

# How do I use icebreakers in class?

## Module focus

- ice breakers in tutorials

## Module outcomes

- you will be familiar with how to use icebreakers effectively
- you will have access to a range of suitable icebreaker activities

*'That first tutorial was really awkward. Everyone seemed nervous and uncertain. I noticed that when I asked questions, a lot of eyes dropped downwards. There wasn't much discussion going on.'*

### Take a moment to reflect on this issue.

What challenges does this pose for *your* teaching?

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## Possible solutions

1. Access and try some practical icebreakers which don't require many resources nor much time.
2. A good means of 'breaking', or at least 'melting', the ice is to use an activity which requires students to leave their seats and move around and talk to each other.
3. Trial some activities in your classes until you decide which ones seem to work best.
4. Use different activities in different classes to gauge their effectiveness.
5. Using an icebreaker before forming students into groups in class can be helpful. Also, using icebreaker activities of a team building nature can be beneficial before allocating students to groups for group assignments.
6. Aim for short and simple and non-threatening activities which you can stop reasonably easily if necessary.
7. It is beneficial to establish yourself first with your class before lightening up the mood with an icebreaker.

## More help

Here are some resources from which you may seek some advice. They are all annotated so as to assist you in making judgements about what might be useful advice for your particular teaching context. By exploring some or all of these resources, you may well be able to generate strategies to suit your particular circumstances.

1. [http://adulted.about.com/od/icebreakers/Educational\\_Icebreakers.htm](http://adulted.about.com/od/icebreakers/Educational_Icebreakers.htm) - from 'About: adult and continuing education', this site contains a range of simple icebreakers for use in class.
2. <http://ah.utdallas.edu/rhetoric/tips/icebreakers.html> - some simple icebreaker ideas for the first class.
3. <http://vccslitonline.cc.va.us/mrcte/ice.htm> - some more ideas.
4. <http://www.businessballs.com/> - a range of team building ideas.

### Example:

Take some scrap paper to class. Form students into groups. Have them agree on a design of a paper plane. Have them build a certain number. Test fly them and have the class rate their airworthiness.

## Alert !

It is important that icebreakers be used sensitively. Aim for activities which are non-threatening, 'safe' and culturally inclusive where possible.