

# Icebreakers

## Fact or Fiction?

Ask each participant to state their name and two statements about themselves, one true and one fictional. Have the group vote with a show of hands which statement they believe is true.

## Line Up

Have students create a physical continuum line. Choose a topic and ask participants to line up (shoulder to shoulder) from one extreme to the other. The topic determines how they line up. For example, if you asked whether students considered themselves “team-players” or “individualists”, the people who like to work in groups would go left, while the folks that preferred working alone would go right. The line must be intact, so participants must discuss their beliefs to gauge where they fit in the line. Afterward, discuss how the information you learned can help the group later. Possible line-ups include: liberal vs. conservative; organized vs. flies-by-the-seat-of-your-pants; techie vs. “hates computers!”; oldest to youngest; quiet vs. loud; or news junky vs. cartoon junky. Come up with your own categories!

## Memory Name Game

Gather the group into a large circle. Have each person say their name, provide one detail about themselves, and do a gesture to go with the detail. “Hi, I’m Janie, and I’m learning to play the guitar.” Janie might make the gesture of strumming a guitar. The next person must first introduce the previous person(s) (using their gesture), and then her/himself: “This is Janie, she’s learning the guitar; and I’m Hank. I play basketball.” So, the last person – usually the facilitator – ends up introducing the entire group. Along the way, everyone learns each other’s name. (The gesture might sound cheesy, but it serves as a mnemonic device to help people remember better.)

## Make a Statement<sup>1</sup>

The purpose of this game is to learn about each other (and get a *tiny* bit of exercise). The facilitator begins by making a statement and asking anyone who identifies with that statement to stand up (i.e., “I like basketball.”) The facilitator chooses someone who is sitting down to make a new statement. That person should say their name, then make a new statement, at which point new people stand up or sit down based on who identifies with the statement. The person who made the statement chooses the next person, and so on until everyone has stood at least once. The facilitator can also challenge someone to try to make everyone stand up.

<sup>1</sup> Source: National Network for Youth, Washington, DC.

## **Infomania**

This icebreaker requires some preparation, but can accomplish much more than “breaking the ice.” It is designed to allow interaction among participants, to introduce participants to issues that will be covered during the program, to provide them with an overview of related trivia, and to give them a chance to speak in front of a full group. There are four steps to this activity. Be sure to explain the directions completely before dismissing students to begin the activity.

### **STEP 1: Preparation**

Select several one-line bits of information relating to topics in your youth training. Make sure there is at least one piece of info for each student participating. Categorize your information “tidbits” into topics with the intention of splitting your larger group into four or five smaller groups (i.e. a group of 20 would require four topics to result in small groups of four). One example at the Capitol Focus program, we create five categories of facts: “the legislature,” “executive branch,” “voting and elections,” “the media,” and “campaigns.” Assign each topic set a different color of paper and copy your “tidbits” on that color. Cut the tidbits so there is one on each piece of paper and mix them up in a “hat”.

### **STEP 2: Introductions**

Let each participant select one tidbit. Direct everyone to circulate around the room, introducing themselves to one another and sharing their tidbit.

### **STEP 3: Task Assignment**

Have students assemble in teams according to the color of their tidbit. Once in their teams, each person introduces themselves and reads their tidbit to their group. The team’s first task is to determine what their common theme is. “What issue or theme do all of your tidbits have in common?” The team’s second task is to determine which two of their tidbits they would like to share with the full group.

### **STEP 4: Moderator Debriefing**

Ask participants to be seated back in their original seats. This session takes place as a full group. Depending on the number of moderators, each moderator will debrief one set of tidbits. There are three steps to the debriefing:

Ask students from the “red group” to stand up and read the two tidbits they decided to share with the group. Ask the audience to try and guess what the category is. Give them hints if they are having a hard time figuring it out. Have full group applaud these students who stood up in front of everyone and spoke. After you confirm that the students selected the correct theme. Recap the tidbits that they read, summarize the remaining tidbits on that issue. It’s a good idea to select the ones you think are important to share prior to beginning the debriefing session.

Relate the theme of the tidbits to a future session on the schedule. “These tidbits were all about local government. As you can see on your schedule, you will have the chance to interview some local government officials in the afternoon.” This provides participants with a preview of scheduled sessions, and introduces them to issues and personalities that will be discussed during that session.

Continue steps one through three with each set of tidbits.

## Human Bingo Icebreaker

This icebreaker works best for groups of 25 or more. Give each participant the grid on the next page, asking them to find people who meet the criteria. Reward the first three who get "Bingo" (i.e. five vertically, horizontally, or diagonally).<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Developed by Jim Muldavin, California Center.

<p>Has Been To A Musical Concert</p> <p>Name:</p> <p>Example:</p>	<p>Has Seen A Movie In The Past Month</p> <p>Name:</p> <p>Example:</p>	<p>Has Played A Musical Instrument In A Performance</p> <p>Name:</p> <p>Example:</p>	<p>Believes That The Right Of Citizens To Own Guns Should Not Be Limited</p> <p>Name:</p> <p>Why:</p>	<p>Believes That All People Should Have Health Care, Regardless Of Cost</p> <p>Name:</p> <p>Why:</p>
<p>Has Traveled To Another Continent</p> <p>Name:</p> <p>Example:</p>	<p>Can Name the Governor</p> <p>Name:</p> <p>Example:</p>	<p>Has Participated In A Conflict Resolution Program</p> <p>Name:</p> <p>Example:</p>	<p>Believes That For Some Crimes Youth Should Be Tried As Adults</p> <p>Name:</p> <p>Example:</p>	<p>Has Helped Improve His/Her Community</p> <p>Name:</p> <p>Example:</p>
<p>Plays On A Sports Team</p> <p>Name:</p> <p>Example:</p>	<p>Believes That if a Person is Not Willing To Work, They Shouldn't Get Welfare</p> <p>Name:</p> <p>Why:</p>	<p>Has Been To Disneyland or Disneyworld</p> <p>Name:</p> <p>Example:</p>	<p>Believes That Youth Are Unfairly Portrayed On TV</p> <p>Name:</p> <p>Example:</p>	<p>Has Helped Family with Yardwork</p> <p>Name:</p> <p>Example:</p>
<p>Has Created a Web Page</p> <p>Name:</p> <p>Example:</p>	<p>Grew More Than Three Inches Taller in One Year</p> <p>Name:</p> <p>Example:</p>	<p>Has Written a Poem or Rap Lyrics Before</p> <p>Name:</p> <p>Example:</p>	<p>Has Been Interviewed By a Reporter</p> <p>Name:</p> <p>Example:</p>	<p>Rides the Bus, Train, Subway or Light Rail at Least Once a Week</p> <p>Name:</p> <p>Why:</p>
<p>Believes that Free Speech Should Not Be Limited, Even if Hateful</p> <p>Name:</p> <p>Why:</p>	<p>Watches Saturday Morning Cartoons</p> <p>Name:</p> <p>Example:</p>	<p>Has Ever Walked to Get to School</p> <p>Name:</p> <p>Why:</p>	<p>Has Flown in a Plane</p> <p>Name:</p> <p>Where:</p>	<p>Can Speak Spanish</p> <p>Name:</p> <p>Example:</p>

Name of questioner: \_\_\_\_\_