

Ice Breakers: A Tool for Esl Learners

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Abstract : An icebreaker is a facilitation exercise intended to help a group to begin the process of forming themselves into a team. Icebreakers are commonly presented as a game to 'warm up' the group by helping the members to get to know each other. They often focus on sharing personal information such as names, hobbies, etc. Challenging icebreakers also have the ability to allow a group to be better prepared to complete its assigned tasks. For example, if the team's objective is to redesign a business process such as Accounts Payable, the icebreaker activity might take the team through a process analysis. The analysis could include the identification of failure points, challenging assumptions, and development of new solutions — all in a simpler and 'safer' setting where the team can practice the group dynamics which they will use to solve the assigned problem. Icebreakers help establish a positive environment and provide an opportunity for students to get to know one another and the instructor. Both are critical to the retention and success of students. There are a number of benefits of using ice-breakers activities in the classroom. It reduces both student and instructor anxiety prior to introducing the course, fosters in a powerful way both student-student and faculty-student interactions. It creates an environment where the learner is expected to participate and the instructor is willing to listen, actively engage students from the onset. It conveys the message that the instructor cares about getting to know the students and makes it easier for students to form relationships early in the semester so they can work together both in and out of class.

Keywords : actively engages students, facilitation exercise, faculty- student interactions, group dynamics, warm up

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