Why are icebreakers important?
- Allow group members to meet each other and leaders
- Gives the leader an idea of how the group interacts
- Gives the leader an idea of the different roles each group member plays
- Builds group solidarity, enhances communication, and allows members to work as a team

There are 3 main types of Icebreakers. They are:

Introductory
*Examples:* Name game, tennis ball game, toilet paper or candy game
- Provide a basic learning of names and backgrounds
- These activities slowly loosen up the group and encourage communication
- Are a way of building trust between leaders and group

Physical Interaction
*Examples:* Scavenger hunt, human knot
- A continuation of getting to know the group better
- Personalities tend to come out more than in the introductory games
- These games tend to be used to increase levels of comfort and trust
- Physical movement and activity forces people out of their shells
- Increases energy when the group is bored or tired
- Gives the leader further insight into group dynamics

Team Builders
*Examples:* Psychiatrist, Assassin
- Forces the group to work as a whole
- Utilizes very high levels of trust and communication
- These games are usually very group-specific
- Keep a close eye out for success and failure
- Should never be used first, but only when the group is already firmly acquainted and established.

Name Web
1. Start with a ball of yarn. Say your name and an interesting fact about yourself. Then, holding the end, toss the ball to a student. The student will say his / her name and an interesting fact, then, holding on the part of the yarn, toss the ball to another student.
2. By the time everyone has spoken, there will be a large web of yarn that can be used as a symbol (i.e. uniting first year students, more people who get the string – stronger the web, etc.)

Name Game (several variations)
1. Each person will come up with an adjective to say before his or her name. The adjective must start with the first letter of their first name (i.e. Kiwi Kerri). Note you can use other things such as food / fruit / animal, etc.
2. The second person must repeat the person before them saying their adjective and name and then his / hers. This will continue until all members of the group have gone.
Other variations:
- Body movements and name (number of movements = number of syllables)

Name Aerobics
1. Using the first letter of their first name, each person comes up with a “move” that describes them. (i.e. “My name is “leaping” Laura, “dancing” Dana...etc)
2. People do the action described by their name.
3. As you go around the circle of participants, after each person has presented their name and action, begin at the first person and say HELLO to everyone, by saying their name and doing their action. (At the last person in the circle, you will repeat all names and actions, the last being the last person of the circle.

Name Tag Grab
1. Gather group in a circle and hand out name tags. Have each group member write their name on a tag, but do not peel back off.
2. Leader collects, shuffles, and redistributes name tags so that each person has someone else’s nametag. DO NOT let anyone reveal the name that they are holding.
3. Each group member should now place the name tag they have in their hand on the back of the person to their right. (if it is the same person whose name tag they are holding, have a few students switch)
4. When the leader says so, the entire group must move amongst themselves and try to find their name tag and grab it off the back of the person wearing it. Group member should also try to avoid having people see their back or grab the name from it...
5. Each person stays in the game until they find their own name and the person whose name was on their back finds his/her own name.
6. The person who keeps the name on their back the longest is the winner.

Two Truths and a Lie
1. Tell participants to think of two true statements and one false statement about themselves.
2. Go around the group, having each participant give their two truths and a lie.
3. The group must guess the lie.
Train Wreck (a.k.a. The Wind Blows)
1. Everyone stands in a circle, except one person who is chosen to stand in the middle of the circle. The person in the middle makes a statement such as “Everyone who is wearing sandals, or everyone who loves Holy Cross, etc”. The statement must apply to the person in the middle as well.
2. Everyone who the statement applies to needs to switch places in the circle with another person that the statement applies to. A person cannot switch places with anyone directly on either side of them. No new spaces can be created in the circle, always leaving someone to be in the middle.
3. The person who doesn’t get to a new space in the circle must stay in the middle and make a new statement.

Human Knot
Objective: To warm up and increase energy of a group, while breaking down inhibitions.
1. Stand in a small circle. Extend both hands across the circle and grab two DIFFERENT hands. Make sure no one is holding the hand of the person next to him or her.
2. Try to untangle the knot without letting go of anyone’s hands.
Note: This activity is also fun when you combine groups or have group races or challenges.

Fear in a Bag
Objective: Allows students the opportunity to ask questions in a confidential manner and in a relaxed setting.
1. Bring your group to a quiet area. Give each member a notecard and a pen or pencil. Ask them to write down at least one question that they have wanted to know about but do not feel comfortable asking in front of a large group.
2. The leaders then collect these cards and go through and answer the questions to the best of their ability.

Name Tag Switch
Objective: To learn more about group members and to also illustrate the ways that stories can become misconstrued.
1. Have the group pair off in twos. Each person will tell the other a funny / interesting / embarrassing story about themselves.
2. When the group leader yells “switch” the pairs need to give each other their nametag, and they become that person. Everyone now finds a new partner and tells the story of the person whose nametag they now have. This should continue for a few cycles.
3. When the time is up, the large group will form a big circle and tell the story of the nametag that they now have in their possession. The person whose nametag it is will then take the nametag back and correct the story if it needs to be.
Tennis Ball Circle
Objective: To learn the names of everyone in the group and be able to recall them quickly.
1. Have everyone stand in a circle - preferably outside - but at least where there's a lot of room. Start with the facilitator throwing one ball to a person. That person must say his / her name and then throw the ball to someone else.
2. Once everyone has caught the ball once, remember the pattern and repeat it. This time though, the person throwing the ball must call out the name of the person to whom he / she is throwing the ball. After a couple of times through, toss the other balls into the circle until it gets too crazy or noisy to continue.

Famous Person
Objective: To provide group members with an opportunity to mingle in a non-threatening atmosphere. Also, it is used to encourage good question asking skills and deductive reasoning.
1. Beforehand, write the names of famous people on name tags or index cards (one person per card / name tag).
2. Stick a nametag or tape an index card to the back of each group member, giving him / her the identity of a famous person. Tell the group to mix with each other asking ONLY yes-no questions until they can guess who they are.
3. The first person to guess can win a small “prize” or not. You can let the game continue until most group members have guessed their identity or for an allotted amount of time.
A variation might be to gather the group back together after most have guessed their identity and, one at a time, have those who have not guessed theirs correctly ask the larger group yes-no questions for a minute or two.

Toilet Paper or Candy Game
Objective: To get everyone to share something about himself or herself, giving other group members an opportunity to get to know them.
1. Have everyone sit in a circle. Pass around the roll or toilet paper or the bag of candy and tell everyone to take as much as they would like (or think they will need). If you use candy, make sure to tell the group members that they CANNOT eat the candy until the exercise is over or until it is their turn.
2. After everyone has taken some, go around the circle and for every piece of toilet paper or candy a person has taken, they must then tell something about themselves.

Green Glass Door
1. Explain to the group that they are going to a party through the green glass door and everyone needs to bring something to the party.
2. Everyone takes a turn saying “I’m going to the party through the green glass door and I’m going to bring __________.” (Note: The trick is that whatever they bring has to have double letters. I.E. Balloons, Trees, Letters, etc.)
3. If the person states that they are bringing something with double letters, you tell them, “You can come to the party through the green glass doors.” (Note: DON’T tell them that they need to bring something with double letters, let them figure out what the “trick” is by listening to what works and what doesn’t).

1 Up, 1 Down, 2 Up, 2 Down
1. Have everyone form a circle. (This game can also be played during downtime at meals, etc.) Explain that the name of the game is “1 Up 1 Down 2 Up 2 Down.” Go around the circle and have the person say one guess.
2. The four choices depend on how they have their arms positioned when they guess. 1 up and 1 down are really the same – one arm is up and the other is down. 2 up means that both arms are up. 2 down means that both arms are down.
3. When someone guesses correctly, tell him or her yes and when he or she is wrong tell them no. See how long it takes them to figure out what the name of the game stands for (i.e. what is the pattern as to who is 1 up 1 down, etc.).

Who Has The Hat?
1. Tell a story about someone in the room wearing a hat, where throughout the story the hat ends up with different people in the room. (Example: Joe wore a hat today but the wind blew it off his head. Chris found the hat on the ground and gave it to his friend Kerri. Kerri thought it was Tim’s hat and gave it to him, etc.)
2. At the end of the story ask the group “Who has the hat?” (Note: Whoever is the first person to speak during the story is the one who has the hat.) Tell a different version each time using different people’s names in the room. See how long it takes them to figure out who has the hat by the pattern.

Click, Click, Bang, Bang
1. Have the group sit in a circle. The facilitator starts going around the circle assigning everyone in the group a click or a bang. Once they have gone completely around the circle, they ask the question “Who died?” The group’s job is to determine who died.
2. Note: The first person who speaks after the facilitator says “Who died?” is the person who is dead, so it doesn’t matter who is assigned a click or a bang. (i.e. everyone in the group can have a click, or everyone can have a bang). The only thing that matters is who is the first person to speak. See how long it takes the group to figure out the pattern.

Assassin
1. Choose someone in the group to be the assassin. Do this in a way that the rest of the group doesn’t know who you have chosen.
2. Then direct the group to mingle by introducing themselves to each other and shaking hands. Tell them there is an Assassin in the group.
3. If someone pokes your palm while shaking hands with you, you've been killed and should count to three (in your head) and then sit down on the ground where you are. The first person still alive to identify the Assassin wins.

**Psychiatrist**

1. Choose someone in the group to be the psychiatrist. The psychiatrist then leaves the area. The rest of the group then collectively decides on an “ailment”. Examples of ailments are, everyone acts like the person to their left or right, or everyone pretends to be of the opposite sex, etc.
2. The psychiatrist then comes back to the group and must ask yes-no questions to individuals in the group. They must answer according to the “ailment”. The psychiatrist must then try to figure out what the “ailment” is through their line of questioning.
3. At any time throughout the game, a person in the group can yell out “PSYCHIATRIST”, at which point everyone in the group gets up and runs to a different spot in the circle. The game then resumes with the psychiatrist asking questions of people in their new spots until they figure out the “ailment”.

**Missing Link**

1. One person starts a story about him/herself.
2. As soon as someone else in the circle hears something that links them to the person talking, that person jumps in, links arms with the first person and continues the story by describing themselves, what the do, where they live, etc.
3. People keep adding themselves to the chain as they hear something that relates to them.
4. The last person must share their info until the first person finds a similarity, created a circle of linked arms.

**Three Words Tell a Story**

1. On separate pieces of paper, each person is asked to write down 2 words. Try to write down the first 3 words that come to mind.
2. The leader takes the 3 words written on the papers from each person, shuffles them, and redistributes 3 words to each person. If someone has gotten one of their original words back, they can switch with someone next to them.
3. The first person in the line “starts the story” using the 3 words that they have.
4. The next person goes on to use their 3 words, and so on and so forth.