

# ICEBREAKER ACTIVITIES

## INTRODUCTION

Establishing a welcoming classroom in the online environment allows students to settle in and adjust to online learning. In collaborative settings, there is a unique sharing of ideas and perspectives among students. There is a freedom to express ideas, create new products, share inventions, and, in general, make significant learning contributions in the classroom. Incorporating icebreaker activities into the first week of an online course helps establish a positive tone and social climate for the course.

## FIVE ICEBREAKER ACTIVITIES TO USE IN YOUR COURSE

Social icebreaker activities set the stage for many later course activities. Many of the activities suggested here use online discussion forums. In such forums, students and instructors can make introductions, form relationships, share personal and professional information and experiences, and generally learn more about each other. The activities below are just a sampling of icebreaker ideas. Use your imagination to expand on these or add them to a list you've already started.

### 1. Personal Introductions

Many online instructors include a discussion forum for students to introduce themselves at the beginning of a course. This introductory activity often prompts students with specific questions that are helpful to direct the conversation and start to build a classroom community. For instance, consider asking students to share their professional interests, goals for the course, or jobs they've held that relate to the course or field. You can also ask about personal interests like hobbies or favorite places to visit or vacation. Make sure to introduce yourself as well and take note of the things that come up in the discussion. You might decide to use this information later in the course (such as in another discussion) to build rapport with your students.

### 2. Eight Nouns

In this activity, ask students to post eight nouns that best describe themselves to a discussion forum. Everyone should also describe why each particular noun they selected represents who they are. These descriptions can be short or long depending on your preference.

### 3. Five Pictures

This is a slight variation on the above activity. In this activity, students create a collage of five pictures or images that best describe themselves. These can be pictures they have already taken or images from other sources. Make sure that students cite the sources for the images they choose if they aren't their own. Students should also describe how the pictures represent who they are.

### 4. Two Truths and One Lie

This activity is fun but can sometimes be challenging. Students must post two truths about themselves and one statement that is a lie. Fellow class members must attempt to determine which piece of given information is false. They can guess this after asking the individual questions or exploring other information, as this might be used in combination with another activity.

## Tips for Using Icebreakers

- Use them during the first week of your course.
- Be the first to participate.
- Refer back to the information students provided in the icebreaker

## 5. An Online Cafe

You can create an online cafe as a social space for students to “hang out” informally. In an online cafe, students can post questions or their thoughts on topics of interest to them, pertinent items in the news, career and academic resources, and so on. The online cafe should be a safe haven that operates both within and outside the course. It’s also a place for students to get to know their peers (and perhaps the instructor) without worrying about how their comments relate to topics discussed in the course. This activity helps personalize the course and establish a learner-centered course atmosphere.

## EXAMPLE

Here is an example of how to begin the five-pictures icebreaker activity:



## Icebreaker Discussion

### Instructions

Let’s get to know each other better.

1. Create a single-page document or graphic (.gif, .jpeg, or .png) that contains five still (not animated) images that visually describe yourself to us. Your description must also contain an explanation of each image’s source. If the images are not your own, you need to state the source of the images. Any program capable of inserting and editing graphics may be used. In the past, students have created their assignments in programs such as Adobe Photoshop, Microsoft Word or PowerPoint, Google Photos, Canva, or another photo application.
2. Post your file to the Module 1 Icebreaker discussion area as an attachment to a message. The message’s subject should be “Introducing [First Name Last Name]” (e.g., “Introducing Jane Smith”).
3. Read at least two other students’ posts and respond to them.

### Purpose

- Students provide background information and emails for instructors and other participants.
- Students practice searching the Web for images and downloading them.
- Students practice inserting images into a document.
- Students cite references or images used that are not their own.
- Students become acquainted with posting discussion messages and responding to other students’ messages.

### Assessment

This activity is worth up to 35 points. A rubric will be used to assess this activity. Please review the rubric to understand the performance levels expected.

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCE

- [Adding Some TEC-VARIETY: 100+ Activities for Motivating and Retaining Learners Online](#) by Open World Books