

# 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.

## A CLOSER LOOK

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. This is just a sampling of ideas. Use your imagination to expand upon or add variation to these or to add more to this list.

### *Personal Introductions*

Many online instructors prefer to create a discussion thread for learners to make introductions. Instructors might structure the introduction activity by asking for specific items or characteristics. For instance, you can ask learners to list their professional interests, goals for the course, or jobs they've held. In addition, ask about personal interests such as hobbies or favorite places to visit or vacation. The most interesting and useful posts are those that combine personal as well as professional information. Most commonly, questions are based on the course textbook or other readings. Switch things up by including questions based on your students' experiences or that are directly related to their lives.

### *Eight Nouns*

In this activity, ask learners 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.

### *Five Pictures*

This is a slight variation on the above activity. In this activity, learners 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. Learners should also describe how the pictures represent who they are.

### *Two Truths and One Lie*

This activity is fun but can sometimes be challenging. Learners 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 icebreaker activities:

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

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## *An Online Cafe*

An online cafe can be created as a special place and social space for learners to “hang out” informally. In an online cafe, learners can post questions and comments on personal interests, pertinent items in the news, and so on. The online cafe is a safe haven that operates both within and outside of 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

Below is an example of how to begin the five-pictures icebreaker activity.



### Icebreaker Discussion

#### Instructions

Let’s get to know each other better.

- A. 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, Picasa.google.com (free download), and Gimp.org (free download).
- B. Post your file to the Module 1 Icebreaker discussion area as an attachment to a message. The message’s subject should be “Introducing Yourfirstname Yoursurname” (e.g., “Introducing Jane Smith”).
- C. 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

Up to 35 points possible. The Discussion Board 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