

Inspire & Engage Your Learners! **Course Openers & Energizers**



Course openers (aka ice-breakers) and energizers are short interactive activities that ensure you and your learners will make the most of every learning experience. Learning is social, and these activities will give you and your learners the opportunity to make those connections that will deepen and extend the course experience. Course openers and energizers will:

1. Give learners the opportunity to express their expectations.
2. Allow participants to build their network and make personal and professional connections.
3. Build a sense of community and co-contributors to the learning experience.
4. Set the expectation for learners that their participation is part of the learning experience.
5. Help you and learners remember other participants' names.
6. Creates opportunities to think differently and challenge assumptions.
7. Spark energy into the session for adult learners who may be coming to the learning experience at the end of a busy day.

Plan a course openers for your first class, webinar or opening discussion board. Schedule energizers throughout the course with at least one every two or three sessions. Avoid the temptation to think that you “can’t spare the time” for these. Investing in social connections with course-openers and energizers will make the rest of the teaching experience much more effective and much easier for you as the instructor.

	Activity Name	Delivery Options	Instructions	Materials/Set-Up
1	Six Degrees of Connection	In-Class Format	-Hand out an index card to each learner. -Ask each learner to list the following aspects about themselves: (1) Home town (2) Favorite Hobby/Sport (3) Favorite meal/food (4) Favorite season (5) Favorite Vacation Activity/Destination (6) Country/City of Birth -Invite learners to stand up and begin comparing lists with other learners to find people who share a connection with one or more of the aspects. -Debrief: Ask how many people made all six connections. Invite individuals to share aspects that are unique, where they weren't able to find a connection.	-Slide or handout with instructions -Index cards -A few extra pens/pencils (just in case) -15-30 minutes of time
	Note: This activity can be changed from social/personal traits to professional or curriculum-related traits or opinions	Online Format	-Online, this activity can be done on a discussion board. It could also be done during a webinar using a breakout room for each question where learners pop in and out of each room posting their response to each question on the list. You could also introduce the activity during the webinar and ask learners to continue it on a discussion board. -The activity could be completed during the first week. It could	-Instructions -Discussion board set-up -Webinar set-up -15-30 minutes (synch.) -One week (asynch.)



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2	Hometown Tour Guide	In-Class or Online	<p>-Question for participants: When friends or family visit you from out-of-town, where is one place that you take them or that you recommend that they visit? This could be a tourist destination, a shopping destination, a favourite restaurant or event.</p> <p>-It's almost guaranteed that you and your learners will discover some delightful connections that otherwise may never have been revealed about one another.</p>	<p>-Instructions -15-30 minutes -Flipchart or white board to record sharing. Helps with learning names.</p>
3	Museum of Curiosities	In-Class or Online	<p>-Question for participants: If you could create a virtual exhibit that showcased the most important inventions and/or works of art, what would you choose to be in that museum?</p> <p>-This activity gives adult learners an opportunity to reveal areas of personal interest, research, experience or education.</p>	<p>-Instructions -15-30 minutes -Flipchart or white board (in class or webinar) to record sharing. Helps with learning names.</p>
4	World Problem Solvers	In-Class or Online	<p>-Question for participants: If you could solve one major world problem, what would that be and why? Do you have any suggested solutions?</p> <p>-Alternate Question: If you could solve one problem in this industry/sector (i.e. in your course domain) what would that be and why?</p> <p>-This type of activity also give participants the opportunity to share personal interests and/or passions and can lead to very meaningful connections between learners.</p>	<p>-Instructions -15-30 minutes -Flipchart or white board (in class or webinar) to record sharing. Helps with learning names.</p>
5	Biggest Misconception About...	In-Class or Online	<p>-Question for Participants: What do you think is the biggest misconception is about this industry/business/sector/profession/discipline and why? What could this industry/business/sector do to address these misconceptions?</p> <p>-This type of activity gives you and the learners the opportunity to gauge the different levels of experience in the group. It also gives more experienced learners an opportunity to share and educate less experienced participants.</p>	<p>-Instructions -15-30 minutes -Flipchart or white board (in class or webinar) to record sharing. Helps with learning names.</p>
6	Top Trends in...	In-Class or Online	<p>-Question for Participants: What do you think are the top one or two trends or issues impacting our industry/business/sector/profession/discipline?</p> <p>-This type of activity gives you and the learners the opportunity to gauge the different levels of experience in the group. It also gives more experienced learners an opportunity to share and educate less experienced participants.</p>	<p>-Instructions -15-30 minutes -Flipchart or white board (in class or webinar) to record sharing. Helps with learning names.</p>



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7	Networks and Influencers	In-Class or Online	<p>-Question for Participants: Who are the influencers, experts, bloggers that you follow online and in social media? What are some of the best online resources you have found for professional development? -This type of activity gives you and the learners the opportunity to gauge the different levels of experience in the group. It also gives more experienced learners an opportunity to share and educate less experienced participants.</p>	<p>-Instructions -15-30 minutes -Flipchart or white board (in class or webinar) to record sharing. Helps with learning names.</p>				
8	No Time To Explain	In-Class or Online	<p>-Separate the class into groups of 3-6 people. Provide them the scenario below. This type of activity doesn't have a right or wrong answer but encourages critical thinking, creativity, leadership, negotiation and collaboration.</p> <p>-You are trapped on the top floor of Robart's library when the zombie apocalypse begins. The Internet has gone down; phone lines are dead; all exits are sealed. You must, as a group, select five of the following objects to help you and your team survive. In the debrief the group must explain the rationale for each choice.</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="537 688 1635 992"> <tr> <td data-bbox="537 688 810 992"> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Toothbrush • Stapler • Hard Candy • White out • Construction Paper • Yoyo • Kleenex • Coffee Filters </td> <td data-bbox="810 688 1083 992"> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Food coloring • Pen • Camera • Gloves • Paper Clips • Glass Cleaner • Lego • Thumbtacks </td> <td data-bbox="1083 688 1356 992"> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Glue • Sunglasses • Camera Film • Balloons • Sheet Music • Multivitamins • Crayons • Dice </td> <td data-bbox="1356 688 1635 992"> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coffee • Rubix Cube • Globe • Candle • Gum • Ruler • Kite • Fireworks </td> </tr> </table>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Toothbrush • Stapler • Hard Candy • White out • Construction Paper • Yoyo • Kleenex • Coffee Filters 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Food coloring • Pen • Camera • Gloves • Paper Clips • Glass Cleaner • Lego • Thumbtacks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Glue • Sunglasses • Camera Film • Balloons • Sheet Music • Multivitamins • Crayons • Dice 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coffee • Rubix Cube • Globe • Candle • Gum • Ruler • Kite • Fireworks 	<p>-Instructions -30 minutes. 10-15 minutes for the discussion and 10-15 minutes for the presentation. -Flipchart or white board (in class or webinar) to allow the learners to record their decisions and share back with the class.</p>
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9	Who Started It?	In-Class	<p>-Ask learners to stand in a circle facing each other. Select a random person standing in front of you across the circle and indicate that they are now the Role Model for the activity. That person then points to another person who will be their Role Model, and so on until everyone is pointing at someone (the last person points back at the instructor). Ask everyone to fixate their eyes on their Role Model, and copy their movements exactly, standing completely still to start, and only moving if their Role Model does.</p> <p>Over a few minutes, you'll see how small movements will be interpreted and repeated as actions, and repeat around the circle endlessly, causing more and more movement over time.</p>	<p>-Instructions -15-30 minutes</p> <p>-This is an excellent activity for helping groups recognize group dynamics and how behaviours transform into culture. It also promotes awareness of respect and accountability among groups and overall team building.</p>				



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Energizer Questions

Use these energizer questions periodically through your course. For in-class teaching, you could turn this into a short pairs or small group activity to refresh learners' minds in between two major topics being covered in one session. In an online webinar, these could be questions that you post on the welcome white board that learners see as they wait for the webinar to begin. They could also be used for short, energizing group discussions with the whole class.



- Which historical event would you like to have witnessed?
- What do you complain about more than anything else?
- Is science or art more essential to humanity?
- Which language would you like to speak fluently, and why?
- What is the hardest thing you've ever done?
- If you could time travel, what period would you travel to?
- If you were given the money to remodel or redecorate where you live, what would you do first?
- What makes you laugh the hardest?
- Do you live more in the past, the present or the future?
- What is one fear that you'd like to conquer?
- How will humans evolve in the next five hundred years?
- What's your favourite quotation or saying?
- Who would you like to trade places with for one month?
- Where would you most like to travel?
- What's the most significant problem facing the world?
- What is the best way to spend a rainy weekend afternoon?
- Where would you live if you couldn't live where you do now?
- What does your perfect day look like?
- Who is the most famous person you've ever met?
- Do you think that space exploration is important?
- What makes a house, apartment or condo a home?
- What was your most memorable meal?
- If you could invite six people to dinner, living or dead, who would they be, and why?
- If you could be Prime Minister for the day, what law would you enact?
- What's the most annoying thing you experience as a driver or as someone who takes transit?

