Virtual Classroom Icebreakers

This job aid contains three icebreaker activities you can use to kick off your next virtual classroom training session.

**Around the World in Recipes**

**Goal:** To use recipes to meet and connect with other participants and become comfortable using the online tools.

**Group Size:** 5-10 online participants

**Time Estimate:** 5-30 minutes depending on how many people take a turn

**Materials/Technology**
- Slide for facilitator with instructions and the order of presenters (optional)
- One slide from each participant with a picture of a dish that represents their country
- Slide with a map marking all participants’ locations using the food image
- A web conferencing platform that has status indicators, such as “raise hand,” chat, and audio un-mute available to participants

**Process**

**Preparation:** Email each participant in advance, asking them to prepare a slide with a picture of a dish that represents the country where they are located. Ask them to email the slide beforehand. Preload all the files received in advance.

1. Tell participants they will take turns describing their country’s dish. They should spend two minutes describing what is in it, what they enjoy about it, or how it is prepared, being careful not to mention the country of origin. Ask each presenter to:
   - Un-mute their audio.
   - Watch the chat (or raise hand) for guesses.

2. Tell the other participants to listen and try to guess which country it is from. They can enter their guesses via the chat, or verbally as long as they do not interrupt the speaker.

3. Present one of the slides and ask the person whose dish it is to begin.

4. At the end of the description, check to see if anyone has guessed the correct country in chat or ask if anyone knows.

5. Continue until you have presented all the dishes.

6. Debrief the activity, using the slide with a map marking each person’s location using the food image. You may wish to ask questions such as these to help participants make connections with one another:
   - How are we connected?
   - What similarities did you find during the presentations? The dishes?
   - How have we demonstrated that our connections reach beyond just participants in an online class?

**Facilitator Notes**

- Instead of preparing a slide in advance, you could ask participants to share a website with the recipe or a picture of the dish.
- For an intact workgroup or non-international group, use treasured family recipes.
- A stronger focus could be on the use of the live online tools of sharing slides and websites, annotating, and presenting information in an engaging way.
- You could also use the topic of national holidays instead of food.

Submitted by: Kassy LaBorie
Virtual Classroom Icebreakers

Rotating Intros

Goal: To meet and connect with participants on a virtual training prior to the official start time.

Group Size: 10-20 online participants

Time Estimate: 5 minutes or less

Materials/Technology
- PowerPoint deck of participant information
- Webex or other meeting platform

Process

Preparation: Prior to the class, email each student asking them to provide you their names, where they work, and a question they can answer in two to three sentences. The question may be more of a personal “get to know you” or a question designed to introduce the training topic. Develop a PowerPoint deck with their responses, one slide per person, using a large, easy-to-read font.

1. Log into your virtual session 10-20 minutes early, post the deck, and use the “auto advance” function so the slides rotate automatically about every 10-15 seconds during the time you are waiting for participants to arrive.

2. It’s a good idea to specifically suggest in the invitation to sign on 5-10 minutes early so they will have an opportunity to “meet” the other participants.

3. With introductions out of the way, you can begin immediately with the content.

Facilitator Notes
- This is an alternative to spending 10 minutes completing introductions when your virtual sessions are only an hour.
- This makes better use of participants’ “hold time” at the beginning of the call.
- A bonus is that they also get to learn from each other’s answers, and you can refer back to their comments during class as a way to increase personal engagement.

Submitted By: Joel Lamoreaux
Virtual Classroom Icebreakers

Who’s With Me?

Goal: To help participants in a live online virtual training class quickly get to know one another, and realize that even if they don’t physically see anyone, they are not alone in the learning experience.

Group Size: Any size
Time Estimate: 5 minutes
Materials/Technology:
A web conferencing platform that has status indicators, such as “raise hand” or “agree/disagree” options available to participants

Process

1. Start by saying something like, “Let’s take a few moments to find out who’s in our classroom and what things we have in common. Click on the ‘raise hand’ button if you can agree with each of my statements.”
   - If needed, use the annotation tools to point out the “raise hand” button, and begin with “If you are connected to today’s session, ‘raise your hand.’”
   - Acknowledge the number of raised hands, and say “Thanks, please lower your hands.”
   - If needed, use your “host” controls to lower everyone’s hands.

2. Ask the following questions in sequence:
   - Who has participated in a live online class before?
   - Who is joining us from east of the Mississippi?
   - Who is wearing something blue today?
   - Who has already celebrated a birthday this calendar year?
   - Who completed all the pre-work for today’s session?
   - Who already has a burning question about today’s topic?
   - Who is excited to get started?

3. After each question, acknowledge the number of raised hands, and say “Thanks, please lower your hands.”
4. If needed, use your “host” controls to lower everyone’s hands.
5. The final question, “Who is excited to get started?” is a perfect segue into your content.

Facilitator Notes

- Move quickly! Don’t spend lots of time setting up or debriefing each statement. Briefly acknowledge the number of raised hands, maybe mention a name or two, and then move on. Keep the pace brisk.
- Feel free to substitute your own questions based upon the training topic or audience backgrounds. However, try to keep the number of questions to no more than six or seven.
- Substitute the correct terminology for your web conferencing platform. For example, instead of “raise hand” and “lower hand,” you might say “click on the green check” and “clear your status.”

Submitted By: Cindy Huggett, CPLP