



Classroom/School Activities

Activities to help learn everybody's names

1. Nametags - This seems so simple (and almost silly to include) but using name tags is a great way to help people learn and remember other people's names. Some people have a much harder time recalling names and matching names to faces than others so it's best to use them for all group sessions not just the first one. Sometimes people are too intimidated to spontaneously interact with others in a group simply because they can't recall a name. Nametags are a simple way to eliminate this barrier from your group. You could even have the group decorate their own more "permanent" type name badges.
2. Ball roll - The group sits in a circle and has a ball. The first person rolls the ball to any member of the group, saying "I roll the ball to ____ (the name of the person they are rolling it to). The person receiving the ball says "I got the ball from ____ (name of person who rolled it). The ball is then rolled to another person in the circle with the same wording. Play continues until everyone has had a chance to send and receive the ball. Alternately play can continue longer with the rule that each time you receive the ball have to send it to someone whom you didn't before. This is a great activity for a group to learn each other's names.
3. I'm going to the ____ (name any fun place) - The first person begins by saying "I'm going to the beach (or name other fun place) and I will bring ____ (names person to their left). The next person on the right says "I'm going to the beach and I will bring ____ (names the two people to their left). This continues around the circle until the last person has to "bring" everyone and name them all. You can use nametags or not - depending on the age and adventurousness of the group!



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Activities to help people get to know each other better

1. Have you ever? – Draw two lines (or tape two lines) on the floor. Have all members of your group stand behind one line (facing the other line). Beginning each sentence with “have you ever” state different actions/activities/experiences that might relate to some members of your group. For example you might say “have you ever traveled outside the country?”, “have you ever met anyone famous”, “have you ever camped out in a tent” etc. Any member, for whom the statement is true, crosses to the other line. If the group is small enough, there may be time for those who cross the line to tell a bit about their experience. It may be surprising to see who has had these experiences, and to discover that you have things in common with people that you weren’t aware of.
(Credit: adapted from “Challenge Day” curriculum www.challengeday.org)
2. About me - Have each member of your group fill out a simple 10 question “about me” survey. Questions should be geared toward gathering information (both common and unique) about that person. Sample questions include: “how many siblings do you have?”, “what do you want to be when you grow up”, “I am really good at _____”. Each day/week post one of the surveys (with the name hidden). See if the others can guess who the survey belongs to.
(Credit: Project Cornerstone)
3. Two truths and a lie - This is a classic “get to know each other activity”. Each person in turn tells three facts about themselves, 2 of which are true and one which isn’t. The other members of the group have to try to decide which one is not true.
4. One important Fact - Each member of the group stands up, states their name and gives one fact about him/herself. The group leader can choose the fact for the group prior to starting (such as favorite food, number of siblings etc) or each person can give one of their own. The game can continue for several rounds, with a new fact given each time.
5. Please stand up - In this activity, all members of the group are sitting. The group leader reads a fact and each group member (for whom that statement/fact is true) stands up. For example the leader might say “I have more than 5 siblings” and each person who has more than 5 siblings would stand.

6. TP (Tell us about yourself Please) - As the group arrives hand members a roll of TP and ask them to tear off as many squares as they wish. (if you have a large group or limited time you can limit the amount i.e. 1-3 pieces). The trick is you don't say why they are doing this or whether it is better to take more or less TP. Once everyone has their TP gather the group in a circle. Go around the circle and ask each person to tell about themselves, as many facts as they have squares of TP!

Activities to promote kindness to others

1. Have all members of your group sit in a circle. One person holds the end of a ball of yarn and chooses someone else in the circle to roll it to. Before rolling that person the yarn, they have to say one nice (true) thing about that person. Once the other person receives the yarn, they hold on to their part and roll it to another person (after giving a compliment). Eventually as the yarn is rolled from person to person, different people are complimenting each other and you end up with a "web" of people speaking kindly about each other. It is a good visual to show how acts of kindness can connect us to each other.
(Credit: adapted from lessonplanspage.com, Dawn Pawloski)
2. Each member of the group gets a piece of paper that has been pre-drawn with lines dividing it into (whatever number you choose) equal sections, and writes their name on the top section. They then pass the paper on to the person sitting to their right. That person writes one nice thing (in the next section) about the person whose name is on the top. They then fold over the paper (fan style) so only the original name is visible (but not the compliment). The paper is again passed to the person on the left who also writes something nice about the person whose name is on top. The activity continues in this manner until the papers are filled. At that point, papers are distributed to the person whose name is at the top. Once unfolded you have a paper with lots of nice things that your classmates think about you.



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3. Pass it on - In this activity the group leader starts by doing a favor or act of kindness for one member of the group. This can be something very small such as picking up something they've dropped etc. After the favor has been done, the group leader whispers "pass it on" to the person he/she did the favor to. That person then does a favor/act of kindness to another person in the group. This continues for a preset period of time (day, week etc) with each person reminding the next to "pass it on." At the end of the time period gather the group together for a discussion of all of the acts of kindness that were passed through the group. Talking about them and listing them may also give others in the group ideas for next time.
4. About me poster - Each person is given a large poster board and asked to write their name and either draw a picture of themselves or somehow illustrate themselves on the poster (pictures of their favorite things etc). Then each person tells about their posters so others in the group get to know a bit more about each person. Then group members pass their posters on to other members of the group and each person writes or illustrates something they like about a person onto that person's poster. This can be done over several days so by the end everyone gets their own poster back, covered with "compliments". Talk about how it feels when someone says something nice to you, and when you say something nice to someone else. What types of reactions do you usually get? Are the reactions different when it is someone you don't know or don't know well?

Activities to build/expand a sense of community

1. Perform a community service activity - This could be as small as spending a few hours cleaning up a public space or collecting canned goods for a food shelter. Or you can work together with your group to plan a larger scale project. Volunteering in the community, even in a small way, strengthens your connection to the community.
2. Invite or include a group of people you do not ordinarily interact with to come to an event or join you in a project. For example, if you are putting on a play or reading stories you've written; why not invite a group of local seniors or preschoolers to come? Perhaps your group/class is working on a project. Inviting collaboration with another group (kids from an older or younger class or other community organization for example) can give you a different perspective and new ideas, and further make connections within the community.



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3. Create a new student welcome committee - Recruit students to volunteer to be mentors for new students. The mentor would help the new student feel more at home in group and do things such as sitting with the new student at lunch, partnering on a project, introducing the student to other classmates or even attend an after school event together. The more volunteers the better as you will have more opportunities to better match up personalities and interests when new students arrive. It may help to have each volunteer complete an "All about Me" questionnaire (student interests etc) to help in the match process. It would also be great to present the new student with a "welcome packet" with information about your class or school (student names/phone numbers, map, coupon for lunchroom snack, about me questionnaire, school pencil/notebook, etc). (Credit: Project Cornerstone)

Activities to encourage collaboration

1. Kid's resume – Have each member in your group create a "resume" for themselves. These resumes indicate what skills that person has that might be helpful to another member of the group. This will vary greatly by age of the group and can be used from young children through adults. Resumes can be written in the form of "I am able to help ____". For example someone might say "I am able to help if you are stuck on a math problem" or "I am able to help you organize a notebook". This also works great when encouraging older students to interact with younger students.
2. Build a story – This is an activity that can be done individually or with different groups of people. One person (or group) starts a story. Depending on the age/ability of your members the beginning can be a sentence "Once upon a time there was a little boy who loved to eat hot dogs", or it can be a whole paragraph. Once the story is started, it is passed to another person (or group) who writes the next part of the story. The story continues until it gets back to the original person/group who now writes the ending. The groups can even be entire classes who start a story and pass it from class to class and even from grade to grade.

3. Man-made machines - In this class cooperation game one person starts the "machine" by standing in the middle of the group, making a repeated movement and noise to go with it. For example the person can bend down and pop up making a "*boing*" noise. The idea is to act like some part of a complex machine. The next person in the group adds onto the machine by making a movement that somehow connects to the first person (for example, pushing their head down with an arm acting as a lever). Members of the group can join at their will, anytime they think of a way to engage themselves in the cooperative machine. Activity continues until all members of the group are part of the machine.
4. Thunderstorm - This activity works best with a larger group of people. Divide into 4 groups. The first group collectively makes a wind noise by rubbing their hands back and forth (as if trying to get warm). After a minute of wind noise, add the second group who will be lightly tapping their fingers on a hard surface such as the floor or chair (as if typing). This is the first gentle rain. Then add the third group who will make heavy rain sound by rapidly drumming their fingers on a hard surface. Finally add the last group who will make thunder by stamping their feet on the floor every minute or so at your direction. Once the storm is built; you can slowly let it fade like a real storm. First stop the thunder, next the heavy rain, then the light rain and finally the wind.

Activities to recognize people who are making a difference

1. Outstanding Up-Stander – Create an "outstanding up-stander" certificate. Encourage group members to fill one out if they have been helped in some way by another member of the group. It could be that someone stood up for them, supported them when they were alone or helped them without being asked. Have the blank certificates in a place where group members can get them without having to ask (they may want to submit them anonymously). The only information that needs to be on the certificate is the name of the "outstanding up-stander" and a space for a brief description of what they did. The certificates can be posted or simply given to the member who was recognized.
(Credit: Project Cornerstone)



2. Warm fuzzies – Warm fuzzies can go by a variety of names and take a variety of shapes. You can design one appropriate for your group. You will need 2-3 for your group depending on the group size. The original “warm fuzzies” were simply pompoms made from yarn tied at the end of a yarn “necklace”. Warm fuzzies are first given out by the group leader to 2-3 members of the group who have shown a kindness, helped a friend, etc. Once all of the fuzzies are given out the group members then become responsible for passing them on. They can pass them on to another member of the group for any number of reasons: they witnessed that person doing a good deed that person helped them in some way, or they see someone who just looks like they need a “pick me up”. Group members can keep the warm fuzzy for as long as necessary but are encouraged to have it pass several times in one day. This encourages group members to be on the lookout for positive behavior in their peers. (Credit: my childhood camp counselors!)