

Ice Breakers for the first day of class

I recommend adjusting the description of these ice breakers to suit the subject area of your class.

Find someone who...

This is like Bingo, but with people instead of chips. Students are given a piece of paper with a grid of squares. Written inside each square is an item, such as ‘travelled to another continent’ or ‘has a younger sister.’ Students are given a time limit to find classmates who fit the description. Whoever gets ‘Bingo’ first wins. You can even award a prize of your choice, such as a bonus point or two on an upcoming assignment.

Find your pair

In advance of class, prepare word pairs—such as salt and pepper, or ketchup and mustard—on separate pieces of paper. Have students select a piece of paper from the pile, ensuring they don’t share their word with anyone else. Students then walk around the room and ask yes or no questions to their peers to try and figure out what word they have (and helping them get to know more people in your class). Once students have figured out what word they have, they then must find their pair (if they haven’t already) by continuing to ask questions.

Three Ps

Divide students into small groups, and have them share three facts about themselves: something personal, something professional and something peculiar, such as an interesting hobby or habit. The personal fact shouldn’t be anything too personal—it could be something as simple as a country they’ve always wanted to travel to.

Beach ball

This activity requires an inflatable plastic beach ball. Ahead of class, write different get-to-know you questions on each segment of a beach ball using a Sharpie. Arrange students in a circle. For larger classes, you may want to divide the class into smaller groups. The questions could be “what was one of your highlights from the summer?” or “who is your celebrity idol and why?” Toss the ball. Whoever catches it asks the question closest to their left thumb, answers it and then tosses the ball to another student.

Name game

This classic party game can also be applied in the classroom—you can even tweak it to reflect the curriculum. Write down names of famous people (or names related to course material) on sticky notes. Students place a sticky note on their forehead (or they can hold it) and interact with their classmates, asking questions to understand which person they are embodying. This team icebreaker helps students loosen up and informally interact with their classmates. It also helps them learn about a figure who may have previously been unknown to them.