

Creating Connections and Using Icebreakers in Online Classes



Connection Strategies

- 1) As the host, you should arrive early to any session or class. Open the space/classroom, and greet everyone by name as they join. Individual welcomes can make each participant feel special and part of the group.
- 2) Set the atmosphere for the session by including something visual on the computer screen for all to see. Or you can have something hanging behind you or sitting next to you. You are using visual cues to create the mood for your session.
- 3) Begin with a quotation or several lines of poetry for connecting. Both quotes and poetry can be inspiring and are intentional. You might invite others to share something, too; but you should invite, not force sharing. Giving others the opportunity to share establishes a warm, open environment.
- 4) Encourage student connections during learning sessions. Connections can take place during opening activities, as well as during select learning opportunities, such as brainstorming, question/answer, and more.
- 5) Use programs and platforms in unique ways. Think of Padlet and Nearpod as two examples that students can use as group members to find out about their classmates.

Icebreakers

- a) Show/share an item on your desk or workspace that has a backstory: 30 seconds only!. You can ask participants to do this spontaneously, or you can tell them in advance. If you create a list with the sharing order, post it in the message area and help the activity move along smoothly.
- b) Ask everyone a question, such as, “How do you feel?” or “Share a color that represents your mood.” You might reconnect to this question or activity at the end of the session to bring it full circle.
- c) Invite students to bring an object to a session. You could provide guidance, such as, “Bring an object that you found in nature.” Have the participants hold the object and focus on it. Then put it on the desktop and draw a contour drawing.
- d) Take a picture of your shoes! Do this ahead of the meeting, have participants upload the photo, and let them share a bit of the “why” or background to the shoes. Alternately, this could lead to a fun “Whose shoes?” guessing game to break the ice.
- e) Social questions are helpful icebreakers, as you can modify the questions quite easily. Some questions might be, “What is something you’ve done this week that makes you proud?” or “What would you be doing right now if you could do anything you want to do?” You get the idea!

Some of the ideas in this handout are from:

[How to Forge a Strong Community in an Online Classroom by Caitlin Krause, April 15, 2020, Edutopia](https://www.edutopia.org/article/how-forge-strong-community-online-classroom)