

# Trainer Essentials: Energizers and Icebreakers

Energizers and icebreakers are used to help participants get to know one another, build motivation, and keep participants engaged. There are many existing resources filled with excellent energizers, icebreakers, games and activities that you can incorporate into your training. Below is a description of some of the best resources we found online. All links were accessed in March 2015.

## **Energizers (Children's Radio Foundation)**

This website contains 22 icebreaker and energizer activities in the following categories:

- Getting to know each other
- Building trust
- Warming up
- Listening, observing, and telling stories
- Energizing and relaxing
- Expressing feelings

Children's Radio Foundation. (n.d.). Energizers. Retrieved from Children's Radio Foundation: <http://www.childrenradiofoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/06/CRF-Energizers-UNESCO.pdf>

## **Facilitation and Icebreakers Booklet (HRC Youth College)**

Compiled by a team of trainers, this booklet contains helpful information about facilitation and the stages of group formation (forming, storming, norming, performing, and adjourning). It describes why icebreakers and activities are important, and includes ideas for 30 icebreakers, 10 closing ideas, and 5 topic-specific activities. The energizers are divided based on the phases of group formation, making it easier for you to select activities that will work best for the stage your group is in.

Human Rights Campaign Youth College. (n.d.). *Facilitation + Icebreakers Booklet*. Retrieved from NDI.org: <https://www.ndi.org/files/HRC%20Facilitation%20and%20Icebreakers.pdf>

## **Games and Exercises (UNICEF Facilitator Manual)**

This comprehensive manual contains nearly 200 pages of games and activities for facilitators and trainers. The activities are divided into the following twelve sections:

- Icebreakers and getting to know each other
- Warm-ups and energizers
- Communication
- Perception

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- Intercultural Communication
- Building and Cooperation
- Conflict Management
- Case Studies and Role Play
- Gender Analysis and Sensitization
- Creativity and Problem Solving
- Relaxation and Meditation
- Evaluation
- End Games

*UNICEF. (1998). Games and Exercises: a manual for facilitators and trainers involved in participatory group events. Retrieved from Save the Children Resource Library: [http://resourcecentre.savethechildren.se/sites/default/files/documents/unicef\\_games\\_and\\_exercises.pdf](http://resourcecentre.savethechildren.se/sites/default/files/documents/unicef_games_and_exercises.pdf)*

## Guide to Cooperative Games for Social Change (CommonAction)

This resource provides a helpful and concise introduction to why energizers and games are important tools for facilitators. It outlines tips for facilitating games effectively, including how to encourage participants to reflect on what they learned through playing together.

All of the games in this resource are cooperative. Instructions are provided for games in each of these categories:

- Icebreakers (getting to know each other)
- Initiatives (challenging players to work together)
- Trust builders (emphasizing success through cooperation)
- “Funnies” (encouraging laughter and fun)
- Closers (focusing on closure, symbolism, and reflecting on the day)

*Fletcher, A., & Kunst, K. (2006). A Guide to Cooperative Games for Social Change. Retrieved from CommonAction: <http://www.commonaction.org/gamesguide.pdf>*

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## Icebreakers, Team building, and Tips

This 3-part resource provides tips and instructions for facilitating icebreaker, energizer, and team building activities. The first section has instructions for introductory icebreakers and energizers. The second section has a large selection of team building activities, organized into “low energy” and “high energy” sub-sections. The third section has resources with “10 tips” for facilitating topics such as time management, building group unity, and building self-esteem.

*Williams, A. (n.d.). Icebreakers, Team builders, and Tips to help you and your organization. Office of Student Leadership Development, Lehigh University. Retrieved from:*

[http://studentaffairs.lehigh.edu/sites/studentaffairs.lehigh.edu/files/offices/leadership/docs/Teambuilders\\_and\\_Activities.pdf](http://studentaffairs.lehigh.edu/sites/studentaffairs.lehigh.edu/files/offices/leadership/docs/Teambuilders_and_Activities.pdf)

## Peer Support Icebreakers (Students as Partners)

For trainers who are looking for a change from their go-to icebreaker activities, this booklet provides introductory activities that are less commonly used. Note that the resource is intended to be printed, folded, and stapled together as a booklet, so the pages may appear to be out-of-order if you use it as an online pdf document.

Each activity falls into at least one of four categories: energizers, discussion, information, and teambuilding. They are also divided into three sections based on how long the icebreakers take to prepare and set up:

- Quick and easy (no preparation or planning required)
- Resources needed (relatively simple but require some preparation)
- Prior preparation and planning (require more planning but will be very rewarding for groups that work together frequently)

*Students as Partners. (n.d.). Peer Support Icebreakers. Retrieved from the University of Manchester: <http://documents.manchester.ac.uk/display.aspx?DocID=7582>*

## 40 Icebreakers for Small Groups

Grahame Knox has compiled instructions for 40 common icebreaker games in this easy-to-follow resource. The activities are simple, suitable for a wide age range, and designed to promote sharing, openness, listening, and discussion.

*Knox, G. (n.d.). 40 Icebreakers for Small Groups. Retrieved from Insight Typepad:*

[http://insight.typepad.co.uk/40\\_icebreakers\\_for\\_small\\_groups.pdf](http://insight.typepad.co.uk/40_icebreakers_for_small_groups.pdf)

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## 101 More Games for Trainers

For each of the 101 games in this extensive resource, you will find a brief description of its purpose, the amount of time it will take, materials required, and ideal group size. The table of contents also classifies each game into one or more of the following categories:

- Openers
- Energizers
- Communication
- Team building
- Review
- Topical

*Pike, B., & Busse, C. (2004). 101 More Games For Trainers: A Collection of the Best Activities from Creative Training Techniques. HRD Press, Inc., Amherst. Retrieved from Claris.org: [http://www.ciaris.org/workspace\\_files/657/101\\_More\\_Games\\_for\\_Trainers.pdf](http://www.ciaris.org/workspace_files/657/101_More_Games_for_Trainers.pdf)*

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