

1 Icebreakers and warmers

It is important for learners to feel comfortable with each other, confident in themselves and focussed on the language lesson rather than on other distractions. We would also like them to be creative, risk-taking, thoughtful, communicative, happy to work together with other learners. To help this situation to develop, the teacher can do ‘icebreaker’ games with a new class and ‘warmers’ at the beginning of a lesson with a class where the learners already know each other.

Games and ‘playfulness’ as a way of warming people and helping them to focus their minds are complemented by the way the classroom looks and how you greet them. Music playing, pictures on the walls, the furniture arranged attractively, curious objects, coloured cloths and smiling faces drawn on the board can all help to get the lesson off to a good start.

All the games in this chapter belong to the family of games of CARE AND SHARE. See Introduction, page 4.

CARE AND SHARE

1.1 Learning names

Family	CARE AND SHARE
Language	Introducing oneself and others, learning names
Variation	Sharing likes or other personal information, learning names
Preparation	Set a friendly classroom atmosphere by putting on some music, if you wish.

Procedure

- 1 Ask the learners to mill about, nodding and smiling, in a space in the classroom. It is an advantage if you can have some cheerful music playing and stop it when you want them to stop.
- 2 Ask them to stop in front of another learner and introduce themselves. You can demonstrate this.
Learner 1: *Hello, I am Lars.*
Learner 2: *Hello, I am Zakia.*

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- 3 Let the learners mill again until you stop them and ask them to introduce themselves again.
- 4 You can add to the challenge by asking them to point at and name the other people they have already met. They can help each other to do this, if necessary. This is a very effective way of practising the paradigm of the present simple: *I am, he/she is*.

Learner 1: *She's Barbara and she's Yvonne and he's Harry.
I'm Ferdinand.*

Variation 1 Getting to know each other

- 1 Sit the learners in circles of about eight.
- 2 Give the class a moment or two to choose something which is important to them and can be referred to in one or two words. You can begin as the model. Introduce yourself by saying, for example, *I'm Martine and I like playing football*.
- 3 The next learner in the circle repeats what the first learner said and adds his or her own information.

Learner 1: *You're Martine and you like football. I'm Rubino and I have a pet dog.*

- 4 The third learner repeats what the first two learners said and then adds his or her own information. And so it continues round the circle.

Examples of other types of information to add

Family, home area, job

Favourite thing to do when not working, favourite food

Reason for learning English, anxieties about learning English

Something really nice which has happened recently

- 5 To make it more challenging, the person who has just spoken should choose the next speaker by pointing at them. This may not be their neighbour, but someone sitting on the other side of the circle. In this way it is a little more difficult to remember the information.

Notes

- You can focus on learning styles by asking the learners to relate their information about jobs and hobbies with likes and dislikes and an estimation of how good they are at each activity, and in this way *you* will learn something about their possible learning style preferences.

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- Learning names is a necessary condition to establishing familiarity and trust and confidence in the other class members.
- In order to establish a true communicative classroom atmosphere you must include yourself in all of these activities.

1.2 Stand in a line

Family Language Preparation	CARE AND SHARE Interacting with others using minimal language Since this activity is based on the learners having to arrange themselves in a line according to a specified criterion, think of criteria you would like to use, for example: Names in alphabetical order Date of birth Favourite month Zodiac sign Favourite times of the day
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Procedure

- 1 Ask the learners to form a line according to the criterion you have chosen, for example, in alphabetical order of their names. Tell them they should speak to each other in order to decide how to line up. For example:
Learner 1: *What's your name?*
Learner 2: *David.*
Learner 1: *Oh, you're before me. I must stand here. I'm Eva.*
- 2 Once the learners have formed a line, ask them to bend round into a circle and then say their names (or whatever criterion was used) in order.
- 3 Once you have got the learners into a circle, you might like to follow this up with the game below.

1.3 Pass on a sound

Family Language	CARE AND SHARE Repeating a sound, word or phrase exactly
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Procedure

Ask the learners to form a circle. (You might like to do the game above to achieve this.) In order to build up a feeling of sharing and listening to each other you can now ask them to pass on a sound or a word or phrase. This

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requires the learners to pay close attention to each other in order to copy exactly what the other person is saying or doing.

Examples of sounds and phrases to pass on
Ba! Ba! Ba! Ba! Baaaa! Ba! (the fifth Ba spoken slowly and drawn out)
Hello. (spoken very cheerfully)
I'm John. (or any other sentence originated by the learner)

1.4 Questions and questionnaires

Family Language	CARE AND SHARE
	Getting to know others by asking questions
	Giving personal information by answering questions

Procedure

- 1 Explain to the learners that all of the games in the variations (below) are based on questions which are used to find out more about other people in the class.
- 2 Help the learners to brainstorm on to the board questions which they might ask a person whom they would like to get to know. For example:
What's your name?
Where do you live?
What's your job?
Have you got children?
What's your hobby?
What's your favourite food/music, etc?
Examples of more personal and demanding questions
Are you married?
What worries you?
What is your greatest fear?
What is your favourite type of holiday?
What would you do if you found a lot of money in a park?
- 3 Tell the learners to leave their seats, mill about, and put questions to at least three other people.
- 4 Finally, invite the class to sit in a circle, and ask each learner to describe a classmate using all the information gathered. The rest of the class should try to guess the person referred to.

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Here are some different ways of organising this activity:

- The learners first choose a number of questions and write them on a questionnaire, and then ask their classmates questions to complete their questionnaires. (Or you could provide each learner with a questionnaire which you have written yourself.)
- The learners, sitting in pairs, put the questions to their partner.
- Learners in groups of three take it in turns to question and answer.
- Divide the class into two. Make an inner circle of learners facing outwards and an outer circle of learners facing inwards. The learners put their questions to the learner opposite. After about three minutes, tell the outer circle to move one place to the left, thus creating new pairs and allowing learners to repeat the same questions.
- Make two long rows of chairs facing each other. The learners put their questions to the learner opposite. After about three minutes, tell the learners on one row of chairs to move one chair to the left, thus creating new pairs. The learner at the end of the row must stand up and walk around to the other end of the line of chairs.

Variation 1 Questions about you

- 1 Ask learners each to write ten questions, the answers to which would be revealing of *their own* personality, interests and concerns.
- 2 Organise the class into pairs. Have the learners ask their partners the questions they have written. Allow learners to ask supplementary questions if desired.
- 3 Invite individual learners to tell the class what they have learned about their partner.

Variation 2 Predict your partner's answers

- 1 Ask each learner to devise and write down ten questions.
- 2 Put learners into pairs and ask each learner to write the answers they would expect their partner to give in response to the questions.
- 3 Finally, ask the learners to put their questions to their partners and compare the predicted answers with the actual answers.

Variation 3 Yes/No questions to the teacher

- 1 Encourage learners to ask you questions inviting *Yes* or *No* answers. Reply honestly!
- 2 If a learner gets *No* as an answer, then they must ask another question.

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- 3 If a question is incorrect grammatically, wait for the other learners to help him or her to get it right.
- Learner 1: *Are you liking sports?*
Learner 2: (corrects Learner 1) *Do you like sports?*
Learner 1: *Thanks. Do you like sports?*
Teacher: *No.*
Learner 1: *Do you have a car?*
Teacher: *Yes.*
Learner 3: *Do you ...?*

Variation 4 Questions to the teacher: what's the truth?

- 1 Draw three columns on the board.
2 Tell the learners to ask any questions they would like you to answer, providing that they only require a short answer.
3 Write three different answers to each question, two being false and one truthful. Write the truthful answers under the same column, but without giving any clue to the learners as to which one it is.
4 Ask the learners to work in groups and to discuss which set of answers they think is the 'real' you. Let them guess, then reveal the answer.
5 Invite the learners to play the same game in pairs or small groups.

1.5 Find someone who ...

Family	CARE AND SHARE
Language	Asking and answering questions to get information about peers
Variation	Finding out and reporting on what you have in common with other people
Preparation	Think of topics you would like the learners to explore.

Procedure

- 1 Write three or four instructions on the board. The conventional way of doing this is to use the phrase *Find someone who...*, for example, *Find someone who lives in the same neighbourhood as you*. However, you may prefer also to provide the learners with the actual questions they should use, for example, *Where do you live?*
Alternatively, let the learners themselves choose the topics and formulate their own questions. Examples might be:

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Find someone who lives near you.

Find someone who likes the same food as you.

Find someone who likes the same music as you.

Find someone who likes the same hobbies and pastimes as you.

Find someone who has the same reasons for, or anxieties about, learning English as you.

Find someone who has a pet.

Find someone who has been to another country.

- 2 Ask the learners to walk about the room talking to each other and finding out the information you have specified.

Variation 1 Things in common

- 1 Have the learners work in groups to find out what they have in common. You may wish to provide some useful sentence starters or topics, for example:

Have you got a ...? / Do you have a ...?

Is your ...?

Do you like ...?

Can you ...?

Have you ever ...?

Learners may take notes.

- 2 Each learner should tell the class about one of the things the group members have in common, for example:

All of us have (got) a brother or a sister.

Most of us live in the same district of the city.

Some of us have a pet.

A few of us can drive a car.

None of us likes boring lessons.

We are grateful to Mario Rinvoluti for this example.

Note

You may wish to play this game in pairs, in which case learners should find out about ways in which they are similar to and different from their partner. Help the learners by showing them sentence starters such as the following:

She/He ..., but I ...

We both ...

Neither of us ...

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1.6 Match the person to the information

Family Language	CARE AND SHARE Using general descriptive language Getting to know others by hearing, reading, then trying to retrieve a piece of information about them Learning names
Preparation	Cut two strips of card or paper about 10 cm x 2 cm for each learner.

Procedure

- 1 Give the learners two cards each and ask them to write their name on one and a sentence about themselves on the other. For example:
Card 1: *DAVID*.
Card 2: *I like walking in the country and looking at nature*.
The name should be written in block capitals, so that the handwriting on the two cards cannot be easily matched. For the same reason it would also help to use a different pen for each card.
- 2 Put the learners into groups and have them take turns introducing themselves to the group and reading out their sentences.
- 3 Tell the learners to shuffle the group's cards together, then lay them out face down on a table.
- 4 The learners take turns to try to find matching pairs of cards. To do this, they turn two cards face up. If they think they have found a pair, they point at the relevant person and say, for example, *This is David. He likes walking in the country and looking at nature*. If they are correct, they keep the cards. If they are wrong, they turn them back on the table face down.

1.7 Topics to talk about

Family Language	CARE AND SHARE Using general language to talk about a familiar topic
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Procedure

- 1 Ask learners to write down four topics related to themselves that they are willing to talk about, for example, *sport, hobby, family, job*.
- 2 Have learners form pairs and tell them to ask their partner questions about each topic. Their partner should answer as fully as they can. Allow about three minutes per topic.

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- 3 Begin with yourself as a demonstration, if you wish, letting the class ask you questions about a topic you have chosen.

Variation 1 Something nice which happened

Ask pairs or groups of learners to take it in turns to tell each other about something nice which has happened to them recently.

Variation 2 A special object

Preparation

Ask learners to bring a special personal possession to class.

- 1 Ask learners to form groups. Then each member of the group should put a personal possession on the table in front of them.
- 2 Encourage learners to take turns saying anything they can about their object and answering any questions put to them by the other members of their group.

Variation 3 A special number

- 1 Write a number on the board and tell the class why it is important to you. The number might be: a date, a telephone number, a lucky or unlucky number, the number of people in your family, the number of people in your favourite sport, etc.
- 2 Ask learners to do the same working with a partner.

Variation 4 A random word

- 1 Invite a learner to choose a letter between A and Z. Write it on the board, then ask the learners to call out nouns beginning with that letter. Write the nouns on the board, too.
- 2 Tell learners, working in pairs, each to choose one word and talk about it for three minutes.

Variation 5 A colour

- 1 Brainstorm on to the board colours the learners can name.
- 2 Ask each of the learners to pick a colour and to brainstorm, on paper, personal associations with that colour.
- 3 Tell the learners to share their associations with a partner.

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1.8 All the words you know

Family Language	CARE AND SHARE Boosting the confidence of beginner learners by compiling a list of familiar English words
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Procedure

- 1 Help the learners brainstorm on to the board all the English words they already know (English words used in their own language or words they know from general contact with the international use of English).
- 2 Challenge the learners to remember all the words by erasing them one by one, then asking the learners to reconstruct the list of words together orally.

Notes

- The primary aim is to help beginners or near beginners feel confident that they already know something, and to introduce them to the different sounds of English in contrast with those of their own mother tongue.
- Another aim is to begin to build a team effort.
- This game could have more of a cultural focus according to your questions, e.g. *Tell me the names of some famous British people ... famous American cities*, etc.

1.9 Proverbs

Family Language Preparation	CARE AND SHARE Learning and using proverbs in everyday experience Photocopy a list of proverbs for each learner. Compile a list of proverbs from the learners' own culture and look for English equivalents, or list some English proverbs and be prepared to explain them.
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Procedure

- 1 Share the list of proverbs with the learners and ensure that the meaning of each is understood by demonstrating how it applies to everyday experience.
- 2 Ask each learner to learn at least one of the proverbs and then use it whenever the opportunity arises during the lesson.