



Practical Resources for Community Groups

## CHECKLIST 40

### Using Icebreakers in Group Meetings

*Make sure you...*

- Know the purpose of the activity. Sometimes you want a game or activity to break the ice and get people talking, but there are plenty of other reasons to use a group activity as well. Perhaps you want to give people an energy boost at the end of a long session or maybe you want to illustrate a specific point. The purpose could be as simple as filling in time or having a laugh. When you're clear about the purpose, it's easier to make decisions about which activity to use.
- Consider how many people will be in attendance. Some activities work perfectly with small groups but if you try to do it with large numbers the whole thing falls apart. The opposite is also true.
- Choose activities relative to the space you have available. If you are asking people to move around, make sure there is plenty of space for them to do so without having to move and reset furniture.
- Are aware of people's comfort zones. While games and activities are often used to break the ice, not everyone is comfortable making a fool of themselves in front of people they don't know. Likewise, be considerate of how much personal information you ask them to share. You don't always have to break the ice with a sledge hammer – there are activities that will gently melt the ice away as well.
- Consider any special needs that participants may have. Team games and activities are supposed to be for the *whole* team, so make sure they are designed so that all members can take part.
- Are culturally sensitive. Offending someone right at the start of your meeting is hardly a useful way to begin, so be aware of any cultural issues in choosing your activity. This is particularly important if you are using activities which require physical contact.
- Think about how you will introduce your activity. Some people have a real dislike of group activities, especially if they don't understand the reasoning behind it. Think of how you will introduce and wrap up the activity so it ties into the rest of your event.
- Go over the activity several times so you are completely comfortable with how it will work in a group situation. Make sure you have all the necessary props prepared ahead of time and check that they all work.
- Give your team clear instructions on how the game will work and if appropriate, write the instructions on the whiteboard for them to refer back to. Always have a Plan B. Sometimes it's not until you are at the meeting that you realise a particular activity will not work well with the personalities in the room.

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