularly good for bringing groups together at the start of a long session, particularly if you want to get them motivated to be creative. They are also good for bringing together groups who know each other quite well already to re-familiarise them with one another.

Discussion

If you are running a session with academic content these activities are really good for setting up discussion topics and getting students focussed on a talking point. They are also good for just getting a group chatting to one another.

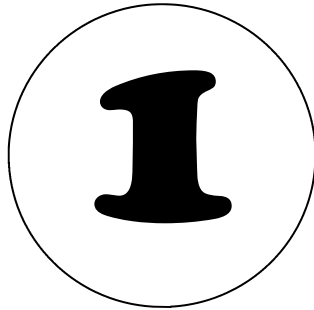
Information

This group of activities are good for introducing new groups of people to one another. They are particularly helpful in learning names and important bits of information about the group. They are also good for providing information, such as getting round campus etc. These activities should be used at the start of the year to help groups get to know each other well.

Teambuilding

If you want your group to bond then this group of activities will be useful to you. Often they will involve more forward planning and resources as they require groups to work in teams and compete.

The full list of icebreakers and categories is available in the index at the back of this booklet.



Section 1

Quick & Easy

E

Protect your Egg!

Group size: 15-30

Duration: 30 - 40mins

T

Resources: Eggs, 1 newspaper, straws, balloons, cellotape, string, blutac, a suitable space to drop eggs from (approx 10 – 15ft height).

The group is split into teams of 4 to 8 people, depending on the group size. Each group is given a set of resources, detailed below, from which to build a contraption which will protect their egg (raw and unboiled!) when dropped from a height.

Resources given to each team:

- 1 egg
- 1 sheet of newspaper
- 1 balloon
- 1m length of string
- 1m length of cellotape
- 5 straws
- 3cm x 3cm square of blutac



Teams are given 25 minutes to design and build their contraption. Teams may request more of a particular item in exchange for something they don't need (e.g. a team may swap a balloon for another 0.5m length of string). Swaps are agreed by the activity instructor, who can be as fair or unfair as they like!

Once the time is up and contraptions are finished (or not!), teams make their way to the launch site. Each team takes it in turn to drop their egg from the height and onto a target below. If the egg breaks, then the team is automatically disqualified. The winning team is the one which successfully protects their egg. If more than one team protect their egg, then the winning team is the one which is closest to the target.

E

Scavenger Hunt**Group Size:** Small Groups**Resources:** Disposable Cameras, Scavenger Hunt Sheets. Several Small Prizes for the Winning Team

I

Duration: 15mins

T

The object of this activity is to give students a list of items that they must try and collect as well as a list of photos they must take. The large cohort should be split down into smaller groups of 5-10 and given their list and a disposable camera. It is often a good idea to start this activity in town and end it at a strategic point on campus which therefore helps with orientation.

Lists of objects should stretch from the ordinary (Take a photo of your group by a Magic Bus in Picadilly) to the more obscure (Collect a menu from as many takeaways as you can). The idea is to help students to explore the wider University and City.

The leader will need to plan this activity in advance to ensure cameras are purchased and the list is acceptable.

D

Where are YOU now?**Group Size:** 4-6**Resources:** Big Campus Map, Stickers, Prize

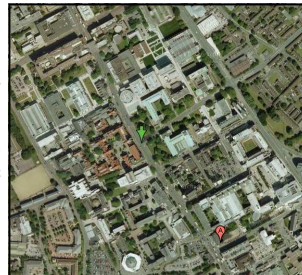
T

Duration: Short

This is a gameshow style activity focussing on orientation of Campus/City but from the comfort of a Seminar room! The intention is that it could take place as part of induction exercises.

Teams of 2-3 are each given stickers and locations and have to pin point them on a Map. Once they have made their choices they compare and discuss. Points are awarded for accuracy. The team with the most points at the end of the activity are the winners.

Must be hosted enthusiastically!



I

Unique Things**Group Size:** Any size**Resources:** None**Duration:** dependent on group size

Each person has to introduce themselves and state one thing about them/ something they've done which they think is unique, if someone else has done it then they have to think of something else.

Variation

The trainer can divide the group into pairs and give participants a few minutes to interview each other. Then, each participant should introduce their partners by name and to share at least two unique characteristics about them.

E

Shopping List**Group Size:** >5**Resources:** People**Duration:** 5 mins

Participants sit in a circle and one person is nominated to start. This person says 'I went shopping and I bought...' and says one item that they bought. Each person must then repeat the phrase 'I went shopping and I bought...' and list all the previous items that have been bought, adding in their own each time.



Variations include 'Under my bed I found...' & 'I opened my door and saw...'

E

Electricity**Group Size:** 8 - 20
group**Resources:** Large enough
table!

T

Duration: 10 - 15mins

The group gets into a circle around a table with everyone sat close together. Everyone places their hands directly in front of them on the table, with their palms facing down. They move the position of their hands so that one hand of each of the 2 people at either side of them is now between their own two hands.



Play begins with the instructor declaring the direction of play (say, clockwise) and beginning a quick example round. Starting with one of the instructor's hands, each hand in the sequence of the circle must clearly tap once for everyone to see, and this tapping should continue around the circle until everyone has tapped once and got used to whose hand is whose (and any stray hands have been accounted for!). Taps should be very clear (maybe even audible) to everyone.

On the first "proper" round, the key rules are stated: if anyone taps TWICE (quickly and clearly), the direction of play is instantly reversed. If anyone raises their hand to tap out of sequence, that hand must be placed behind their back. Thus, a process of elimination comes into play.

People tend to slip up remarkably quickly by getting over-excited or losing concentration. The game works well with medium-sized groups (say, 6-15 people).

3

Section 3

Prior Preparation & Planning

D

6 Degrees of Separation**Group Size:** any**Resources:** Prize

I

Duration: 15-20mins

It happens all of the time, we meet someone who knows someone we know. It's a small world, that's for sure. The object of this game is to see how small the world really is.

1. First, find a partner. Introduce yourselves and make a list of 5-10 things that you have in common with each other: where you went to school, year you were born, food likes, sports likes, etc.
2. Once you have completed your first list, you must find someone else in the room that also has one of those 5-10 things in common with you. When you have found that person, repeat step one with them and develop a new list.
3. Repeat step two.
4. Continue until you have met five other people or time is called by the facilitator.
5. A prize will be given to the first person able to complete the game. When you are done, let the facilitator know that you have finished.

E

A4 Paper Challenge**Group size:** any**Resources:** A4 paper, pencils, rulers, scissor

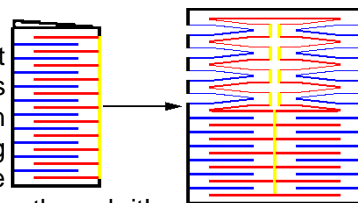
T

Duration: 10 – 20mins

The group is split into small groups of 3 to 6 people. Each group is given 1 A4 sheet of paper, a pencil, a ruler and a pair of scissors. The team must devise a way to fit one team member 'through' the sheet of A4 paper.

Solution for activity leaders' benefit:

First fold the paper in half. Then cut lines in the paper approx 1cm apart, as shown by the red and blue lines. Then unfold the paper and cut carefully along the yellow line, taking care not to cut the ends. Finally open it out carefully and step through it!



E

Human Spelling**Group Size:** Small groups**Resources:** Clues & Space

T

Duration: 2 mins per word

The room is divided into small groups. The leader then gives a crossword style clue to a target word. The groups then have to spell out the word using their bodies to create letters. This can either be done standing or lying down. Every member of the group must be used.



The first team to correctly spell the word using their bodies is the winner and gets a point.

The leader needs to know the numbers of people in order to decide on the words. The number of letters in a word doesn't have to correlate to the number of people in a group.

E

Next Question**Group Size:** Small groups (6-8)**Resources:** People

D

Duration: 5 Mins (Per topic)

I

The leader of the ice-breaker decides on a topic. Those involved have to think of a question based on that topic and ask it to the person to their left. However, this question isn't answered by the adjacent person, but the person one along.

T

The members of the group first answer the question posed by the person two places to their right then asks their own new question. If someone makes a mistake and answers the question from the person sat next to them they have to stand up and run around the group table. The questions keep going around the table until the leader calls time on the activity.

Make sure the question is directed to the person next to them!

E

BANG!**Group Size:** 10-30 **Resources:** People

I

Duration: 10 Minutes

The group make a circle and one person is nominated to stand in the middle of this circle (this person should know everybody's name). The person in the centre of the circle shouts out a person's name. This person must quickly duck down. The two people either side of this person make a 'gun' shape with their hands and, pointing at one another, must shout **bang**. The last person to shout bang must sit down and is out of the game. If the person who's name is called doesn't duck before someone shouts bang, they are out.

When only two people are left they stand back to back in the centre of the circle and begin to walk away from each other. One person shouts draw and they must both quickly turn round and shout **bang** while aiming at the other. The quickest person to shout bang is the winner.

E

Circle Seats**Group Size:** Large Group **Resources:** People & Space!

T

Duration: 2 Mins

The whole group stand in a circle shoulder to shoulder. They then turn through 90° clockwise so they are facing the back of the person to their right. The group then all need to move to their left to make the circle as small as possible, ensuring they are as close together as possible.



When given the signal from the leader everyone in the circle tries to sit down on the knees of the person behind them. In theory the whole circle should be supported!

I

Unique Fact Quiz**Group Size:** 15-30 **Resources:** Answer sheets /

T

blank paper, pen
Duration: 15-20 minutes

Going around the room, each participant shares with the group their:

Name
Discipline
Unique Fact

The quiz master makes a note of each unique fact along with the name of that person. After everyone has shared their facts with the group, the quiz master picks unique facts at random.

These facts form the basis of the quiz, and the individual who remembers the most names wins.

Those who give a valid description of the person (e.g. green jumper) but cannot remember the correct name get ½ point.

I

Find the Missing Piece**Group Size:** <25 **Resources:** Paper, pens

T

Duration: 10mins

The facilitator prepares pieces of paper, enough for everybody in the group. The papers include words that are split into two, for example:

MILE	STONE
ICE	CREAM

Each person picks one piece of paper and then begins to look for the person who has the matching word. When the participant has found their match, they should get to know the other person. Then, they will be asked to introduce one another to the rest of the group.

This is a good way to break large groups into pairs, particularly ones who don't know each other well

E

Who Does What?**Group Size:** 3 - 8**Resources:** paper, pens, (prize)**Duration:** 5 - 10mins

T

The group should sit in a circle facing each other. Each person writes down on 2 slips of paper 2 things about themselves (e.g. hobbies or things that they have done etc).

The facilitator gathers all the slips of paper, folds them and mixes them up in the middle of the table. The direction of play is agreed then each person takes one piece of paper out at a time, reads it out loud and then guesses who it relates to.

Guessing correctly earns the player 1 point. The player with the most points at the end wins (and receives a small prize!)

I

Human Bingo**Group Size:** <35**Resources:** Pre-prepared bingo cards and prize**Duration:** 10-15mins

T

Each person is given a bingo card with statements such as 'can play an instrument' or 'has green eyes'. Each bingo card doesn't have to be completely unique, there should be a number of different cards round the room.

E

The 'players' have to find someone who matched that statement and get them to sign their name in the corresponding box. Players cannot sign more than one box on a card.

A winner is announced when someone has a 'full house' - the leader then reads out the statements and follows them up with the person who has signed the box ie. John—What instrument do you play?

D

Everyone's a Liar**Group Size:** 15 - 40**Resources:** None**Duration:** 20mins

I

1. The group is split up into smaller groups of 3-4 people. Each person then introduces themselves to the other members of the group, then all but one of them thinks of a strange thing they do/have done; the other group member thinks up a lie about him/herself. Each group member then stands in a line and gives their statement to the other groups, e.g.



I have been teaching for 10 years.

I have a pet newt called, "Isaac Newt."

I lived in Switzerland for a year.

2. Each of the other groups may then ask ONE "lie detector" question (directed at **one** of the members of the group standing) to get further information, in order to determine which statement is false. For example:

- **Teaching** - Where have you taught? What have you taught? What year did you start?
- **Pet** - What does Isaac eat? Where do you keep Isaac?
- **Switzerland** - Where did you live in Switzerland? What language was spoken in that part of Switzerland?

3. The other groups then vote on which statement is a lie. The group standing then reveals which one of the statements is a lie! If any of the other groups got this correct then they receive one point.

4. The whole process is repeated for each of the other groups to announce their statements.

D

I Remember**Group Size:** any**Resources:** Coins, Prize**Duration:** 5mins set up; 5mins per round

I

Instructions

1. First, get a coin.
2. Next, look at the year on the coin. Take a minute to think about what you were doing when that coin was minted. Were you in school? Were you a child? Where did you work? Were you married? Where did you live? What was going on in your life at that time? What was the music of the day?
3. After you have had some time to remember where you were, you are ready to play the game. Your goal is to find someone with a coin that was minted at least two years before or after yours. Ultimately, your goal is to have the oldest coin in the room.
4. Once you have found a partner, take three minutes each to tell each other about your moments in time. When you are finished, each of you flip your coin. Reveal the results of your toss to your partner. If they are alike (both heads or tails) exchange coins. If they differ, keep your original coin.
5. Repeat the process up to three times as designated the facilitator.

Variations

Use your own coins to ensure an even distribution of years.



If using your own coins, incorporate a piece of University/Discipline history with each. Research a fact or figure about each year and include it with the corresponding coins. When the participants exchange their own information, they can also share a piece of information when debriefing.

Call each year in order and ask the participant with the year called to read his or her fact.

E

Marooned**Group Size:** 4– 6**Resources:** Pens / Flipchart**Duration:** 15mins

T

Each small group is asked to imagine that they are marooned on an island and collaboratively decide what five items they would have brought with them if they had known there was a chance they were stranded. Note that they are only allowed five items per team, not per person. You can have them write their items on a flip chart and discuss and defend their choices with the whole group.



This icebreaker is a little different from the others and will take longer. Instead of finding out general facts or information about other members of the group, participants will get the chance to discuss and argue their point, hence gaining insight into the other's values and problem solving styles. It also promotes teamwork.

E

Criminal Dealings**Group Size:** 8 - 20**Resources:** Deck of cards**Duration:** 10 - 15mins

T

Design a system for secretly identifying the "criminal" and the "cop." We used a deck of cards. You only need enough cards so each player may have one card. One card needs to be a jack--the criminal, and one needs to be an ace-- the cop. All of the other cards should be below ten in rank. Let each person draw and keep a card, without showing it to anyone.

The criminal needs to recruit other criminals by winking at them, but without getting caught by the cop. Any person who sees a wink is to wait a few seconds, so as not to be obvious, and then say, "I committed a crime." That person then turns in his card and is out of the game. Play continues until the criminal recruits all players without being caught by the cop, or the cop identifies the criminal. If the cop misidentifies the criminal, he loses the game.

T

Who Am I?**Group Size:** 4-6**Resources:** Namecards

E

Duration: >10 Minutes

A large groups would be split down into smaller groups for this activity. The leader prepares slips of paper with names of well known people (TV Characters, celebs etc) and put them into a hat. Group members then pull these out of a hat in secret.

The other members of the group then ask Yes/No questions to guess who each person is. This is a good way of breaking the groups down into smaller ones.

Variation: Everyone else sees who the person is by putting a sticker on their back. The person has to guess who they are by asking Yes/No Questions.

E

Bop-It**Group Size:** <15**Resources:** 'Bop-It' machine**Duration:** 10mins

I

If you have ever played with a Bop It you will know how simple, yet fun the game can be (especially when you are playing multiplayer with friends!)

The bop it , flick it, twist it, pull it, spin it contraption can also be used as a great ice-breaker too. The facilitator should ask the group members to form a circle and start the game on multiplayer mode. Each member of the group must do what the bop-it tells him/her to until the signal for them to pass it to the next person is sounded.



There should be a few practice rounds to get everyone used to the game before the forfeits start! When someone does the wrong thing (e.g. bops when they should be flicking) or takes too long, that person must carry out a forfeit that has been agreed from the start. This could entail revealing some sort of fact or piece of information about themselves so people start to get to know one another.

I

Alliterative Introductions**Group Size:** 5 - 15**Resources:** None**Duration:** 10mins

Introduce yourself to the group with an alliterative sentence based upon the first letter of your name. Example:

"I'm practical Polly. I like painting portraits."

(Pattern: I'm ADJECTIVE NAME. I like ACTION-ing NOUN)

Participants then introduce themselves in the same manner.

Name Chain

Participants then introduce themselves, and the person to their right:

"I'm kooky Katherine. This is vivacious Vera."

The person to your right repeats previous introductions, and introduces the person to their right.

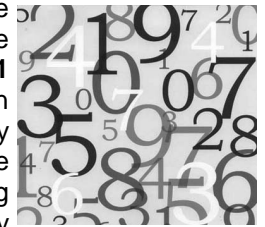
"She's Practical Polly. I'm vivacious Vera. He's generous George".

3. Continue with the next person to the right, until all names have been repeated.

E

Counting**Group Size:** <20**Resources:** People**Duration:** 5 mins

The group sit themselves in a circle and the leader tell them that between them they have to count to 10. One person randomly says 1 and then it is up to another random person in the group to say 2 and so on. If two people try and say the same number at the same time then the counting starts from the beginning again. The same person is not allowed to say two numbers in a row. If the chain is broken by repetition a new person must start the counting.



I

What's the Question?

Group Size: 3-4

Resources: None

T

Duration: 15mins

D

Step 1: The facilitator writes some facts on the board. Example:

Purple
16 months
Kenya

Step 2: Participants try to think of the question that matches each fact.

Purple - *What's your favourite colour? What colour is your car? What colour is your favourite clothing?*

16 months - *How long have you lived in this city? How old is your child? How long have you been married?*

Kenya - *Where were you born? Where have you worked? Where are you going on vacation?*

Step 3: When participants have discovered all of the questions, place them in small groups (3 - 4). Repeat steps 1 and 2. Have participants introduce each other to the large group.



Leaders can use this as a way of beginning discussion on a certain areas by writing up a word which related to part of the module being studied.

E

Spot the Difference

Group Size: 3-10

Resources: Whatever the participants are wearing. Pen & Paper

Duration: 5 mins per round

The leader must split the group down into even groups (3-4 groups is best for 'competition'). The first group stands in a line and the other group have 30 seconds to look at them and memorise their appearance. They then leave the room and make changes to their appearance (swap clothes, remove jewellery etc). These changes are then written down by the leader.

This group then returns to the room and the other groups then have 2 minutes to spot as many changes as possible and write them down on their sheet of paper. The group are then asked what changes they made and the other groups mark their answer sheets.

This process repeats itself until all groups have had a chance to make changes.

E

Themed Cluewords

Group Size: 25-30

Resources: Cluesheets

Duration: 10 Minutes

D

T

Before the activity begins the leaders think of a target word related to the topic to be discussed in the session/workshop. (e.g. Teleology). Leaders would then need to prepare 'crossword' clues based on a topic (e.g. films), where the first letter of the first word relates to a letter in the target word.

Leaders would group students into small groups and ask them to pick 2-3 clues from a hat. Once they have figured out the clue they write the letter on the back (e.g. Film with a big ship that hit an iceberg = T)

The leaders would then bring the group back together. The group then have to use the jumbled up letters to find the target word. This word then becomes the catalyst for group discussion (e.g. Does anyone have a definition for Teleology?)

This Icebreaker is particularly designed for Revision/Skills workshops and is great for starting discussion.

I

Human Cluewords**Group Size:** 20-30 **Resources:** Anagrams & Clues**Duration:** 10 Minutes

T

This activity takes a bit of preparation by the leader and requires the names of all in attendance if it is to be successful.

E

The leader takes the first names of every member of the group and creates words out of these letters (e.g. **Chris, Helen, Ellie, Will** = CHEW). The leader then creates clues for these words (e.g. the act of mashing up food with your teeth!). The leader should try to make anagrams using all the letters so that every participant can get involved.

The leader reads out the clues, or projects them onto the board, telling the students how many letters each answer requires. They then have to work out the clues and, by asking one another's names, line up to spell the target word.

When all the words have been figured out the groups should say their name aloud and the word that they represent.

This is a good game for splitting large groups down into smaller groups but leaders need contingencies in case a member is missing thus removing their letter from the group.

D

Tell Us About Yourself**Group Size:** <15**Resources:** Sweets or other**Duration:** 15mins

I

Pass around a bag of sweets. Tell the participants to take as many as they want. Once all the participants have some, tell them that for each sweet they took they have to say one thing about themselves. For instance, if a participant took 10 sweets, they would have to say 10 things about themselves.



Variation: Try it with toilet roll!

I

Line Up**Group Size:** 20+**Resources:** None

T

Duration: 10mins

This exercise is good for a large group. It is good to break the monotony of long periods of sitting and to help participants find out about each other.

This can be a whole group activity or an inter-group competition. Leaders will give the instruction for groups to line up in a particular way and each group should get in a line as quickly as possible. The twist is that they must do it in **silence**. Group members can't speak to one another but must communicate to get into the correct line. When the group is lined up appropriately all group members should clap to indicate they have completed the task.

Variations: Use this activity periodically throughout a long session or you can ask groups to come up with their own way of letting you know they're ready. (We have had groups yell, hum a song, put up their hands, etc.) This can add a lot of fun to the activity.

SUGGESTIONS

1. Line up in order by shoe size.
2. Line up by first name in alphabetical order.
3. Line up by surname in alphabetical order.
4. Line up by age, down to the month, youngest to oldest.
5. Line up in order by number of pets owned.
6. Line up by house number, smallest to largest
7. Line up in order by the number of bones you've ever broken.



Section 2

Resources Needed



Introduction Tennis

Group Size: 5 - 30

Duration: 5 -10mins

Resources: several small balls,
spacious room

The group stands in a circle and everyone introduces themselves by name, what discipline they are from and their favourite band/type of music.



The group stands in a circle and everyone introduces themselves by name, what discipline they are from and their favourite band/type of music.

A tennis ball is then thrown from person to person. The person throwing the ball must shout the person's name they are throwing it to. When people are comfortable with who they are throwing the ball to, more balls are introduced to see how many can be kept going around the circle.

Variations

To make it more difficult the person throwing the ball must shout name and degree/music type of the person they are throwing it to. You could also change the personal details the participants reveal at the start. E.g. what their favourite sport is, where they were born etc...