

## **NAME GAMES and ICEBREAKERS**

### **Action Syllables**

With the group standing in a circle, have the participants each choose an action for every syllable of their name. Example: Elvis has 2 syllables, so he does a hip shake with “El” and snaps his fingers for “vis”. Once Elvis has done his action while saying his name, the whole group repeats. After the 2nd person does his/her name, the whole group repeats, then does Elvis’s again. And so on ‘til everyone’s done it.

### **First Names**

Have everyone count the number of letters in their first name. Now ask them to find someone who has the same number of letters. Those two are now partners. If a person can't find someone let him/her use another name s/he is called by (i.e., a someone named Matthew may use the name Matt and then look for someone with 4 letters instead of 7.) If they still can't find someone pair up with a person who has the closest number of letters.

### **Instant ID**

Divide into two teams. Have two people hold a large, thick blanket up like curtain. Have a person from each team stand facing each other with the blanket between, then quickly drop the blanket. First one to correctly say the other person's name earns a point for his team. This game often produces hilarious results.

### **Name Roulette**

To play this game you need to form two equal circles, one inside the other. Set the circles up so one person from each circle is physically standing back to back to one member from the other circle. (I use a spot on the ground to mark the spot for each circle)

These circles both start moving in clockwise motion, ensuring each member of the circle passes through the "spot". Someone who is not in either one of the circles and not facing them, will call stop. At that point the people on each spot must turn around and face each other. The person who names the other first wins that round and the "loser" joins the other circle.

### **Communicating Challenge**

Give everyone a number. They have to arrange themselves in numerical order communicating with each other without speaking or holding up fingers. They make up their own sub-language or sign-language and it often is pretty amusing. Round two. Have people arrange themselves in order of birth or in calendar months.

## **Line Up Game**

Get in groups of five to ten people each. First group that gets itself into order according to the category you name, wins. For example first letter of middle name, shoe size, height, birth date, etc. Just be sure to pick subjects that people can line up easily.

## **Screamer**

In a circle, people look at ground, then on "heads up" look into someone else's eyes. If 2 people are looking at each other, they scream and are both out. Continue to see who is last - hilarious.

## **Shoe Pile**

A good way to have new people meet everybody. Everyone takes off one of their shoes and throw it into a big pile. Then each person picks up a different shoe from the pile and finds the person it belongs to. Works well for large groups.

## **Paper Roll**

Don't tell anybody what is going to happen, but get a roll of toilet paper and tell all those playing not to take too much but to take however much they want. Once all the players have taken the number of sheets they want each has to tell one thing about themselves for every sheet they have.

## **Nod-Wink Toss**

You may want to start the activity with the traditional [name toss](#). You can however, play this as a stand-alone activity.

Once the group has successfully completed the task, instruct them to be completely silent. Tell them that they must now pass a wink or nod to someone, who in turn, passes the nod/wink to a different person.

To pass a wink, a person simply winks at a different person, who 1) winks back at them to acknowledge that he/she "caught" the wink, and then winks at a different person in the circle. And so on...

Variation:

1) Instruct the group to begin passing winks as described above. Then tell the group that you will also have nods, nose-thumbing, tongue sticking-outings (?), and others.

2) Participants do not need to stay in any particular passing order - however, if you receive a nod, you must first give a nod to the person who gave it to you, and then you can pass some other movement

## **Tell a Story**

The leader starts a story that begins with something funny, including his name... and then passes it on to the next person who adds his own character to the story. Continue until the last person finishes. This one is a good way to bring humor into group settings and finding the humor in story telling.

## **INDOORS GAMES**

### **Silly Scrumple**

[Kit: This could be used as an ice breaker if group is allowed to mix and have to swap with each person they meet. Leader periodically then calls on two people to carry out the actions described on the pieces of paper.]

One person is selected as the leader (who remains out of the game) all players then get into a circle and each gets given a piece of paper to write a silly thing to do on with out letting others see what they have written (e.g. Bark like a dog or sing a song). Each player then crumples their paper up so that the contents cannot be seen. On the leaders command players then start to pass the pieces of paper around the circle waiting for the command to stop. When this happens two people are chosen to carry out the instructions on the pieces of paper they have, without laughing. Those who laugh are out. Repeat until only two people left.

### **Catch the Ball, Head the Ball**

Arrange all participants in a circle. To start off - pass the ball to each one in turn with instructions as you throw the ball to them. **They have to complete the opposite.** i.e. If told "Head the ball", they have to catch it, and "catch the ball", they have to head it.

Players that get it wrong have to sit down. As the game gathers momentum, start passing to individuals at random until you have a winner.

### **Group Scavenger Hunt**

Have audience break into 3 - 4 groups. Leader calls out different items or activities for the groups to produce. The first group (the entire group does not have to go) to come up to the

front with the item gets a point. Group with the most points at end wins.  
Suggested items and activities:

- Red (or another colour) shoelace - to be removed from the shoe
- Pen with a chewed cap
- Penny or any coin with a certain date
- Paper clip
- Stamp
- Family picture
- Guy wearing red lipstick
- 2 people with their shoelaces tied together
- Gum in the wrapper - MC thanks the person and then eats the gum
- Key chain with at least 8 keys
- Church bulletin
- Book mark
- Store receipt

### **Singing Contest**

Divide the crowd into 3 or 4 groups. Give a topic or theme (such as songs mentioning a colour or a girl's name). Then have each group, in order around the room, loudly sing the appropriate line from the song. No repeats are allowed. Last group left with a song is the winner.

### ***Crash aka: Clump***

Players mingle, constantly moving until the leader shouts out a number. All players must then try to get into groups of that number, any group/s that don't succeed are out. Can be played so that when the music stops players find others who have things in common, such as same shoe size.

### **Find the Leader**

One player goes out of the room. While he is out the others choose a leader and then they all sit in a circle. The leader starts any simple movement; such as patting his stomach, opening and shutting his mouth, waving his hand, and so on. The other circle players copy his movements, changing when he does. The player who has been outside now comes and stands in the centre of the circle and tries to find out which person is the leader. The leader will, of course, not normally change a movement while the centre player is looking in his direction.

## **Gibberish**

Not a quiet game... Play in pairs or as a team, one person chooses a non-sense word or sound and then tries to perform a song or nursery rhyme using only that non-sense word. Partner or other players have to guess. Could perhaps be played as a team game with team members individually being given various songs they have to perform using the non-sense word. If their team fails to guess the song, given to other team to guess. Teams take turns.

## **Remember aka Memory Game**

"Get a tray and put about 20 objects on it. 2 people have to study what is on the tray for 1 minute. they cover the tray and try and guess all 20 objects in 3 minutes. the loser gets a cream pie shoved in their face!!"

Very good game for children of all ages for sharpening the memory! Use 20 different objects... and of course use of the cream pie is optional, but makes it more fun for teenagers and older children. Use whipped cream (or shaving foam) piled onto a paper plate.

## **The Hat Game**

Players don't need to know each other so its a good icebreaker on occasions when there are strangers in your midst. Each player thinks of two things - book or film titles, film stars, pop stars, authors, proverbs - and writes them on two scraps of paper which are folded and thrown into a hat. The players then pair off, and one from each pair picks out a piece of paper from the hat and describes to his or her partner what is written on it, without using a single word that appears on the paper.

The object is to keep talking, to give your partner clues as quickly as possible, and to answer yes or no to questions which he or she fires at you. The quicker your partner guesses the answer, the better, as you then get to pick another piece of paper, and so on until your time limit of one minute is up. If the minute is up before the phrase has been guessed, that piece of paper is thrown back into the hat again, and the next pair then takes its turn. If there are any pieces of paper left in the hat when all the pairs have had their minute, the first pair starts again, but reverses roles. The pair with the most pieces of paper wins.

This is a fast-moving, exhilarating game, and an excellent exercise in precise and succinct description. A version of it is played on the UK TV show "They think its all over." at the end when teams have to guess the sporting personality from the description being given.

## **"Honey do you love me?"**

This game is played by having a group of people sit in a circle and one person in the middle. The person in the middle has to go up to the people in the circle and ask them "Honey do you

love me?." If the person being asked laughs, then they become the person in the middle. If not the person who asked keeps going around asking everyone until they manage to get someone to laugh. (Its funner if you say it in a funny voice or sit on the persons lap).

[ed] If it become too hard to make someone laugh change the rules so that smiling is not allowed either!

## **Hunt the thimble:**

There are several versions of this well known game. Here's two of them:-

1. When all players are out of the room a thimble coin, button or cork is hidden. And not always visible! The person who hid it gives clues as to whether those seeking it are getting closer (hotter) or moving away (colder). The person to find is the next person to hide it.
2. In this version when all players are out of the room the thimble is placed where it can be seen (just) without having to move anything. Players are given no help in finding the thimble and the first person to find it doesn't announce the fact but sits down silently and waits for other finders to follow suit.
3. The moment a player sees the object, they do not say a word but sit down quietly on the floor and start to sing "3 blind mice". Last one to be seated must pay a forfeit.

## **In the Manner of the Word**

This is a game for when everyone is feeling relaxed after a long lunch, and (especially version A) is best suited to extraverts. Don't bully shy people into it - let them be the audience.

A. One person leaves the room and those remaining choose an adverb (eg, madly, shyly, demurely - you can pick simpler ones for children), which the absent person has to guess. On coming back into the room, the guesser can either ask questions which the others have to answer in the manner of the word, or ask any number of them to act out a situation, such as robbing a bank or cleaning your teeth, in the manner of the word,

B. Two people leave the room and think of an adverb, Those remaining have to guess what it is by giving them situations to act in the manner of the word, eg, milking a cow, picking someone up, being refused a drink in a pub (in this version the situations should have two active parts).

Obviously, version B is less inhibiting as you have someone with whom to share the agony. B also tends to be funnier because you can match the situations to the participants.

## **Wait a Minute**

Players have to guess when a minute is up, either by putting their hands up or by sitting down and standing up when they think a minute has passed. Closest person to the minute wins (make sure nobody is looking at their own watch!)

## **Earth, Air, Water, Fire**

Players sit in a ring. One player walks around the inside of the ring with small piece of cloth such a handkerchief or a small ball. When the player walking around reaches a player they want to challenge they throw the ball or piece of cloth into the seated players lap and shout out either "Earth", "Air" or "Water" and then counts out to 5. The seated player has to respond by naming an animal which lives in the appropriate category, e.g. if Water is called out, any animal that lives in water can be stated ('air' includes any bird or animal that can live in the air, etc). A new animal must be thought of each time. Animals cannot be repeated in the game. If the seated player is unable to respond correctly in time they swap places with the player standing. If the player standing is unsuccessful in changing places after a number of attempts they can call "fire". The response is "salamander" by all players and everybody has to get up and move seats. The player left without a seat after the shuffle becomes the next person in the middle.

## **Categories**

Fun, interactive get-to-known activity. Ask a group to organise themselves into smaller groups, based on categories such as favourite colour/food/country/age/languages they speak/colour of their eyes etc. (Leader of the game calls out categories)

## **Hammer or Nail?**

**What to do:** Explain that this activity is meant as an exercise in abstract thinking. "Use your imagination. Think of yourself in non-concrete terms." Ask students which of the two choices best describes them. Give them time to think, then ask them to raise their hands to indicate their choice. "Who is a hammer?... Who is a nail?" Then have them ask others near them why they feel like a hammer or a nail and give them about a minute to discuss their choice.

In one session probably no more than six to ten of these should be done. If the class is very small, students might be asked to walk to one area of the room (nails over here; hammers over there) and talk about why they feel the way they do.

- Hammer or nail
- Racket or ball
- Child or old man
- Picasso or DeVinci

- Jeans or a suit
- Egg white or egg yolk
- Sun or moon
- Cube or ball
- Present or future
- Rock group or string quartet
- Yes or no
- Mountain or valley
- Physical or mental
- Pencil or ball point pen
- Teacher or student
- Question or answer
- Leather jacket or Harris tweed
- Black or white
- Leaf or wind
- Pencil or eraser
- Earthquake or typhoon
- Tortoise or hare
- City or country
- Dictionary or novel
- Pen or pencil
- Agape or Eros
- Cat or mouse
- TV or Radio
- Present or Future

## **Heads Down, Thumbs Up**

(Good for ending a session.)

A slightly more complex version of this is "[Mafia](#)"

3 or 4 players are selected and stand to one side, all other players sit quietly on the floor or on chairs. On the command "Heads Down, Thumbs up" those sitting have to put their heads down, close their eyes and put their fists by the side of their heads with their thumbs sticking out. When everybody has complied the 3 or 4 players previously chosen walk as quietly as possible around the group and choose one person each by touching/gently gripping the persons thumbs. When a player is touched on their thumb they fold them into their fists indicating that they have already been selected. Players who are caught keeping their eyes open or peeping during the game may not be selected.

When of those walking has selected a player they go back to standing in a line up. The leader then calls "Heads up" and all players sitting can look up. Those players who were touched put their hands up to indicate they were chosen and try to guess which of those standing touched them. If they are right they swap places.

HINT: Ask players not to announce or indicate who was right or wrong until everybody has had a guess, to give everybody an equal chance in guessing.



## **Mafia**

Here is a game which I learnt about a year ago and my youth group love. It is called Mafia and is a logic game but quite active and fun. It is quite long to explain and involved but once you get the hang of it is fantastic. You might need to play it a couple of times before you really get into it!"

There are four different characters in the Game.

- The Civilians,
- The Mafia,
- A Medic and
- A Detective.

The characters are assigned to the students by giving them a playing card, the picture on the card dictates what identity they possess throughout the game.

Number Card = A Civilian

Jack = Member of the Mafia

King = Medic

Ace = Detective

Before you start you have to work out how many people are there and adjust a deck of card so that there is one card per person. If you have a large group (20+) then you should have 4 members of the Mafia, if you have less than that you should have 2 or 3 members. The pack should then consist of 1 King, 1 Ace, 2-4 Jacks and the rest normal number cards.

You also need one person to be the master of the game, most likely yourself.

The object of the game: To catch all the Mafia!

You start off with everyone in a circle and deal out the cards secretly to each member of the group. They must keep their identity secret from everyone around them.

The game is played in four turns: Universal Round, Mafia Round, Detective Round and Medic Round. Once you have been through all the four different rounds, you restart at the Universal Round.

The Universal round:

All players converse with each other normally but trying to keep their true identity a secret. After a short time, 1-2 minutes you must quiet the group down and get them to decide on one person who they think is a member of the Mafia, you must then walk around the room and place your hand on each persons shoulder as you go round. Anyone who thinks that that person is a member of the Mafia must raise their hand. Each person can only vote once. The person with the most votes gets a short time to defend themselves, you then revote that person, if they still have a majority vote they are jailed and have to show the group their card. They then move away from the group and are out of the game. That is the end of the Universal Round, everyone must shut their eyes now and peeking is punishable by death!!

The Mafia Round:

You then say 'Mafia only open your eyes'. The members of the mafia open their eyes and

silently they nominate one member of the group to be assassinated. Once you are sure of their decision you get them to close their eyes and that is the end of the Mafia round.

#### The Detective Round:

Then you say 'Detective only open your eyes'. They then get to silently choose one member of the group and you can, silently, tell them if they are or are not a member of the mafia by shaking or nodding your head. They then close their eyes.

#### The Medic Round:

Then you say 'Medic only open your eyes'. They then get to silently choose one member of the group. If they have chosen the person who the Mafia has chosen that person is saved from death. The medic closes their eyes and that is the end of that round.

After the Medic closes their eyes, you then say 'everyone open your eyes' and if the Medic has not saved the Mafia target you then tell that person that they have been killed, if the Medic has saved the person, then you say 'No-one was killed, the Medic was successful' or words to that effect.

You continue on with the game back at the beginning until all the Mafia have been caught or there are only 2 or 3 people left and the Mafia outnumber the Civilians and there is no way of the Civilians winning. If the Detective and/or the Medic get killed then you miss out their turns from the sequence.

There is only one exception to the sequence of the rounds. Right at the start, on the first Universal turn, no-one gets voted to be killed. But they get to chat for a couple of minutes, this is because some people are just really bad at hiding their identities and it is obvious who they are.

#### Tips...

The Detective has some tactics which will help him/her. If on the Detective Round they choose a person sitting next to them the master will tell them if they are or they are not Mafia. They then know for sure that if they are not Mafia they can trust them. On the next Universal turn, they can say to that person "I know you are not Mafia because I am the Detective and I have checked you out, don't tell anyone else until I have checked them out." The Detective continues checking people's identity moving away from them around the circle until they find someone who is Mafia, by that time you have a good majority of people who can vote to jail them.

By watching how people vote, you can build up an idea of that player's identity, if you see them voting for the same person as two or three other people every time there is a good chance that they are the Mafia and are trying to work with each other to reduce the number of civilians.

You can play the game without the Medic, which speeds the game up a bit. Without the Medic you can get through the game rounds quicker and also you can not bring anyone back from the 'brink'!!

This game is definitely for an older group, but I have found that if there are a couple of younger students in the group, they do make it a bit more fun as it can get a bit tense at times. Also my advise is to have some other activity going on in another room or somewhere in the

background for those people who are murdered or in jail early on in the game as each game can take a while.