

## **Activities for Building Your ASB Team**

This resource is designed to encourage creative use of hands-on tools for team building and group development. As a leader, you can use these activities in many different ways to leverage your own leadership and to challenge and engage those you lead. When used strategically, activities like these can contribute to group productivity, foster community, and facilitate the exploration of critical issues. Please keep in mind all accessibility needs with these activities before organizing them to ensure all participants can participate. All activities can be adapted to your program's needs, learning outcomes, and issues you are focusing on.

### **Animal Sounds**

*A great game to get people into small groups or pairs in which they can then discuss relevant topics, address questions, debrief and activity, or introduce themselves. Requires open space.*

Decide how many groups you want and think of that number of animals. Depending on the number of participants and the subsequent number of people who will be in each group, make the appropriate number of cards, each with one of the animal names on it. Give one card to each participant, being sure that they do not show it to anyone. When you say "go!" everyone should make the noise of the animal on their card. Once they all find each other, they will have found the people in their group!

### **Check-In Questions**

*Check-in questions are a great way to begin any meeting, seminar, or workshop. These can be related to the topic at hand, can be serious to facilitate group sharing and bonding, or can be all in good fun. Some examples follow.*

- Who is your hero? Why?
- What is the strangest dream you've ever had?
- What's your favorite current TV show?
- What was your favorite childhood toy?
- What is your greatest or most irrational fear?
- If you could live anywhere in the world, where would you want to live?
- What would be on your ideal sandwich? Your ideal piece of pizza?
- What is your least favorite animal?
- What character from a book or movie do you identify with?
- Tell us about your most embarrassing moment?
- What's the strangest combination of food you enjoy?
- Tell us about the worst date you've ever been on.
- What are you most proud of?
- If you could design a t-shirt with a slogan, what would it say?
- If you could be serenaded by any musical artist, who would it be?
- What is your favorite thing to do on the weekend?
- What's the most beautiful thing you've ever seen?

### **Concentric Circles**

*This is a great game which can either be a way to introduce people or can serve as a way to get them talking about real issues. The activity works best in even-number groups of anywhere from 12-30. Takes 20-25 minutes. Requires open space.*

Split participants into two equal groups. One group stands in a circle facing out and the other group stands facing them. The leader asks a question, and the person in the inner circle answers first; then the person in the outer circle answers and, if applicable, they have a little conversation. After a while (30-60 seconds, depending on the question), the facilitator says “switch” and the outer circle shifts to the right so everyone is facing someone new. Questions can be simple (i.e. “What is your favorite movie?”) or can be more deep/relevant to your group (i.e. “What is a serious fear of yours?” or “What is your biggest social concern?”)

### **“Ha”**

*This is a great and easy activity to start off a meeting or another activity. It gets people together and ready to focus on a group-oriented activity, raises the energy level, and gets people to interact with one another in a way that’s fun and funny. Great for a group of 15-20.*

Have all the participants from a circle and take a seat. The object of this game is for the participants, without laughing, to pass the word “ha” around the circle. The leader designates one person to be the head of the circle. That person begins the game by saying “ha.” The person sitting to his or her right must repeat the “ha and then say another “ha” the third person must say “ha, ha,” and then say an additional “ha.” This continues around the circle. The game ends when all the participants, trying not to laugh, have repeated the “ha’s” that preceded them and then added their own. If someone laughs the head of the circle must start over again. You may also use other words, like “yuck” or “tee-hee.”

### **Jolly Rancher**

*This is a great activity to get people into small groups in which they can then discuss relevant topics, address questions, debrief and activity, or introduce themselves. Requires open space.*

Everyone takes one jolly rancher from a bowl or jar and get into groups according to their color. Once in groups, the color of each group’s jolly rancher determines the question they must address, which can be as simple as “All Reds discuss your favorite movie,” or as subject matter relevant as “Green’s discuss what you thought was most controversial in the workshop we just attended.”

### **All My Neighbors**

*This is a fun, moving-around activity that breaks the ice, pumps up the energy, and loosens people up. It works well in small or large groups (12-50 people).*

Ask participants to form a shoulder-to-shoulder standing circle and then have each person

take a step back. Give each participant a place-holder which they should place at their feet. The leader takes a place in the center of the circle.

The facilitator says:

“This activity is similar to the game of musical chairs. As you’ll notice, there is one less place than people in the group. That’s why I’m in the center of the circle. So, I’ll begin in the center of the circle, but my task is to try and find a place on the outside of the circle and have someone else end up without a place. The way I’m going to do that is to make a statement that is TRUE for me. For example, if I am wearing tennis shoes, I might say ‘All my neighbors who are wearing tennis shoes.’ If that statement is also true for you, then you must come off your place and find another spot in the circle. I could also say something like ‘All my neighbors who love to swim,’ and if that’s true for you on the outside of the circle, you must move and find a new place. You may not move immediately to your right or left and you may not move off your space and return to it in the same round.

When you think people have had enough, simply say “OK, this is the last round.” Give a round of applause to the last person who ends up in the center.

### **Change 3**

*This is a good activity to introduce people to one another and to give them an opportunity to share information about themselves. It’s also an interesting lesson in observation, which can be used to initiate a conversation about what we notice in others, first impressions, or how we remember people. This can be effective with any size group (10-50).*

Pair members up. Have each pair study their partner for 30 seconds. Then have them turn their backs on one another and change three things about themselves (remove a shoe, roll up a sleeve, mess up hair, etc.). When they turn back around, partners guess what has been changed. Then ask them to change 3 more things and repeat. Repeat again!

Use this activity to encourage members to be perceptive of one another. Once pairs have shared what changed, encourage them to share something about themselves by asking one question.

- What is the best movie you have seen recently?
- What is the title of the last book that you have read?
- If you could be any animal other than human, what would you be?
- If you could travel to any place in the world, where would you go?
- What is your favorite sport?
- One adjective to describe you is....
- Other questions you find relevant, fun and/or important to ask

Change partners and repeat. When the group comes back together, each person shares one thing new they have learned about one of their partners.

## **Screamers**

*This is a fun group activity that, aside from loosening people up and being funny, addresses discomfort, stress, and interpersonal interaction. If you have participants in your group who are sensitive to loud noises, do not do this activity.*

### **Activity Instructions:**

- 1 Preparation: make sure the folks in the rooms on either side of you know that they will be hearing some loud yells / screams in a minute, that it will only last for about two-three minutes, and that everything is OK.
- 2 Have the entire group "circle up". Important: everyone needs to be able to see the eyes of everyone else.
- 3 Explain that you will be saying two sets of instructions repeatedly, "heads down" and "heads up." When you say "heads down," everyone looks down. When you say "heads up," everyone looks up, STRAIGHT INTO THE EYES of anyone else in the room. Two possible consequences:
  - a. If they are looking at someone who is looking at someone else, nothing happens;
  - b. If they are looking at someone who is looking right back at them, they are both to point in a very exaggerated manner at the other person and let out a SCREAM OR YELL. They are then "out" and take their places together outside of the circle to observe.
- 4 Once the "screamers" have left the circle, the circle closes in and you repeat step two, followed by step three, until you are down to two people. Yes, they have to do it one more time, even though the outcome is a foregone conclusion.
- 5 Processing questions: what made this "fun?" The short answer to the first question is the stress involved. You can then ask them to think about what the actual stress factors in the exercise are (will my scream sound silly? Will I embarrass myself?) and when did the stress seem to lessen or intensify?

## **Switch If... (similar to All My Neighbors)**

*It's a good way to get the energy level up and to find out small facts about people. The game works best in a group of twenty to thirty people, requires open space and either chairs or some place marker (like shoes).*

Everyone sits in a circle except for one person who is standing in the middle. The person in the middle says something like "switch if you are a sophomore." All the sophomores get up and have to switch seats while the person in the middle tries to take any empty seat. Whoever is left without a seat must then stand in the middle and come up with a "switch if..." statement.

## **Who Am I?**

*This is a good activity to facilitate interaction and get people to meet one another. It also encourages critical thinking, good question asking, and careful communication. For this activity you will need one sticky note per person. On each note write the name of a celebrity, political figure, cartoon character, book character, etc. You can choose one category or mix them up. Use a different person for each note.*

Place a sticky note on the back (or forehead) of each participant. The participants are to figure out who they are, but can only do so in the following manner. Find a partner and read each other's sticky notes. You may ask the other person three questions to which there are yes or no answers.

Once your questions have been asked and answered, make a guess as to your identity. If you are correct, move the sticky note to your chest and you become a "consultant" who gives clues to those still trying to figure out their identities. If you are not correct, find a new partner and repeat the process.

### **Hot Lava**

*This is a great activity that facilitates communication, problem solving, and teamwork. It's active, which is energizing, and requires creative thinking. The game requires open space and is ideal for a group of 10 to 15 people.*

The whole group stands on one side of the room behind a line. You tell them "You are on the shore of a Hot Lava River." If you touch it with any part of your body, you sink to the bottom and your whole team has to go back to the shore. Your mission is to get your whole team across the lava safely. The only resource they can use to help them cross the river is bricks (which are actually pieces of construction paper). If there is a brick between the group and the lava, they are safe. The only restrictions on the bricks are that they cannot be ripped in half and, more importantly, they cannot be touching the lava if someone is not touching them (i.e. a brick cannot be sitting by itself in the river). The group has to figure out what to do. The hardest part about planning this game is figuring out how many bricks the group should get; they need enough to get across but so many that the task is easy.

*A little help:* Basically, the group needs to get to a certain destination in the room without touching the floor. They can step on pieces of construction paper to get across, but each piece of paper must always have someone's foot on it. If there is not a foot on one of the "bricks" it sinks to the bottom and either you lose that brick and continue or the group must start over again from the beginning.

### **Human Knot**

*This is a fun game that emphasizes problem solving and communication. Additionally, it gets a group to work closely and physically together, which can be a good way to create a sense of closeness and cohesion. This works best in groups of 8-12.*

Divide the group into teams of 8 to 12 members. Have each person join right hands with another person in the group, but it has to be someone who is NOT standing immediately to the left or right. Then have each person join left hands with another person in the

group, but it has to be someone who is NOT standing immediately to the left or right and someone other than before.

Now the groups have to untangle themselves without letting go of hands. They may have to loosen their grips a little to allow for twisting and turning. They may have to step over or under other people. The first group to untangle their knot is the winner.

SPECIAL NOTE: There are four possible solutions to the knot.

- 1 One large circle with people facing either direction.
- 2 Two interlocking circles.
- 3 A figure eight.
- 4 A circle within a circle.

### **Human Scavenger Hunt or Bingo**

*This activity is a good way to get people up, moving around, and interacting with one another. It's also a great way to find out random facts and "trivia" about people in the group.*

Create a list of facts that could be true about people in your group. For example:

- lives in the current city your institution is in
- has met a celebrity
- wears contacts
- likes to cook

If you like, you can ask people to submit factoids about themselves in advance such that each fact on the sheet is true of one person in the room only. This makes the game more challenging but more personal as well. Have each person find and get signatures from a group member for whom one of the facts on the sheet is true. This can, but does not need to be, competitive. A fun twist on this game is to make it like a game of bingo, so that the facts are arranged in boxes on a Bingo board and to "win," someone must get a diagonal, horizontal, or vertical line by checking off boxes.

Speaks Spanish	Has green eyes	Has been to South America	Is wearing purple	Has been sailing
----------------	----------------	---------------------------	-------------------	------------------

Has climbed a mountain	Has a younger brother	Likes Chemistry	Has more than four siblings	Likes to cook
Has read "Harry Potter"	Has painted toenails	Speaks French	Has lived in more than 4 houses	Has family who live in another country
Wears glasses	Can put on a spare tire	Plays a musical instrument	Has been to a concert	Shares a bedroom
Was born in another country	Rides a skateboard	Likes science	Has seen "Shrek 2"	Likes Kiwi fruit

### **Name Toss**

*This is a good first-day, getting to know you game.*

Have group members form a circle. Each person says their name once. Provide a tennis ball or bean-bag and have one person toss the ball to another across the circle, calling their name first. When the second person receives the ball, they say, "Thank you (so and so)," to the thrower, calls the name of a third person and tosses the ball to them. The cycle repeats until a pattern has been made and each person has received and tossed the ball once. Repeat the pattern to see how fast it can be completed. Add a second and third ball. This activity reinforces names.

As an addition to this basic game, you may also use a beach ball on which you have written a series of questions. For example:

- favorite movie
- favorite book
- place in the world you'd most want to travel
- first pet's name
- best dish you can cook
- favorite dessert

When someone catches the beach ball, after thanking the thrower by name, they look at their right thumb and answer the question on the ball that the thumb is touching.

### **Peek-a-Who**

*This is a fun, active game that helps people to learn the names of others. This game could work for most age groups. Requires some open space and a large blanket or sheet. Best for a group of 15-30.*

Make sure everyone introduces themselves a few times (or this can be done at a second or third group meeting when people should, but might not yet, know names fairly well). Split the group into two equal teams. The leader and a co-facilitator hold the blanket between the two teams. Everyone (except the leader and co-facilitator) kneels down so that they can't see over the blanket. Each team quietly sends one group member up to the blanket. The leader counts to three and then drops the blanket, leaving the two people facing one another. Each person tries to say the name of the other person first. Whoever loses (i.e. can't remember the name of the person they're facing) goes over to the other side. The game ends when the team has everyone on their side.

### **True or False?**

*It encourages sharing of personal stories and gets a group to work together. If well facilitated, it can also encourage students to engage in careful and analytic reasoning.*

Ask each participant to think about two truths about themselves and one lie. Go around the group having each participant share their three points and have the group guess which is a lie.

### **Personal Brand**

Members create their own "Brand" by filling in information about themselves using words or drawings. They then share with the rest of the group. Information can include:

- Significant life events
- Hobbies
- Favorite heroes
- Family members
- Future goals
- Travel experiences
- What they bring to the group
- What they hope to gain from the experience

### **Social Second**

"Social Seconds" are a nice way to foster community bonding among your participants before the ASB trip occurs. Each week the trip leaders break up the participants into pairs. Within these pairs, the two participants must set up a time outside of class to meet up with one another to have lunch, go on a walk, etc. The point is that everyone gets to know each other outside of the classroom context. To make participants accountable, require them to take a picture from their "social second" and post it to a shared group site.