



## Icebreakers

Icebreaker activities and games are terrific ways to begin to build relationships that will make your tutoring meaningful to both tutors and students. Icebreakers typically ask people to share a bit of themselves in fun and welcoming ways so all can participate. These icebreakers are a good way for tutors and students to get to know each other at the beginning of the year.

The icebreakers below are but a fraction of icebreaker games whose intention is to simply help tutors and students learn about each other and to spark the development of relationships. In deciding what questions to use in these activities, it is worthwhile to strike a balance between asking personal questions and keeping the conversation light and enjoyable. There might be a reluctance to reveal personal information until people get to know each other. Don't shy away from lighthearted questions or responses: "What's your favorite dessert?" or "I used to have red hair."

## Pair Activities

### 1. Two truths and a lie

Tutor and student in the pair each take a piece of paper and write down two truths and one lie about themselves. When finished, tutor and student trades papers and reads them. The partner will try to guess which one they think is a lie. The pair can explain their 'truths' if interested.

*Variation: If the students are younger, feel free to share out loud instead of writing and reading the papers.*

### 2. Personal Flag Activity

Take a sheet of paper, pens, and colored pencils, crayons, and/or markers. Design a flag that has symbols or objects that represent you and or what you find enjoyable or important.

Examples:

a guitar or musical note (representing a passion for music)

a tennis racket (someone who enjoys sports)

Set an amount of time to draw (e.g. 15-20 minutes or so) and then reconvene. Ask your partner to share their flags and explain the meaning of what they drew.

*Variation: You can have the tutor and student cut out and paste pictures/symbols from magazines to make a flag collage if drawing is too difficult.*

### **3. Beach Ball**

Use a permanent marker to write getting to know you questions on a beach ball. Toss the ball to each other. When one catches the ball, read and answer the question closest to their left thumb. After they answer, they will pass the ball back and their partner can answer a different question.

### **4. Treasured Objects**

This activity is intended to learn a part of someone's life story. Tutors and students are invited to bring an object/picture/memorabilia of personal meaning to share and speak about a part of their life connected to the object.

## **Group Activity**

### **1. Concentric Circles**

Arrange chairs in two concentric circles. Have the tutors sit in the inner circle and the students sit in the outer circle facing the tutors. Ask a question for the pair to discuss. After the pair has had time to answer the question, have the students move to the next chair to the right so they will be matched with a new partner. Continue until every student and tutor have talked. Each student can ask a different question to keep it fresh.

*Variation: This can get a bit noisy and hectic in a circle so you can set up chairs in pairs throughout an area for a more intimate conversation. Students can move around the room.*

Sample questions:

- What is your favorite sport?
- What is your favorite color?
- What is your favorite season and why?
- Can you say hi in another language?
- What is/are the most important thing(s) you've learned from someone older?
- What is/are the most important thing(s) you've learned from someone younger?
- What is your favorite kind of music?
- What was the best thing about the neighborhood you grew up in?
- What is the most interesting thing you have learned in school?
- What is the name of the last book you read?
- If you could be a cartoon character, who would you be?

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