

# Diversity & Inclusion Activities



Diversity and Inclusion activities are simple ways to get people talking and listening to one another. It is only through understanding each other that we truly gain knowledge and can move forward together.

While we can't always walk in someone else's shoes,  
we can take the time to inquire about how the shoe fits and  
if its path is smooth or riddled with pebbles.

## Objectives

There are many reasons you may choose to use an icebreaker or activity: to warm up or relax your group, to bring your group back together after a break or intense session, to introduce the next segment or to present your group with challenges that, as a team (together or divided into small groups or teams), your group must either overcome or address.

## Age & Appropriateness

Icebreakers and activities are adaptable to your group and situation. When considering an icebreaker or activity, be sure to keep specifics about your group in mind, such as age and meeting focus. Please don't overlook an icebreaker or activity because you think the group is too mature for it. Many groups, once aware that it's ok to relax and have fun, will enjoy the experience of "being able to let go," if only for a moment.

## Icebreakers

Icebreakers are exercises that are intended to help a group of people begin the process of forming and working with a team.

Icebreakers are commonly used at the beginning of a meeting and presented in a game format to "warm up" the group and help them get to know each other. However, icebreakers can be used at any point during a meeting and for many reasons: to keep the group on track; to provide the group with a mental or physical break; after lunch to get the group back into the mindset of the meeting.

You should not limit the use of an activity just because it is referred to as an icebreaker.

When planning the use of an icebreaker, or any activity for that matter, keep your audience in mind. You don't want to inadvertently use an activity that excludes members of your group.

## Diversity

Sometimes you will need to have a specific diversity activity to shed light on problems you may be having, potential problems you may face or as just a refresher to help bring your group back together.

Everyone should be able to feel wanted and valued during the meeting, so make sure to set ground rules before conducting any activity, including icebreakers.

Diversity is not a sometimes issue that only needs to be addressed sometimes. Diversity is an always issue that needs to be cultivated, supported and reinforced. By recognizing people's similarities and differences, we can become better employees and stronger leaders. In order to strengthen the sense of teamwork in the workplace, it is vital that people have an understanding of diversity and to be able to communicate about it. In order to help people learn how to recognize and correct stereotypes, to find common ground and to be able to work with and celebrate difference within the team, open communication about diversity must be fostered.

## Dividing Large Groups

If you're facilitating to larger groups, you'll often want to divide them into smaller work groups. Small work groups can be very beneficial and achieve the task or goal much quicker and more efficiently. You should want to create as much of a diverse small group as you can. Generally, when the same people work together time-after-time, new results don't happen often.

While there are many quick and easy ways to split a group, they are generally routine and over used: counting off, splitting the room in quarters, tables working together, etc. Granted, by using these methods you achieve the goal of splitting the group, but you should question the overall outcome of the method. Have you accomplished anything beyond splitting the large group? How diverse are the small work groups? Are the same people sitting together who always sit together?

Many people tend to sit with friends and the same people at each meeting so, having tables work together or splitting the room won't split the friends. Likewise, counting off may not achieve the most diverse small work group based on where people are sitting and the number you use to split them.

It's important to mix the large groups in different ways because you want the group to be able to generate new ideas, problem solve and discuss issues deeply and from various viewpoints. You should also want to provide the participants with the opportunity to experience different opinions, a wider range of options and to be able to really consider the positives and negatives of the issue.

There will be times when you assign people to specific groups so that you can create a specific mix within the small work group. Most times, however, you will probably be able to mix the groups more freely and be able to provide a bit more fun and humor to "lighten" everyone up.

There are many fun and easy ways to divide large groups, including:

- Hair color
- Morning, afternoon, evening people and even night owls
- Those wearing jewelry (by type and where (rings/bracelets can be on either hand/wrist)
- Types of shoes (color, strings/no strings, sandals/dress/sneakers/loafers)
- Birthdays (by month(s) or seasons)
- Coffee drinkers (regular, decaf, non)
- Favorite dessert/fruit (these can also be available during the meeting)
- Hand out candy as people enter and then separate by flavor
- For cynics: by what they would rather be doing (napping, playing golf, shopping, gardening, reading, hiking, family, etc.). Be creative but limit the choices by the number of groups you need.

Don't be afraid to be creative or think outside of the box when separating the group.

## Strategies for Inclusion

- Communication
  - Without communication, strategies for creating the most inclusive atmosphere are unknown.
- Person-first language
  - Make sure to put the person first, not the disability
  - Say “the PERSON/CHILD with a disability” not “disabled child”
- Avoid using labels
  - Labels are debilitating
  - Labels make people more aware of the difference
- Positively acknowledge differences
  - Find ways to celebrate/include differences when appropriate and possible
- Accessibility
  - Ensure that facilities are accessible to everyone
  - Be sure to provide reasonable accommodations
- Prior assessment
  - Make sure to assess participants’ needs before they arrive
  - Ask for as much information as possible on registration forms to ensure that you are prepared
    - Questions can include:
      - Do you have any dietary restrictions
      - Do you need any special accommodations
- Seek help
  - Do not be afraid to seek help
  - Contact your HR or Social Justice Office for assistance



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## Adapting Games & Activities

### **Games and Activities**

Throughout the year, games and activities may be a part of meetings. At times, the thought of involving members with disabilities in such activities can cause stress. This does not have to be the case. Games are one of the most versatile forms of recreation and virtually any game can be modified to accommodate a child with a disability. Some games provide physical activity while other games provide social interaction and mental exercise. Regardless of the type of games or the outcome, all games provide the setting in which an essential element of life is learned—Good Sportsmanship. Good sportsmanship is useful not only in recreational activities but also in everyday life.

Through participation in games children with and without disabilities learn to:

- Take turns
- Accept defeat, lose
- Be a leader
- Make decisions
- Cooperate
- Try new skills
- Accept boundary limits
- Be eliminated according to rules
- Respect the right of others
- Observe rules
- Get along with others
- Improve old skills

Informal games are games that are played with a few simple rules. No one player is in the most active part for very long. This may be very desirable when participants have mental or emotional disabilities.

### **How to Adapt Games**

Persons with disabilities feel more comfortable if few changes are made in an activity. Adaptations should suit ability, not disability. Encourage the youth with disabilities to suggest adaptations.

In general:

- Substitute walking, wheeling, and rolling for running, skipping, and hopping.
- Use bounce, roll, or underhand toss to replace throwing, catching, and batting.
- Substitute sitting, kneeling, or lying down for standing.
- Decrease distances in such activities as horseshoes, ring toss, and softball.
- Reduce the size of the playing field, court, or area.

### How to Adapt Arts and Crafts

Make the adaptation fit the individual. Many devices have been invented for folding pencils, paint brushes, embroidery hoops, woodworking tools, and other equipment. Check with parents, a doctor, an occupational therapist, or an agency serving persons with disabilities, if necessary.

### How to Adapt Dance

- Substitute swaying, swinging, walking, sliding, balancing, and wheeling for regular steps.
- Encourage each person to create personal dance patterns such as swinging from side to side, clapping hands, and moving the head.
- Use another dancer as a partner for a dancer using a wheelchair. Push or rock in time with the music.
- Confine movements to a small area for visual disabilities. Tap dancing is great.
- Free movements of social dancing are enjoyed by individuals with cerebral palsy or youths with poor coordination.
- Use square, line, or round dances with orthopedic disabilities, as they involve few complicated step patterns.



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\* *From A Perfect Fit: 4-H Involvement for Youth with Disabilities. A Leader's Guide. 1992.*

## Splitting large groups

Type: Group division  
Level: Low to medium  
Space: Usual meeting room  
Time: 10 minutes (can vary depending on group size)  
Purpose: To break large groups into smaller groups  
Baseball:



- Ask the large group to divide themselves into groups of 4, 6 or 8.
- Have the small teams assign baseball positions to each member; no two team members can have the same position (catcher, pitcher, shortstop, right fielder, left fielder, etc.).
- Separate into groups by position (all catchers together, all pitchers together, etc.).
- These will serve as your small groups.

### Crossed Arms:

- Ask participants to cross their arms.
- Which arm is crossed OVER the other?

### Captain My Captain:

- Determine how many groups you need. If you have 40 participants and need 4 groups then you will want 10 people per group.
- Shout out Captain my Captain and the even number split to “Get in a life boat”
  - i.e. “Captain my Captain, we need 10 people to get in a life boat.”

### Animals:

- Ask participants to make a circle standing an arm length apart.
- Ask them to close their eyes.
- Go around and whisper the name of an animal in each person’s ear.
- Then announce “Keeping your eyes closed, make the sound of your animal and find all others of like kind.”
- Go to the “lost sheep” and tap on the shoulder; they make their sound, their accumulating group calls to them.
- Make sure to add enough animals with distinctive sounds, such as, cows, pigs, ducks, turkeys, etc.
- You don’t have to limit yourself to farm animals, don’t forget about the woods!

**Cutting the Deck:** (*Playing With a Full Deck, Michelle Cummings*)

- There are several ways to divide groups by using a deck of cards. If you have more than 52 people, add decks of cards to meet your total number of participants.
  1. Odds and Evens
    - Using the entire deck: 52 cards, 26 odds, 26 evens (A = 1, J = 11, Q = 12, K = 13)
    - Take out the Royalty cards: 40 cards, 20 odds, 20 evens (Aces = 1)
    - Each suit: 13 cards, 7 odds, 6 evens
    - Two suits: 26 cards, 14 odds, 12 evens
    - Three suits: 39 cards, 21 odds, 12 evens
    - Each suit without royalty cards: 10 cards, 5 odds, 5 evens
  2. Color of the Cards
    - Full deck: 52 cards, 26 black cards, 26 red cards
    - Hearts: 13 red cards
    - Spades: 13 black cards
    - Diamonds: 13 red cards
    - Clubs: 13 black cards
  3. Suit of the Cards
    - Full deck: 52 cards, 4 suits (hearts, spades, diamonds, and clubs) 13 per group
    - Two suits: 26 cards, 13 per group
  4. Number or face value of the Cards
    - Full deck: 52 cards, groups of 4 (four 9's, four Jacks)
    - Three suits: 39 cards, groups of 3 (three 7's, three Aces)
    - Two suits: 26 cards, pairs (two 3's, two Queens)
  5. Pairs based on the like color and rank (use this one only if everyone will end up with a partner)
    - Full deck: 52 cards, 26 pairs of people (2 of diamonds and 2 of hearts)

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## Chicken Impulse



|                   |   |
|-------------------|---|
| <u>Type:</u>      | Icebreaker, team building   |
| <u>Level:</u>     | Low to moderate   |
| <u>Space:</u>     | Usual meeting room  |
| <u>Time:</u>      | 15 minutes (can vary depending on group size)                             |
| <u>Purpose:</u>   | To help energize the group, to help build a team atmosphere, to have fun. |
| <u>Team size:</u> | Open (be creative with large groups)                                      |
| <u>Needs:</u>     | Rubber chicken (or any type of rubber/stuffed animal)                     |

### Instruction:

- Split group into 2 even groups, students sit down facing (backs?) to each other, 12 inches between teams
- Students hold hands with the person on either side of them
- Place the rubber chicken will be at the end of the line between the last two players on each team
- Ask everyone to close their eyes, except for the two people at the beginning of each line
- The facilitator/teacher flips a coin
- If the coin lands on heads - both teams send down the pulse to the end of the line and tries to be the first to grab the chicken. If the coin lands on tails, neither team sends an impulse down the line
- Teams gets a point when they are able to send the pulse down their line by using the hand pulse technique
- Teams lose a point if a pulse is passed down, or chicken grabbed when the coin landed on tail

### Reflection:

After each round, ask the group what they can do to have a better outcome.

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## Circle the Circle



|                   |   |
|-------------------|---|
| <u>Type:</u>      | Icebreaker, team building   |
| <u>Level:</u>     | Low to moderate   |
| <u>Space:</u>     | Usual meeting room  |
| <u>Time:</u>      | 15+ minutes (can vary depending on group size)  |
| <u>Purpose:</u>   | To help energize the group, to help build a team atmosphere, to have fun.                             |
| <u>Team size:</u> | Any (while it is best to keep the group together as a one unit, splitting the group may be necessary) |
| <u>Needs:</u>     | Hula-hoop (at least one, two or more can be used for different challenges)                            |

### Instruction:

- Ask participants to stand in a circle and link hands.
- Place a hula-hoop around a set of linked hands (so that their hands are within the hula-hoop circle).
- Tell the group that they must pass the hula-hoop around the circle but must remain in contact at all times. (You can be as specific as you like, but sometimes it's best to let them figure out how they want to pass it around.)
- Adaptations:
  - Add a second hoop traveling in the opposite direction.
  - Time each round.
  - Instead of focusing on hand-holding, you can tell the group that they must remain in contact with the people beside them at all times.

### Reflection:

After each round, you can ask the group what they can do to decrease their time/make it faster.

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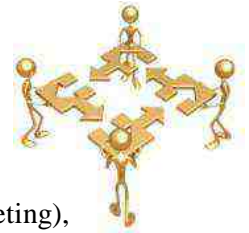
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## First Impressions

|                   |  |
|-------------------|--|
| <u>Type:</u>      | Icebreaker (individual perspectives, emotional triggers, respecting personal differences)                        |
| <u>Level:</u>     | Low  |
| <u>Space:</u>     | Usual meeting room   |
| <u>Time:</u>      | 15 minutes (can vary depending on group size)  |
| <u>Purpose:</u>   | To help participants get to know each other better.  |
| <u>Team size:</u> | Open   |
| <u>Needs:</u>     | Note cards/Post Its (Post Its are better because they can be displayed during the meeting), pens/pencils/markers |



### Instruction:

- Sit all participants in a circle. Each participant writes one fact about his background, interests or history that most people don't know.
- Participants then fold up the cards and put them in the middle of the circle.
- A group leader opens the cards and reads them one at a time.
- Participants write down which person in the circle they believe the card addresses.
- Each person then reveals his/her guess and then the writer reveals him/herself.

### Reflection:

- Discuss with the group why they associated certain traits with certain people.

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## Getting to Know You

Type: Icebreaker  
Level: Low  
Space: Usual meeting room  
Time: 15 minutes (can vary depending on group size)  
Purpose: To learn more about each other.  
Team size: 4-10 members per group  
Needs: Flip chart paper, markers



### Instruction:

- Provide each group a large sheet of flip chart paper and markers.
- Have them to draw a large flower with a center and an equal number of petals to the number of participants in their group.
- Through discussion within their group, have them find their similarities.
  - They should fill in the center of the flower with something they all have in common.
- Each member should then fill in his or her petal with something about them that is unique - unlike any other member in their group.
- Participants should be instructed that they cannot use physical attributes such as hair color, weight etc. This encourages them to have more meaningful discussions with their group members).
- Encouraged to be creative in their ideas and drawings.

### Reflection:

- Ask the small groups to share their flower with everyone
  - They should discuss similarities and differences
  - If it was easy or difficult for them find similarities
- Discuss the importance of talking with others and the value in finding both similarities and differences with one another.

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## I am...



- Type: Icebreaker  
Level: Low  
Space: Usual meeting room  
Time: 15+ minutes (can vary depending on group size)  
Purpose: Allows participants to introduce themselves. This can also be an in-depth exercise depending on time and participant attitude.  
Team size: Open  
Needs: Handout, pens/pencils/markers

### Instruction:

- Distribute the I am...? form.
- Ask participants “Who are you? On this form place your name in the center and then fill out each bubble with a descriptive word or words about who you are.”

### Reflection:

- Ask participants to volunteer and share what they wrote.
  - It is nice to recognize introverts by saying “I’m/We’re not going to call on anyone because we respect our participants who are introverts.”
- After the volunteer participants have shared, you can ask:
  - What similarities/differences did you notice between our volunteers?
  - Did you identify with what someone else said during their introduction? If so, how?
- The flow and emotion of the participants will help you determine how in-depth to make this exercise.

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Instructions: Place your name in the center circle, then fill out each bubble with a descriptive word or phrase that finishes the following sentence:

I am...

The form consists of a central large circle and eight smaller circles arranged in a circular pattern around it. The circles are intended for a person to write their name in the center and descriptive words or phrases in the surrounding bubbles.

## It's a Lie!



|                   |   |
|-------------------|---|
| <u>Type:</u>      | Icebreaker, first impressions   |
| <u>Level:</u>     | Low   |
| <u>Space:</u>     | Usual meeting room  |
| <u>Time:</u>      | 15 minutes (can vary depending on group size)                               |
| <u>Purpose:</u>   | To illustrate how people often have different definitions of the same word. |
| <u>Team size:</u> | Open—the size of the group will determine the length of the activity        |
| <u>Needs:</u>     | N/A   |

### Instruction:

- Ask participants to share three things about themselves *but one of the three must be a lie*.
  - Examples: activities, hobbies, etc. Things that may not be easily known about them.
    - I swam with a dolphin. I lived in Costa Rica. I've met the President of the United States.
- The other participants must then try to figure out which statement is a lie.
  - Questions are allowed (but then the answers can be more lies).
  - You can provide prizes for winning guesses if you would like to make it a competition.

### Reflection:

- Ask participants if anyone was surprised by the truths that others shared.
  - Follow up by asking why they were surprised.
- Discuss the implications of first impressions and how we should not rely on them
  - People may look or appear boring but they may have led very interesting lives or have unusual interests.

### Another version:

- You can adapt this activity for first impressions only or for a shorter version by selecting just a few participants to share and then discuss with the entire group.

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## Marshmallow Tower

- Type: Icebreaker  
Level: Low  
Space: Usual meeting room  
Time: 20-40 minutes (can vary depending on group size)  
Purpose: To emphasize team work, communication, problem solving, leadership.  
Team size: At least 2 teams (size and number of teams will depend on your group)  
Needs: 1 bag of Marshmallows (regular or jumbo work best), 1 box of spaghetti per group



### Instruction:

- With the materials provided, the teams need to build the highest Marshmallow Tower
  - The Tower must be stable, it cannot fall over
  - If the Tower falls over, the team is disqualified
- A twist: swap members between teams after 10-15 minutes.

### Reflection:

- Ask participants:
  - Was there a leader in your group?
    - Was he/she selected, did it just happen or was it self-appointed?
  - How well do you feel your group worked as a team?
  - Was your communication style effective?
  - What worked best/worst for your group?
  - How did you feel whenever team members were moved?
  - Did you notice anything about yourself within the group?

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## Paper Pieces



|                   |   |
|-------------------|---|
| <u>Type:</u>      | Icebreaker  |
| <u>Level:</u>     | Low   |
| <u>Space:</u>     | Usual meeting room  |
| <u>Time:</u>      | 15 minutes (can vary depending on group size)   |
| <u>Purpose:</u>   | Introductions (can be adapted and used during down town to reflect on day's activities) |
| <u>Team size:</u> | Open  |
| <u>Needs:</u>     | Roll of toilet paper (napkins or paper towels work as well)                             |

### Instruction:

- Explain to participants that your training session will be messy and that they will need to have paper to keep their area clean.
  - This activity may be well-known among your group, it would help to have cups or paints sitting on a table to give the illusion that the meeting will entail crafts (water colors, painting, etc.)
  - You can even provide a brief description of an activity (you can have an activity that would use the materials planned or not)

### Reflection:

- After each person chooses their amount of “paper” let them know that you are going to start the meeting by having each person introduce themselves, with a twist.
- The twist is that the number of pieces of “paper” they selected is the number of things they need to say about themselves during the introductions.

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## Trash Your Ego



|                   |   |
|-------------------|---|
| <u>Type:</u>      | Icebreaker  |
| <u>Level:</u>     | Low   |
| <u>Space:</u>     | Usual meeting room  |
| <u>Time:</u>      | 15-20 minutes (can vary depending on group size)  |
| <u>Purpose:</u>   | Helps participants visualize putting their egos aside to work as a group toward a common goal.                              |
| <u>Team size:</u> | Open  |
| <u>Needs:</u>     | Paper (any size, note that the size of the paper will likely dictate the time spent on this activity), pens/pencils/markers |

### Instruction:

- Ask participants to write a capital “I” on plain paper
- Allow 3-5 minutes for them to decorate it as they wish (not decorating it is an option).
- After everyone is finished decorating, ask them to tear the paper into as many pieces as possible.
- Either circulate a trash can (this can save time) or have everyone take their torn “I” to the trash and return to their seats.

### Reflection:

- Ask participants if they understand the point of the exercise/significance of the act
  - They had just torn their “Is” and trashed them.
    - “I” is a representation of their ego
- The purpose of this activity is for the participants to “leave behind” or “put aside” their egos.
- Discuss how participants feel about the exercise and how it may encourage positive attitudes for meetings.

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