

Icebreakers

An icebreaker or a warmer is a short, dynamic, fun and attention-grabbing activity which requires little organisation.

Teachers generally use two types of icebreakers:

- at the beginning of a course or a lesson to help the children and teacher get to know each other
- as a means to introduce a new topic or review and practice the content from the previous lesson.

Starting class every day with an icebreaker will get children excited about learning and help prepare them for success.

WHY?

Icebreakers:

- help children and their teacher get to know each other
- energize and motivate children by getting them engaged physically, mentally and emotionally in the activities
- address children with diverse learning styles by providing a range of learning opportunities (games, songs, videos, drawings, dance, etc)
- relax children by reducing stress and sense of isolation
- build good relationships among children and foster an optimal learning environment
- create a special atmosphere in which children feel comfortable sharing ideas and fully participate
- help foster a shared sense of purpose and belonging to their community
- help children think outside the box and open doors to new ideas
- prepare children for collaborative group work

See Handout Tips to consider when organising an icebreaker

have a clear objective. What do you want to accomplish with the icebreaker?

- make it simple: easy to explain, understand and do.
- temper extreme emotions or competitive tones.
- keep children focused on the stated objectives.
- don't insist children reveal too much personal information (encourage them to improvise if they don't feel comfortable).
- ask children what the value of an icebreaker activity is and share your rationale for the activity at its end.

NOTE

Icebreakers may be subject to cultural differences. Consider explaining to parents the role icebreakers have in learning when working with a multicultural group of children. Some cultures do not favour warm-up activities which are perceived as fun activities irrelevant to learning. They consider that learners should focus mainly on learning achievement and success. On the other hand, other cultures have highlighted the role of icebreakers as facilitators for children's involvement in class.