Communication and Icebreaker Exercises

Two Truths and a Lie
Time Required: 15-30 minutes

Start out by having every team member secretly write down two truths about themselves and one lie on a small piece of paper – Do not reveal to anyone what you wrote down! Once each person has completed this step, allow 10-15 minutes for open conversation – much like a cocktail party – where everyone quizzes each other on their three questions. The idea is to convince others that your lie is actually a truth, while on the other hand, you try to guess other people’s truths/lie by asking them questions. Don’t reveal your truths or lie to anyone – even if the majority of the office already has it figured out! After the conversational period, gather in a circle and one by one repeat each one of your three statements and have the group vote on which one they think is the lie. You can play this game competitively and award points for each lie you guess or for stumping other players on your own lie. This game helps to encourage better communication in the office, as well as it lets you get to know your coworkers better.

The One Question Ice Breaker Exercise
Time Required: 15-20 minutes

This icebreaker not only gets coworkers talking to each other, but it also gets them working with one another. It’s quite simple: the leader gets to decide the situation the question will pertain to. Example situations include babysitting, leading the company, or being married. After pairing participants into teams, the leader will pose this question: If you could ask just one question to discover a person’s suitability for (insert topic here), what would your question be? Say the leader chose to go with a marriage situation. That means each person in a two-person team would come up with one question that would help them discover whether or not their partner was suitable to be married to them. If the topic was babysitting, each team member would have to come up with just one question whose answer would help them determine whether or not the person was suitable to babysit their child. This icebreaking exercise can also get mixed up by issuing one situation for the entire group or allocating a different situation to each team member or pair to work on. Depending on the situation chosen, the exercise can be very fun, but it can also demonstrate that crucial questions should be developed properly.

Classification Game
Time Required: 10-15 minutes

The classification game can be a quick icebreaker or a more complex activity. For the purposes of this example, we will treat this exercise as a quick icebreaker. Before splitting the room into teams of four, explain the concept of “pigeon-holing someone,” which means classifying someone as something or stereotyping someone. It should be made clear that this type of classification is subjective and unhelpfully judgmental. Instruct the participants to introduce themselves to those in their team and quickly discuss some of their likes, dislikes, etc. After the introductions, reveal to the teams that it will be their job to discover how they should classify themselves- as a team- into two or three subgroups by using criteria that contains no negative, prejudicial, or discriminatory judgments. Examples of these subgroups can include night owls
and morning people, pineapple pizza lovers and sushi lovers, etc. This exercise encourages coworkers to get to know each other better and enables them to collectively consider the nature of all individuals within the team.

**Problem Solving Exercises**

**Picture Pieces Game**  
Time Required: 30 minutes

This problem solving exercise requires that the leader choose a well known picture or cartoon that is full of detail. The picture needs to be cut into as many equal squares as there are participants in the exercise. Each participant should be given a piece of the “puzzle” and instructed to create an exact copy of their piece of the puzzle five times bigger than its original size. They are posed with the problem of not knowing why or how their own work affects the larger picture. The leader can pass out pencils, markers, paper, and rulers in order to make the process simpler and run more smoothly. When all the participants have completed their enlargements, ask them to assemble their pieces into a giant copy of the original picture on a table. This problem solving exercise will teach participants how to work in a team and it demonstrates divisionalized ‘departmental’ working, which is the understanding that each person working on their own part contributes to an overall group result.

**Sneak a Peek Game**  
Time Required: 10 minutes

This problem solving exercise requires little more than a couple of sets of children’s building blocks. The instructor will build a small sculpture with some of the building blocks and hide it from the group. The participants should then be divided into small teams of four. Each team should be given enough building material so that they can duplicate the structure you’ve already created. The instructor should then place their sculpture in an area that is an equal distance from all the groups. One member from each team can come up at the same time to look at the sculpture for ten seconds and try to memorize it before returning to their team. After they return to their teams, they have twenty-five seconds to instruct their teams about how to build an exact replica of the instructor’s sculpture. After one minute of trying to recreate the sculpture, another member from each team can come up for a “sneak a peek” before returning to their team and trying to recreate the sculpture. The game should be continued in this pattern until one of the team’s successfully duplicates the original sculpture. This game will teach participants how to problem solve in a group and communicate effectively.

**Create your Own Team Building Activity**  
Time Required: 1 hour

The group leader should present participants with this fake problem: The hour was going to be spent doing a problem solving exercise, but as the group leader- you don’t know any and you don’t want to do one that the participants have already heard or tried previously. The goal- or problem- then, is to have each group of participants come up with a new problem solving exercise that they’ve invented themselves. Groups should be no larger than four or five people
and at the end of the hour, each group must come up and present their new problem solving exercise. Aside from being a problem solving exercise in and of itself, this exercise also promotes creativity, communication, trust, and time management, among other things.

**Tag Team Game**
*Time Required: 20-30 minutes*

This adapting exercise requires just a few simple tools, which include large sheets of paper, writing paper, pens, and markers. In this exercise, participants are broken up into groups of 4-8 people and instructed to share with their group their individual strengths and the positive attributes they feel would lend to the success of their group. They are to write these strengths and attributes down on a piece of paper. After their group discussion, each team will be given one large sheet of paper, writing paper, markers, and a pen. The groups should then be instructed to make the “ultimate team member” by combining each team member’s strengths and positive attributes into one imaginary person. This “person” should also receive a name, have a picture drawn of them, and have their different attributes labeled. The group should also write a story about this person, highlighting all of the things their imaginary person can do with all of their amazing characteristics. At the end of the exercise, each group should introduce their person and read their story. This exercise will help coworkers adapt to weakness they feel they or a team member may have by understanding that as a group, they are capable of having more strengths and positive attributes then they would have working solo.

**The Take Away Game**
*Time Required: 5-10 minutes*

This planning game only requires 15 coins of any time, including pennies. To play, the instructor can create multiple teams of two or have on group play another, with one representative from each team participating in each game until everyone has had a turn. The set up is simple: a coin is tossed to decide who goes first. Each side may remove two coins every time they call the it (heads or tails) correctly. The winner is the person/team removing that removes the last coin. The game can be made more complex by upping the number of coins a team can take when it’s their turn or by allowing coins to be put back. With increased complexity, the activity allows the teams a strategic planning stage. The goal is to have the players realize that simpler versions of the game can easily be planned and controlled by the team/person playing first.

**The Paper Tower**
*Time Required: 5 minutes*

This planning exercise is very simplistic in its approach, but it teaches participants the importance of planning, timing, and thinking on their feet. Each participant is given a single sheet of paper and told that it’s absolutely necessary that they construct the tallest free-standing structure in just five minutes using no other materials. After the five minutes and a review of the structures, a discussion can be had concerning who planned out their structure, who ran out of time, and what could be done differently next time.
Paper and Straws Game
Time Required: 15 minutes

This planning game is ideal for small groups and only requires drinking straws and some paper. The group leader needs to draw a large circle on a large piece of paper with concentric circles within it. Then, each circle must be assigned a score, with the biggest score being saved for the smallest, middle circle. This paper is taped onto the middle of a large desk. Then, each participant must gather around the table and be given a drinking straw. The group leader will make dime-sized balls by wadding up bits of paper. It is up to the group leader how many balls will be in play. The participants must blow into their drinking straws to push the balls around. It sounds easy, but as more balls come into play, the participants must plan with their coworkers how they will push balls into high-scoring sections without moving balls that are already in place. This may require re-positioning themselves in different locations around the table or having different players blow in different directions; it’s up to the participants to create their plan of attack. The group leader can end the game once they’ve reached a specific score or once each ball is in the middle. This simple exercise helps coworkers work together to create and follow through with a plan and it also encourages them to communicate.

Eye Contact
Time Required: 5 minutes

This trust exercise requires no special equipment, just an even number of participants. Making eye contact is sometimes difficult for people, as it requires a certain amount of trust and respect. Some people avoid it, while others simply aren’t very good at it; they make look away often or appear awkward or uncomfortable, sometimes fidgeting with other objects. This exercise, though simple, can help coworkers become more comfortable and trusting of each other through the practicing of eye contact. For this activity, have people group into pairs and stand facing each other. The idea is to have them stare into their partner’s eyes for at least 60 seconds. Neither participant should be wearing glasses or sunglasses of any kind. There may be some giggles at first, as it can feel somewhat awkward during the first try, but as participants get the hang of it, it should become easier for them to make eye contact for prolonged amounts of time.

Here are 4... Realistically we only need 2-3..

Limited Senses:
People are blindfolded & given a unique number. Challenge is to line up in sequential order, without talking. Works on communication skills.

Celebrity ID game
Summary: An icebreaker where each person has a label with a famous celebrity or character name on their back. Everyone mingles, asking “yes” or “no” questions to gain clues about the name posted on their backs.

Celebrity ID Game
Instructions: The Celebrity ID Game is a good way to get a large group to mingle and break the ice by interacting with lots of people rapidly. To set up, the moderator prepares several labels with famous celebrity or well-known names (e.g. Tom Hanks, Mickey Mouse, Barry Bonds, etc.) The moderator sticks a label on each person’s back. Then, the moderator announces it is time for the game to begin. At this point everybody mingles and introduces themselves to each other, and then each person asks yes or no questions to gain clues about the name. When a person correctly identifies the name, he or she removes the label and continues to mingle until a preset amount of time.

Never Have I (would do 2 groups)

Summary: An icebreaker where players sit in a circle and take turns saying interesting things they have never done. Each player starts with ten fingers. Each time someone says something that you’ve done, you drop a finger. The goal is to be the last player remaining.

Never Have I Ever

How to Play

Tell everyone to sit in a circle. Each player holds out all ten of your fingers and places them on the floor. One by one, each person announces something that they have never done; for example, they say, “Never have I ever been to Canada.” For each statement, all the other players remove a finger if they have done that statement. So, if three other people have been to Canada before, those three people must put down a finger, leaving them with nine fingers. The goal is to stay in the game the longest (to have fingers remaining). Thus, it is a good strategy to say statements that most people have done, but you haven’t. This can be humorous (e.g. “Never have I ever skipped a class in school” or “Never have I ever soiled my pants.”) The game provides a good way to find out unique experiences and facts about people.

Bigger and Better - we would hand out at the end of a session and when they came back with.

Summary: A teambuilding activity in which teams are given a small object (e.g. paperclips) and must keep trading and upgrading their objects to get the biggest, best objects possible until the time limit expires. The objects are judged for size, value, and creativity.
Materials: Paper clips or other small objects. Recommended Setting: Outdoors.

Bigger and Better

Instructions: How is it possible to turn a paper clip into a guitar, laundry machine, bicycle, or other huge objects like a yacht? Through a team-building activity called Bigger and Better! Split the teams into groups of two to ten, depending on the size of your overall group. Distribute paper clips (or some other small object) to each group. Clearly indicate the time limit for this activity (e.g. 2-3 hours), and let them go off to trade. The goal is to come back with the biggest, best, most creative object after a series of trading and upgrading. When the time expires, everyone reconvenes at a predefined location for the show-and-tell and judging process. Judges choose the best items on various criteria: size, value, creativity, and overall best. This game has benefits of having team members work together and think creatively on how to upgrade their items. Camaraderie is gained through this fun process – enjoy!