



Nickel City Housing Cooperative Vibes Activities

Compiled by Erin Hancock in August 2016

NCHC Vibes Activities Menu

Each activity contains an approximate time based on a group of 10, as well as the themes (tags) and any materials needed (these details will show right under the activity title).

Sections/themes

Communications4

Numerical order – No peeking (4)

Three-way communication (4)

Blindfolded polygon (5)

Communicating strengths (5)

What’s in your head? Madlibs (5)

Human knot (5)

Where were you? (6)

Count to 10 as a group (6)

Shutdowns (6)

Visual puns and puzzles (8)

Relaxation and stress management.....10

Meditation (10)

Body scan meditation (10)

Massage circle (11)

Creating a symbol of relaxation (11)

Take a load off (11)

Tai chi or yoga session (11)

Music sessions (12)

Sensations (12)

Stretch and walk (12)

Simple aromatherapy (12)

Teambuilding, sharing and deeper connection.....13

Two truths and a lie (13)

Marooned (13)

Small group discussions (13)	
Me too (15)	
Common circles (15)	
Would you rather? (15)	
Masks (16)	
Interview (16)	
7 Circles (16)	
Blanket flip (17)	
Fun	17
Special supper (17)	
Improv game: Questions only (17)	
Draft dictionary (18)	
Animal roundup (18)	
Rainstorm (18)	
Human machines (18)	
Race to remember (19)	
Tall stories (19)	
Word link (19)	
Object stories (19)	
Skill Sharing	20
Making something (group projects)	20
Easy activities or excursions	21
Questions to start a meeting (ice breakers)	21

Note on accessibility

If you have members of your group with special needs, leave more time for activities, consider bringing in support for interpretation, simplify where possible to make it as accessible as you can for everyone to participate fully. The activities that are best suited for participation by someone with a hearing impairment are: Communicating strengths, Human knot, Where were you?, Massage circle, Tai chi or yoga session, Sensations, Stretch and walk, Simple aromatherapy, Would you rather?, Masks, Interview, Blanket flip, many of the group activities and excursion activities.

Communications

Numerical order – No peeking

20 minutes | Communications, challenge, teamwork | Blindfolds (strips of fabric) for everyone playing

Tell the group they have a challenge to do together. Be in a large space without many obstacles or things to hit or trip on.

Set the rules of the game:

- a) There is no talking
- b) You must keep your blindfolds on at all times
- c) Each of you will have a number whispered into your ear
- d) The goal is for the group to arrange itself in numerical order without speaking and without the use of sight

Blindfold all the participants. Whisper a number to each of them (do not allow other participants to hear). The number should be random (not just 1-12, etc). After whispering the number, move the participant to a random location in the space by gently holding their shoulders or hands. Once every participant has a number, announce they should begin. Make sure all participants are safe throughout the exercise. Once they seem to be in a line, ask them to number off and see if they achieved the goal.

Debrief Questions (back in the circle, after removing their blindfolds):

- What was the most difficult aspect of this exercise?
 - Did you have a sense of working together? Why/why not?
 - How frustrating was it when you could not talk?
 - What was necessary in order for you to be successful?
 - How important is good communication in groups?
 - How does this activity relate to our group?
- (adapted from the Lion's Club)

Three-way communication

30 minutes | Communication, discussion | Flip chart, markers, a few bandanas, clipboards, pen and paper

Purpose: Discussing pros and cons of different communication methods and styles.

1. Preface the game with a brief discussion about the various ways in which people communicate with their friends, professors, colleagues, etc. Tell them that in this activity, they will discuss and determine key aspects, pros/cons and guidelines for a specific type of communication. Three different communication methods will be explored: Face to face, telephone, and e-mail.
2. Divide the group members into three groups. The first group represents the face to face communication environment. These people do not have any controls on their communication. They should sit in one area of the room and use pen and paper to write their findings during the activity.
3. The second group represents the telephone environment. These group members should be blindfolded in order to replicate the telephone environment (in which they cannot see the person they're talking to). They should sit together in one area of the room. One person will act as the scribe for the group's findings and will not wear a blindfold.
4. The third group represents the e-mail environment. These participants should sit back to back and may not speak. They should each have paper, pens, and clipboards. In order to communicate, they must write notes and pass them to one another.
5. Give them about 7 minutes and then ask each group member to make its report. (Participants can now be free of the blindfolds, clipboards, and other constraints).

6. Ask the group what it was like to be relegated to a particular style. Ask them what they noticed in terms of pros and cons of each. Capture the findings and guidelines on a flip chart.

(Deming, V.(2004). The Big Book of Leadership Games. New York, NY: McGraw-Hill. P.115-116)

Blindfolded polygon

10-25 minutes | Communication, teamwork, movement | Rope, blindfolds for everyone

Ask the participants to form a circle and put on their blindfolds. Give them a rope. Ask each person to grab hold of the rope, and then, as a group, to form a perfect square. When they believe the task is accomplished, they are to stand in position and remove the blindfolds. Using the same procedure, ask them to form any geometric shape you think is possible with the group like a circle, rectangle, triangle or even a "Z". Debrief by asking them what worked and didn't work about how they took on the task and how they communicated. As well, ask how they could've done it better. (Minot State University)

Communicating strengths

25 minutes | Caring, self-esteem, sharing, acknowledgement | A piece of paper and pen for everyone

Distribute a piece of paper to everyone and have them write their name at the top and then flip over and stack in the middle of the table. Have everyone grab a piece of paper and write something they see as a strength in the person named at the top. When they're ready, they can pass it right flipped over. Pause the game for a minute if people need time to catch up. Once everyone has written on everyone else's, have everyone flip the page over face down in the center again. Pick up the stack and hand it out to the person. They can read it to themselves and then ask them how the exercise was or if they saw any themes or anything on their page that stood out to them. This is a feel good exercise and often encourages positive vibes between group members.

What's in your head? Madlibs

10-30 minutes | Communication, playful, fun, creativity | Paper and pens for everyone

Go around the table and have each person one by one say the beginning of a sentence and then have everyone else write down how they would finish the sentence. When everyone has finished writing, have them share it one by one. This should get a laugh. Go around the table so everyone has the chance to start a sentence or until you run out of time.

Human Knot

15-25 minutes | Communication, movement, teamwork | 2 blindfolds, space to move around

Participants should stand shoulder to shoulder in a circle. Each person should put their right hand into the middle of the circle and join hands with someone across the circle (and not directly to their right or left). Each person then places their left hand into the circle and joins hands with a different person, and not the person directly to their left or right.

When the participants have their hands tangled, inform them they need to be untangled without ever breaking grip with the group. (Note that there are three possible solutions: a circle, two interlocking circles, or two circles with a knot in it.) Participants should not make sudden or large movements since they're all connected. You can invite two people to be blindfolded at the beginning for the activity. Pay attention to the group and throughout you can change the rules such as asking the loudest leader in the group to be silent or removing the blindfold.

Debrief questions:

Was this challenging? Why? Or why not?

How did the group approach this task? What was done effectively? What could have been done more effectively?

What role did you personally take in this exercise?

For those who were facing out, and couldn't see what was happening, how did you feel?

How could each of you have increased participation in this activity?

How can you relate your co-op experience to this activity?

(Adapted from Minot State University)

Where were you?

15-20 minutes | Communication, sharing | Nothing special needed

Pick a year or a date before the meeting and give each person a chance to tell where they were and what they were doing on that date (summer '96, January '07, etc.). (Minot State University)

Count to 10 as a group

10 minutes | Communication, teamwork, challenge | Nothing special is needed

Have the group come together into one group, side by side with each other. When everyone is together, tell them the game is to count to ten as a group. But the catch is that each person is only allowed to say one number. If two people speak at the same time you must start over. The same person cannot start the exercise twice in a row. To make it even more challenging, have the group members close their eyes. (Minot State University)

Shutdowns

20 minutes | Communication | Print the statements so you can cut them up and hand them out

To emphasize how certain statements can have a negative effect on any discussion or further meaningful communications that may have otherwise followed, this exercise gives the group a chance to experience it in a big way.

1. Introduce the activity as an exercise in communications shutdowns. Explain that a communications shutdown is when someone says something that has the potential for ending any further discussion on the subject. Ask the group for a topic of conversation or offer one (such as what to have for dinner tomorrow or what kind of party to throw) and invite everyone to participate in the discussion. Keep the conversation moving and add in after shutdowns so the whole conversation doesn't stop. Sometimes leave room for silence too for impact.
2. Present a slip or a few (cut from the list below) to each participant and ask that they say the sentence at some time during the discussion.
3. After everyone has got a chance to participate, tell the group we're going to move into discussion now. Encourage people to reflect on these communications shutdowns, asking participants to share their experiences and perceptions of these or similar statements and how they played out in the group discussion. What happened?
4. Highlight particular statements that you as the facilitator may have experienced. Share your experience concerning the negative impact these statements can have on further discussion or consideration of an idea or suggestion. Invite people to share experiences from their lives when these things shut down a conversation.

Communications Shutdowns (print in large font so you can cut them up and distribute them)

1. Don't be ridiculous.
2. It'll cost too much.
3. That's not my responsibility.
4. We don't have time.
5. We've never done that before.
6. That's not the way we do things around here.
7. If it ain't broke, don't fix it.
8. We're not ready for that.
9. You can't teach an old dog new tricks.
10. It will never sell.
11. We will become the laughing stock of the entire company.
12. We tried that before and it didn't work.
13. It simply can't be done.
14. It's too radical of a change.
15. That will make our current equipment obsolete.
16. It's not really our problem.
17. Let's get back to reality.
18. Let's form a committee to decide.
19. I need to go over the numbers again.
20. It's not in our budget.
21. We have done alright without it all this time.
22. It won't work here.
23. Okay, but if it doesn't work, you're the one who's going to get the blame.
24. I don't personally agree, but if you insist.
25. Are you crazy?

(Adapted from Peter R. Garber, 50 Communications Activities, Icebreakers, and Exercises)

Visual puns and puzzles

20 minutes | Communications, teamwork, challenge | Printout of visual puns page for each group, papers and pens

1. Divide the group into pairs or small groups (also possible to do it 1 per person). Distribute a copy of the below visuals to each participant or group depending on how you've set it up.
2. Instruct participants that they are to solve as many of the 12 picture puzzles as they can.
3. After 10 minutes, ask participants to share the answers they came up with for each picture puzzle.

The correct answers are:

1. Falling temperatures
2. Mixed wedding
3. Burning the candle at both ends
4. Last chance
5. Capital punishment
6. Giant steps
7. Fat cat
8. Repeat
9. In box or boxed in
10. Dancing with the stars
11. Lost in space
12. Gunpoint

Debrief: Ask participants which puzzles gave them the most difficulty and why. Explain that as in most of our communications, you need to keep an open and creative frame of mind to really understand the messages we receive. (Adapted from Peter R. Garber, 50 Communications Activities, Icebreakers, and Exercises)

<p>1.</p> <p>65 degrees 48 degrees 24 degrees 15 degrees 9 degrees 3 degrees 0 degrees</p>	<p>2.</p> <p>Wednignd</p>	<p>3.</p> <p>BurningCandleBurning</p>
<p>4.</p> <p>chance, chance chance, chance</p> <p>chance</p>	<p>5.</p> <p>PUNISHMENT</p>	<p>6.</p> <p>Steps</p>
<p>7.</p> <p>Cat</p>	<p>8.</p> <p>Pete Pete Pete Pete</p>	<p>9.</p> <p>In</p>
<p>10.</p> <p>Stars Stars Stars</p> <p>Stars Stars Stars</p> <p>Dancing</p> <p>Stars Stars Stars Stars</p>	<p>11.</p> <p>Spalostce</p>	<p>12.</p> <p>Gun •</p>

Relaxation and stress management

Meditation

5-10 minutes | Relaxation | Nothing special needed or else a computer and speakers if desired

Invite participants to sit comfortably. Invite them to close their eyes if they would like or hold a soft gaze. Let them know how long the meditation will be. Start by asking them to simply follow their breath and whenever their mind goes in a different direction, simply return to the breath when they notice. There is no wrong way to do this. The practice is not having a clear head but rather the ability to refocus when you get distracted. Say that when they feel frustrated or think that something should be different, simply acknowledge they are now distracted from the breath and simply return to the breath. You can also find a recording on youtube for the length that you want to make it different.

Body scan meditation

10 minutes | Relaxation, de-stress, silence | Have enough room for everyone to lay down

A body scan is similar to progressive muscle relaxation except instead of tensing and relaxing muscles you simply focus on the sensations in each part of your body.

Instructions to participants:

Lie on your back, legs uncrossed, arms relaxed at your sides, eyes open or closed. Focus on your breathing, allowing your stomach to rise as you inhale and fall as you exhale. Breathe deeply for about two minutes, until you start to feel comfortable and relaxed.

Turn your focus to the toes of your right foot. Notice any sensations you feel while continuing to also focus on your breathing. Imagine each deep breath flowing to your toes. Remain focused on this area for one to two minutes.

Move your focus to the sole of your right foot. Tune in to any sensations you feel in that part of your body and imagine each breath flowing from the sole of your foot. After one or two minutes, move your focus to your right ankle and repeat. Move to your calf, knee, thigh, hip, and then repeat the sequence for your left leg. From there, move up the torso, through the lower back and abdomen, the upper back and chest, and the shoulders. Pay close attention to any area of the body that causes you pain or discomfort.

Move your focus to the fingers on your right hand and then move up to the wrist, forearm, elbow, upper arm, and shoulder. Repeat for your left arm. Then move through the neck and throat, and finally all the regions of your face, the back of the head, and the top of the head. Pay close attention to your jaw, chin, lips, tongue, nose, cheeks, eyes, forehead, temples and scalp. When you reach the very top of your head, let your breath reach out beyond your body and imagine hovering above yourself.

After completing the body scan, relax for a while in silence and stillness, noting how your body feels. Then open your eyes slowly. Take a moment to stretch, if necessary. (<http://www.helpguide.org/articles/stress/relaxation-techniques-for-stress-relief.htm>)

Massage circle

5-10 minutes | Relaxation, self-care, touching | Enough space for everyone to sit in a circle on the floor

Have the group form a circle and face one direction. Instruct each person to place their hands on the shoulders of the person in front of them. Each person then gives the person in front of them a shoulder massage. Feedback to the massage giver (such as "that's perfect", "You can press harder", etc.) is encouraged. After a few minutes, the group does a turn around so that they are now massaging the shoulders of the person who just gave them a massage.

(<http://www.recreationtherapy.com/tx/txwpq.htm>)

Creating a symbol of relaxation

5 minutes | Relaxation, de-stress | Nothing special needed

As you are practicing relaxation in a group setting, invite participants to sit comfortably and choose an image that conveys peace, comfort, or mental and physical letting go. Instructions: This image can be anything you choose. You may think of the seashore, or a favorite spot in nature. It may be an image like the sun, a rope untwisting, ice melting, or a soothing color. It may be the face of a pet or of someone you love. Invite them to conjure up the experience of this symbol for a few minutes thinking of every sense of the body (smell, sight, taste, touch, sound).

Remind them that every time you do relaxation, call up that image as you are becoming relaxed. Allow the symbol to grow and fill your awareness. Let all of the qualities of that symbol come to mind, and imagine them moving through your body on the rhythm of your breath. As you practice this more, you will be able to close your eyes anywhere and relax quickly by calling up your symbol and filling your awareness with it for a few minutes. (http://www.traumacenter.org/resources/pdf_files/relaxation_exercises.pdf)

Take a load off

15 minutes | De-stress, organization, getting help | Paper and pens for everyone

Hand out a piece of paper and pen to each person. This works best when sitting around a big table. Invite everyone to draw a line down the center of their page top to bottom, dividing the page in two. Then invite them to write in a list down the left column of all of the things they want to do or have on their mind. Give a few minutes for this. Then invite them to write in the right column any way they could get help with that whether it be to ask someone for help or the like. If someone gets stuck, tell them to put a star by that item. After a few more minutes, tell the group we're going to mastermind. Have someone who was stuck with an idea or problem state the problem specifically to the group. On the clock for 2 minutes, have the group generate solutions without any discussion or debate, only throwing out ideas. Have the person with the problem write down the ideas they heard as they go on the back of their sheet. If there is time, mastermind someone else's problem too as a group. When you break, invite people in the group to take one action from their sheet so they can start building a solution.

Tai chi or yoga session

10 minutes – 1 hour | Relaxation, movement | Screen and computer, video loaded

Browse yoga and tai chi videos on youtube and select one based on the time you have allotted for your activity. Consider doing something accessible to everyone in the group. Invite people to bring mats or blankets. Also invite them to sit or lay whenever they wish throughout if they don't choose to do the particular movement.

Music session

20 minutes | Relaxation, music | Computer, speakers, slips of paper and pens

Introduce to the group this is an opportunity to relax, listen to music and just be in the present moment. Hand out slips of paper and have everyone who wants to write down the song and artist of a song that makes them feel relaxed and calm. Find the first one on youtube, invite the group to get comfortable and play the song. At the end invite people to share if they wish about how it was for them, what they felt, what they noticed, a word to describe their current state. Then play the second. Do this for as long as you have one by one and open for brief discussion after each.

Sensations

10 minutes | Relation, touch, physical experience | Items with different textures

Collect a number of things with different textures from around the house and bring it to the table in a box. This could be different kinds of clothing items made of different fabrics, kitchen utensils (nothing sharp), office supplies, etc. Have people choose one item from the box and set it in front of them on the table, sit comfortably, then pick up the item. Invite them to feel the texture of the item, the temperature, the edges. This is a grounding exercise about focus, being present and in one's experience rather than in the head. After a couple of minutes, invite them to place it back in the box and to select something else. Ask them to contrast the experience in their minds. They do not speak throughout the exercise, but you can open for discussion when you're done (after a few items). A variation is to invite people to bring 3 of their favorite objects to the meeting and do the exercise with these objects 1 at a time.

Stretch and walk

10 minutes-1 hour | |Relaxation, exercise, movement, outdoors | Outdoor clothes (individuals bring their own)

Let people know ahead of time you'll be going outside. When you gather, invite people to do a bit of stretching or walk them through it. Practice dropping the shoulders and de-stressing in the body. Head outside for a pre-determined route or invite the group to decide if time is not a concern. Get some fresh air. You can also walk in pairs and every few minutes rotate who you're speaking to.

Simple aromatherapy

10 minutes | Relaxation | Many different items with a scent in small bowls

Collect a number of things that have pleasant scents like spices from the cupboard, flowers or leaves, essential oils or fruits. Place a small amount of each in it's own small bowl just before the meeting so the scent doesn't dissipate. Have enough bowls so every participant can have 1 at a time even if some are duplicated. Invite folks to take one bowl and take a quick smell. Ask them to consider what memories or ideas come to mind. Let them ruminate for a minute, then switch to another. After a handful of rotations, ask questions about what came to mind. Remind them this was a simple experience in being present in the moment and grounded in the experience. They can use this whenever they sip a coffee or smell a favorite scent. Let it be a reminder to let the clutter of the mind disappear for a moment.

Teambuilding, sharing and deeper connection

For these activities, let people know the theme ahead of time and let them know there will be sharing involved so they can choose to pass when it's their turn if they'd like or they can choose not to attend...or they could get really excited about it too. Some are light hearted and others are a bit deeper and require a foundation of trust.

Two Truths and a Lie

15-20 minutes | Sharing, fun, game, get to know you | Paper and pens needed

Ask everyone to write on a piece of paper THREE things about themselves which may not be known to the others in the group (1-2 minutes). Two are true and one is not. Taking turns, they read out the three 'facts' about themselves and the rest of the group discusses and votes which are true and false. There are always surprises. This simple activity is always fun, and helps the group and leaders get to know more about each other.

https://insight.typepad.co.uk/40_icebreakers_for_small_groups.pdf

Marooned

20 minutes | Values, communication, creative thinking, teambuilding | Paper and pens for each group

Describe to the group that you are marooned on an island. Have them determine what five (you can use a different number, such as seven, depending upon the size of each team) items they would have brought with you if you knew there was a chance that you might be stranded. Divide the larger group into groups of 3-6. Note that they are only allowed five items per team, not per person. Provide them 10 minutes to discuss and have them write their items on a flip chart or sheet of paper and discuss and defend their choices with the whole group. This activity helps them to learn about other's values and problem solving styles and promotes teamwork. (adapted from the Lion's Club)

Small Group Discussions

15 minutes | Discussion, sharing, team-building, get to know you | Printed discussion questions below (1 per group)

Introduce this as an simple, fun activity to learn a bit more about each other. Divide the group into groups of 3-6 (larger is better in this case for richer discussion). Print the below discussion cards, cut and give 1 per group. Give the groups 15 minutes to discuss. They can sit where they like. No report back is necessary.

- If you were trapped in a tv show for a week, which show would you want it to be?
- Who would you most like to be stuck in an elevator with?
- If you could mandate the whole world to do one thing for an hour per day, what would it be and why?
- If you could take a vacation right now, where would you go and why?

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Me too

20 minutes | Get to know you, sharing, story telling | Enough pennies for everyone to have 10

This activity works best for small groups or with a large group divided into smaller groups of 4-6 participants seated in a circle.

1. Everyone in the group gets 10 pennies/toothpicks/scrap of papers, etc.
2. The first person states something he/she has done (e.g. water skiing or lying).
3. Everyone else who has done the same thing admits it and puts one penny in the middle of the table.
4. Then the second person states something (e.g. I have eaten frogs' legs).
5. Everyone who has done it puts another penny in the center.
6. Continue until someone has run out of pennies and then they can share a story about one of the things they gave a penny for.

You can continue playing as many rounds as you'd like.

(adapted from the Lion's Club)

Common circles

10-15 minutes | Sharing, game, finding commonalities | Paper and pens needed

In groups of 2-4, ask everyone to generate as many things in common as they can in 5 minutes. After 5 minutes, give them 1 more minute to share the top 5 most interesting things they discovered they had in common. Provide pen and paper so they can track it as they mine their conversation and share fun things along the way. When the groups reconvene as a larger group, ask them to share their top 5 so the rest of the group can learn more about them too. Debrief by asking if anything surprised them. (adapted from

https://www.nafsa.org/uploadedFiles/NAFSA_Home/Resource_Library_Assets/Networks/AREA1/pdo%20Icebreakers.pdf)

Would you rather?

30-40 minutes | Get to know you, movement, fun, sharing | An open space (indoors or out)

Have the group members stand together facing the facilitator. The facilitator says that you vote by moving to represent your response for these "would you rather..." questions. So each time you read one point to the side that is the first option and the side that is the second option as you read them. After people move, ask why they chose that side.

1. Would you rather get up early or stay up late?
2. Would you rather never have coffee again or live without TV forever?
3. Would you rather be 10 minutes late or be 20 minutes early for everything?
4. Would you rather be a writer and get your first book published or be a musician and get your first album released?
5. Would you rather be completely alone for 5 years or constantly be surrounded by people and never be alone for 5 years?
6. Would you rather go through life only answering any questions or only asking any questions?

7. Would you rather be an amazing dancer or an amazing singer?
8. Would you rather lose \$1000 or lose all of your phone contacts?
9. Would you rather never laugh again or never use your smartphone again?
10. Would you rather be able to speak fluently every language in the world or be the best in the world at something of your choosing?
11. Would you rather have 1 wish granted today or 3 wishes granted 5 years from now?
12. Would you rather never be able to speak again or always have to say everything that is on your mind?
13. Would you rather have a dragon or be a dragon?
14. Would you rather not be able to use your hands or not be able to walk?
15. Would you rather live one life that lasts 1,000 years or live 10 lives that last 100 years each?
16. Would you rather have the ability to fly or the ability to read people's mind?
17. Would you rather eat your favorite meal for every meal for the rest of your life or never be able to eat your favorite meal again?
18. If you could time travel, would you rather go forward or back in time?
19. Would you rather know everything or be amazing at any activity you tried?
20. Would you rather live in a place where it is always hot or always cold?

After finishing the activity, you can ask if they noticed anything interesting about the group or the responses.

Masks

30-45 minutes | Self-image, sharing, possibly medium intensity, crafting, creative | Paper or cardstock, pens, markers, craft supplies, scissors

Hand out white paper or cardstock. Put markers, pens and craft supplies (glitter, stickers, etc.) on the table. Invite people to cut out a rough cut-out of a human face (or their face) on a piece of paper/cardstock. Invite them to use one side of the face to represent what they think others know about them, how others see them, what they show to the outside world or are known for. On the other side, have them represent their internal state, the things that matter to them, and so on. This is a good exercise on self-image. You can play music while people are working away. After 15 minutes (or gauge the crowd for maybe longer if needed), have a go-around where everyone can describe the 2 sides of their mask. Allow people to ask questions to each other. At the end, ask if anyone noticed anything interesting.

Interview

15-20 minutes | Sharing, get to know you, bonding | Nothing special needed, just space to break out

Divide folks into pairs. Ask them to take five minutes to interview each other. Each interviewer has to find 3 interesting facts about their partner (which can be fun in a group that may know each other well). Bring everyone back to together and ask everyone to present the 3 facts about their partner to the rest of the group. Watch the time on this one, keep it moving along. (https://insight.typepad.co.uk/40_icebreakers_for_small_groups.pdf)

7 Circles

25 minutes | Sharing, diversity, get to know you, medium-high intensity, possibly sensitive | Paper and pens needed for every participant

Invite group members to write their name in the middle of a sheet of paper and draw a circle around it. Then (mind map style), have them draw 7 circles around it that are groups they identify with (whether gender, age, location, race, profession, special interest communities, etc.). In the full group or in smaller groups (ideally approximately 5-6 people

per group), have them answer the following questions (call them out every 4 minutes). A) Talk about a time you felt proud to be part of a certain group. B) When did it feel uneasy or painful to be part of a certain group? C) Have any of your identities stood out strong to you recently and for what reason? Then invite people back to the larger group and debrief by asking any key ideas or interesting observations they made while doing the exercise. Ask if there is anything left to share before closing the activity. (Adapted from Madison Area Technical College)

Blanket flip

15 minutes | Teambuilding, communication, movement, challenge | Blanket per group

Recruit 6-10 volunteers per team. Have them lay a blanket out flat on the ground. Everyone stands on the blanket. They must turn their blanket over without any team member touching the physical floor under the blanket or around it. Choose a size that is not too challenging or too simple so they have to problem-solve as a group. Debrief by asking what worked and didn't work. It's not a race but naturally the groups will watch the other group(s). If they help the other group when they're done or step back and watch, ask them why in the debrief. This is the mental shift from competition to cooperation – to an 'everybody wins' mentality.

Fun

Special supper

Add 20 minutes to a meal time | Fun, challenge, creativity | A mix of random utensils from the kitchen (1 per person)

For a meal together, give everyone an odd utensil to eat with (no forks or spoons, but rather a lemon squeezer or a spatula) and if you want to make it really fun then make a challenging meal like spaghetti or soup. Take all of the forks and spoons away from the eating area. If people are really struggling, ask them if they could think of any solutions to make it better. After 10 or 15 minutes, you can provide people their normal utensils again. You can debrief by asking how it was for them, what solutions they found to make it work better, etc.

Improv game: Questions only

10 minutes – 30 minutes | Fun, playful, challenge, improve, acting, drama | Enough space for the acting to occur

Divide the group into two even teams. Have one person from each team step forward to begin the scene. Ask the group to generate a location and what the scene is about. A scene is improvised, in which any sentence used by the players must be a question. Players that use statements instead of questions are tagged out by another player on their team and the scene continues with the new player. Go until everyone gets a chance to participate.

Notes: Although questions are quite often frowned upon in improv, in this game the idea is to build a story. That implies that any question should be giving information, and should be (implicitly) advancing on the information already available. In turn, the next player should implicitly accept any information that was given in the previous question(s). The improv principle of "Yes...and" should be kept in mind but only use questions.

(Adapted from http://improvcyclopedia.org/games/Only_Questions.html)

Draft dictionary

10-20 minutes | Fun, drama, improv, creativity, playful | Nothing special needed

Sitting in a circle, the first player says a random word. The next player says an unrelated word. The following player has to give a definition as though the two words were the name of an object. For example, let's imagine that Billy says "water-skis" and Linda says "spaghetti". Malcolm might say, "Water-ski spaghetti is a new kind of pasta that you eat underwater" – or "Water-ski spaghetti is when you get the lines from the boat tangled up and you fall off your skis" – or anything else he thinks of. Continue around the circle with another two words and a definition – and so on all the way around. To keep players on their toes, pick people randomly from anywhere in the circle to give the two words and then the definition. (<http://dramaresource.com/daft-dictionary/>)

Animal roundup

10 minutes | Drama, fun, playful, movement, energizer | Nothing special needed

1. Tell group members to silently think of their favorite animal.
2. Then tell group members that without talking, they need to arrange themselves from largest to smallest animals.
3. Group members can only make gestures and the noise of their animal.
4. After they have finished, have group members go around and say the animal they were supposed to be to see if their arrangement was accurate.

(Lion's Club)

Rainstorm

5 minutes | Fun, group activity, movement | Chairs for everyone and a quiet space

Invite everyone to sit in a circle, chair to chair. No talking is allowed. You start the exercise and invite the person to your right to join in one by one doing what you do and keep doing that activity until the person to your left is doing something else (like a wave). You start the exercise by rubbing your palms together (to simulate light rain). This continues in the circle until it comes back to the leader who then changes the sound (in the sequence of -1 at a time- snap fingers, clap hands, slap thighs, stomp feet, and then in reverse order as if the storm is ending). The sensations created are akin to the sounds of a rainstorm. The last round you stop and then one by one each person stops until the room is totally silent.

Human machines

20 minutes | Fun, drama, challenge, creativity, teamwork | No materials needed

Divide the big group into 4-6 people. Invite them to create a machine out of humans by imitating the appearance and action of the machine. You can start by inviting them to think of a machine that already exists and imitating it using their bodies (blender, toaster, lawn mower, copy machine, lamp, or washing machine). Or you can jump right into the creative round which is where you ask the group for a theme (or a problem that needs solving) and each group has to create a machine. Each person must have a distinctive movement and sound to accompany the movement. Give them 5 minutes to prepare and practice and then have the groups present to the larger group. Have the other groups guess what the machine is before the group reveals it and then ask the group to explain their machine.

Race to remember

10-20 minutes | Fun, memory, playful, teams | Blanket

Have your group divide itself into two even groups. Tell them to sit on the floor facing each other. Hold up a blanket between the groups so that each team cannot see the other. A member of each team is quietly selected to move up to the blanket. On the count of 3, drop the blanket so that each of the selected members is facing each other. Yell out a question and whoever can accurately answer it first about the other person gets a point for their team. Go until one team gets 10 points. You can decide to put something at stake like the team who loses has to do a chore.

Sample questions:

What is the other person's hometown?

What is their favorite food?

What color socks are they wearing?

What color are their eyes?

(Adapted from Minot State University)

Tall stories

10 minutes | Fun, storytelling, creativity, silliness | Phone for recording

The leader starts a story with a sentence that ends in SUDDENLY. The next person then has to add to the story with their own sentence that ends in SUDDENLY. Continue the story until everyone has contributed. The story becomes crazier as each person adds their sentence. Record it on your phone and play it back. For example; 'Yesterday I went to the zoo and was passing the elephant enclosure when SUDDENLY.....'

(https://insight.typepad.co.uk/40_icebreakers_for_small_groups.pdf)

Word link

10 minutes | Fun, thinking, language | Nothing special needed

This is a word association game. Ask the group to sit in a circle. The first person starts with any word they wish i.e. red. The next person repeats the first word and adds another word which links to the first i.e. tomato. The next person repeats the previous word and adds another word link i.e. soup, and so on. To keep this moving, only allow five seconds for each word link.

Object stories

10-15 minutes | Story-telling, creative | Random objects, canvas bag

Collect a number of objects and place them in a canvas bag. The objects can include everyday items i.e. a pencil, key-ring, mobile phone, but also include some more unusual ones i.e. a fossil, holiday photograph, wig!

Pass the bag around the group and invite each person to dip their hand into the bag (without looking) and pull out one of the objects.

The leader begins a story which includes their object. After 20 seconds, the next person takes up the story and adds another 20 seconds, incorporating the object they are holding. And so on, until everyone has made a contribution to your epic literary tale. (https://insight.typepad.co.uk/40_icebreakers_for_small_groups.pdf)

Skill Sharing

Even in a group of 5-20 people, there are a lot of skills and talents. People can often feel validated and experience increased self-esteem when they are able to be seen as an expert in some way. Skill sharing is simply allowing the space and support for people to share their talents as teachers so others can learn. Canvass the group to see what skills they have and would like to teach. Some ideas for skill sharing include:

- Cooking lessons
- Sharing life hacks
- Soft skills like communication techniques or facilitation
- Leading exercise, meditation or a spiritual practice
- Teaching skills about how to use tools and do repairs
- Teaching an artistic skill (let people know of materials needed ahead of time and provide an opt-in, opt-out option)
- Doing screen printing or button making
- Technical skills like how to use different apps or technology
- How to record a song
- How to make a video
- Photography
- Origami

You can also have people identify things they want to learn and then see if others could teach them so have a buddy night where people can trade skills one on one. If the skills aren't found in the group, you could consider bringing in an expert or friend.

Making something (group projects)

Groups can gel when they have a task in front of them. The following are ideas for group projects that can build a sense of community and teamwork:

- Take a problem in the house and generate ideas on how to solve it and then go to work on doing so for a certain period of time
- Generate ideas of how to help someone out and then take an hour to follow through
- Have the group do an art project together whether with paint or a collage. Gather materials ahead of time, tell people to wear appropriate clothes, lay out newspapers so you don't make a mess and then let the group decide how to proceed.
- Volunteer together
- Do a walk of your block and pick up garbage
- Have a random acts of kindness night
- Have the group have a designated amount of time to plan a party, figure out what to do and start doing it
- Make a special meal together
- Bring together a selection of instruments or make-shift instruments like pots and pans, boxes and the like. Ask someone in the room to set the beat and then have others add in as they wish to try to create cohesive music. After a few minutes, invite a new person to get it started and invite people to switch instruments if they'd like.

- Write a poem or song. Divide the group into pairs or small groups and choose a theme as a group then have each team create a verse together (where line 1 and 2 rhyme and line 3 and 4 rhyme). Have each group read off their verse to the larger group. See if they want to rearrange where the verses go and then if the groups want, create a final version and post it or circulate it.
- Make a time capsule. Invite everyone in the house to get an object and create a note if they like (or a letter to themselves). Put it in a box and tuck it somewhere out of the way. Decide as a group when you want to open it again (perhaps set a reminder in your calendar). You can create a ceremony around opening it too.
- Create awards for housemates. Gather crafting materials, tape, paper, markers and recyclable items like bottles and boxes. Invite the groups to create awards for members of the house that acknowledge them for good things they do. These can be trophies or make-shift medals.
- Make a youtube video
- Creating a tshirt design for the house (get it printed if you wish) or make stickers

Easy activities or excursions

- Watch a movie
- Go to a comedy club (most have free nights)
- Go out for live music and a drink
- Go for a bike ride
- Get ice cream
- Go to a park and play Frisbee or volleyball
- Visit a museum
- Go to a farmer's market
- Talk and walk
- Decorate cupcakes or make ice cream sundaes
- Make a craft together (pinterest or youtube offer tons of ideas)
- Do a clothing or book swap
- Play a card or board game
- Play charades (you can download a free charades generator app)
- Go to karaoke
- Do a photo walking tour of the city where you walk and everyone takes photos at will and then selects their favorite 1-3 when they get back and shows them on the big screen
- Go out for coffee and just chat

Questions to start a meeting (icebreakers)

What was the best job you have ever had?

What was the worst job you have ever had?

What one word describes your computer ability?

What would be your dream job?

What is the hardest thing you have ever done?

When you were a kid, what did you want to be when you grew up?

What is one goal you'd like to accomplish during your lifetime?

Which three words would you use to describe yourself?

If you were to create a slogan for your life, what would it be? (Example: Eat, drink, and be merry, for tomorrow, we may die.)

What is one thing you really like about yourself?

What past action (big or small) did you take to improve the quality of your life?

What was the best thing that happened to you this past week?

What are the best perks that you have ever had at a job?

What part of your daily routine do you enjoy most?

[http://icebreakerideas.com/icebreaker-questions-biggest-list-ever/#Icebreaker Questions for Meetings](http://icebreakerideas.com/icebreaker-questions-biggest-list-ever/#Icebreaker_Questions_for_Meetings)

If you had this week to do over again, what would you do differently?

What would you do in life if you knew you could not fail?

What would you do if you did not have to work?

If you found out you only had two weeks to live, what would you want to do? (Or cross off your bucket list?)

If you are at a friend or relative's house for dinner and you find a dead insect in your salad, what would you do?

If you saw someone being mugged in the street, what would you do?

What would you do if you did not have to work?

What would you do if you had a million dollars?

[http://icebreakerideas.com/icebreaker-questions-biggest-list-ever/#What Would You Do Icebreaker Questions](http://icebreakerideas.com/icebreaker-questions-biggest-list-ever/#What_Would_You_Do_Icebreaker_Questions)

Are you a morning person or a night person? Why?

Are you sunrise, daylight, twilight, or night? Please share why you picked your time of day?

How do you like to spend a rainy day?

Why do you like living in this area?

Do you believe in extraterrestrials or life on other planets?

Do you believe in ghosts?

Do you have any hidden talents?

Do you have any phobias?

Do you have any relatives in jail?

Do you like pickles? Why or why not?

Do you untie your shoes when you take them off?

Do you like coffee or tea?

[http://icebreakerideas.com/icebreaker-questions-biggest-list-ever/#Present Experience Icebreaker Questions](http://icebreakerideas.com/icebreaker-questions-biggest-list-ever/#Present_Experience_Icebreaker_Questions)

Can you share one quote or saying you love, that keeps you going in life?

Food for soul or music for soul? Why?

If you could go back in time and change history, what would you change? Why?

If you had one day to live over again, what day would you pick?

If you knew you were going to die in 24 hours, what three things would you do in the time you had left?

If you woke up as (name any famous personality), what is the first thing you would do?

If you were mayor for the day, what three things would you change about your city?

If your house was burning down, what three objects would you try and save?

If your plane was about to crash, who would you want sitting next to you?

What do you consider the most important event of your life so far?

What do you consider your greatest achievement?

What do you think the secret to a good life is?

What do you value most in life?

What gift have you received that you will always treasure?

What is your motto in life? (Now this one's an icebreaker question to get to know someone.)

What would you like to be known for?

Describe a real-life situation where you stood up for someone/something.

Describe one experience you have had where you took a huge leap of faith.

Describe your own outlook on life in six words.

What one thing do you think would create peace in the world?

What product would you refuse to promote?

What is the one thing you can't live without?

What is the one thing for which you would most like to be remembered after your death?

What is the best thing that has ever happened to you?

What is important to you in your life right now?

http://icebreakerideas.com/icebreaker-questions-biggest-list-ever/#Icebreaker_Questions_Focusing_On_Your_Life_Philosophy

Which bad habits of other people drive you crazy?

Which body part would you choose to get a tattoo done?

What is your pet peeve?

Which song reminds you of an ex and why?

If you were running for office what would your campaign slogan be?

Is there a place where you would not be caught dead? Where?

Is there anything you absolutely refuse to do under any circumstances?

What is one thing that drives you crazy?

What “critter” scares you the most?

What do you do to have fun?

What do you dream about at night (or last night)?

What is a weird habit that you have?

What is the craziest thing you have ever done?

What is the first thing you notice about someone when you first meet?

What is the most unusual thing in your wallet, pocket, or purse right at this moment?

http://icebreakerideas.com/icebreaker-questions-biggest-list-ever/#Fun_Icebreaker_Questions_That_Press_Your_Buttons_And_Everyones_Elles