

Icebreakers and Energizers for UBC Orientations

Low Risk activities:

Partner Introductions: Pair first years up as they arrive. Get each partner to find out five or six pieces of info; things like where they're from, favorite food or movies, what they did this summer, areas of study at UBC, etc. Get the partners to share the info with the rest of the group.

Six Degrees of Separation: You probably know the principle: every person on this planet can (in theory) be connected to every other person by at most six common acquaintances. Split your group into partners, and try and get them to find a link. Or several. It can also be fun to try and see how many celebrities can be linked with your group.

Data Processing: Divide the group into smaller groups. Then have each group process each of the following data by having them either line up according to the order or to make a list of the people in the correct order. You can play as many rounds as you like. Each datum that is processed is one round. You can also come up with your own data. Examples: alphabetical by best friend's first name, alphabetical according to favourite food, length of hair, shoe size, birthdays, length of thumb. This can be a good game to introduce everyone to interesting things about all participating.

Geographic Location: Each group member is from a different geographic location, but together they will form a map. The facilitator will layout the general boundaries and directions for the map. Once a map has been established, without talking each group member will stand where he/she thinks they belong to make the map as close to scale as possible.

Group Juggle: You have the group stand in a circle (5-12 people). The object is to toss an object (ball, hacky sack, stuffed animal, etc.) around the circle. However, before a person throws the object they have to call out the person's name they are throwing it to. They throw it to the same person each time you go around the circle (they continue the same pattern). As they begin to get the hang of it, I usually add more objects. With the addition of more objects there is usually a lot more laughter as everyone is trying desperately to pay attention so they do not get hit with an object or drop one and have three more coming their way. After the activity I will have volunteers name all of the people in the circle. I will give everyone in the circle an opportunity to name everyone (also a great way for facilitators to learn names).

Hot Potato Categories: This is a great activity to get people's energy up at the beginning of training. You start by tossing around a kosh ball. Then you tell them - as you're tossing - that the ball has become very hot and if they hold it in their hands too long they will burn. They need to toss the ball as soon as they catch it. Then while still tossing you yell out a category - they need to fill in that category before they can toss the ball - if it takes them too long they are out. For example, if you yell out magazines

they need to yell out "Vogue" "Ebony" before they toss the ball but if it takes them too long they will burn and they are out - they are also out if they fill it with something that has already been said. Do this as long as you want or until one person is left. Possible categories: places people have visited favourite foods, classes people have taken, bands/musical artists, and countries. Feel free to make up your own categories. Enjoy!

Alliteration Name Game: Get your group to sit in a circle. Go around the circle and have each person say their name and an adjective/word starting with the same letter. For instance, Terrific Timothy or Crazy Camille. Then each person must repeat the names and associated adjectives of all those who went before them.

Silent Birthdays: Divide your group into two smaller groups. Tell them they cannot talk but have to arrange their group in order of birthdays from earliest to latest. The first group to arrange themselves and jump up and down as a group wins (only if they actually are in the right arrangement when you check).

Two Truths and a Lie: Give every person in the group about 2-3 minutes to think of two things about them or related to them that are true and then also get them to make something up that is a lie (but a convincing one!). When your group is ready, go around the circle in any order and each individual will say their 3 things (in random order). The rest of the group will then have to guess which is the lie. People tend to share stories about their truths if they are interesting enough. Good way to learn fun things about people.

Pick Candy (or toilet paper) and talk: Pass around a bowl of candy or a roll of toilet paper and let everyone pick an arbitrary amount of candy or toilet paper. Once everyone has their number let them know that the amount they picked is how many things they have to tell the group about themselves.

Rutabaga Rutabaga: Have everyone sit around in a circle. Tell everybody to name a unique fruit or vegetable one at a time around the circle and that knowing a few fruits or vegetables named will be useful. Once one round of the circle is done, ask them to name their fruit or vegetable one at a time around the circle (to check for doubles and so that others have an idea of what fruits or vegetables are out there). Now that everybody knows a few fruits or vegetables, as well as their own, they begin by covering their teeth with their lips. If at any point during the game, you show your teeth (either by laughing, smiling, an accident, etc.), you are out of the game. One person starts by saying their fruit or vegetable and naming another fruit or vegetable in this fashion: "Carrot Carrot, calling Apple Apple". This is of course, still with their lips covering their teeth. The game ends when either one person is left or everybody is laughing way too hard.

Medium Risk activities:

Mingle, Mingle, Mingle: This activity gives participants the chance to meet a lot of new people in a short amount of time. It's helpful for the facilitator to have a whistle or noisemaker of some sort to lead this activity. A large open space works best for this exercise. Ask everyone to stand. When you blow the whistle, everyone should begin to walk around the room, amongst one another saying "mingle, mingle, mingle, mingle..." When you blow the whistle again you will shout out a number between three and seven. If you shout "three", for example, participants must quickly get together with others to form groups of three. If you shout "six," participants form groups of six. Simple, huh? Once in their groups, they should have a seat on the floor. When everyone is in groups and seated, you will give them a statement to complete. (Examples: "My

favorite movie is..." "The most fun I had this past summer was..." "If I could travel anywhere, I'd go to...") Everyone in each group introduces him or herself and completes the statement. Encourage participants to explain why they chose the response they did. When all of the groups have finished, blow the whistle and have them mingle again. It's best to do this about six or seven times to allow participants the greatest opportunity to meet and talk with a variety of people. This activity is great to use because it is low risk, gets everyone up and moving around, and allows participants to share in small groups. Lots of fun!

How You Doin'?: The group is standing in a circle. One person is chosen to be IT! That person stands in the middle then walks over to someone else and says "How you doin'?" while shaking his or her hand. That person responds "How you doin'?" (still shaking hands) They ask one another a total of 3 times, then take off in different directions around the outside of the circle, walking. The idea is to get back to the starting spot first. The other folks in the circle can slow the walkers down by holding out their hand to shake and say "How you doin'?" The walkers must shake the hands and respond with "How you doin'?" The one, who doesn't get back to the spot, is then IT! This is funny game to watch and gets the blood movin'!

Fruit Salad: This is a really effective Group Activity Builder and can also be used as an energizer. Sit every one in a circle and name them apple, banana, pear. Go on doing this until they are all named with one of the three fruits. You then selected a caller who can shout either: apple banana pear or fruit salad. If apple is shouted all the apples have to get up and swap seats as quickly as they can, the last person to sit down is then the caller. If fruit salad is shouted everyone must change places. Play as many rounds as you like.

Evolution: It is a paper, rock, scissor energizer for all ages! The "evolution" is from egg to chicken to Supreme Being. And the de-evolve supreme being-chicken-egg. Everyone starts as an egg (all hunkered down, low to the ground) and finds another egg. Play paper, rock, scissors and the winner goes to a chicken (elbows out- bah bahk bahk) the loser stays an egg. When you become a supreme being you yell I am a supreme being and then you are finished. Eggs play eggs, chickens play chickens. Just mingle about finding a kindred egg or chicken to play.

Whomp'em: One person is the "Whomp 'Em Master." That individual stands in the middle of circle. The rest of the group stands in a circle shoulder to shoulder with one hand out palm facing up (leaving enough room for person standing in middle). The object of the game is for the "Whomp 'Em Master" to get stuck in the middle of circle. Someone starts off round by saying the name of a member of the group. The Master must "Whomp" slap the hand of that member, before that member says the name of another member. The game goes on until the Master hits an individual before that individual can say another person's name (can not repeat name that has been said in round already.) If the person flinches when the Master goes to slap their hand then they now become the Master. When the Master succeeds in "Whomping" an individual or if there is a flinch, that individual becomes the new Master. Quite crazy...but loads of fun! Best if played following another name game, so individuals have a sense of who each other are. This can also be modified to a game called Sock'em. This is where everyone sits down with their legs out and the person has to hit their foot with a sock before they can say the next person's name.

Balloon Toss: Have each individual write down an interesting fact about

themselves on a slip of paper put the fact in the balloon and blow it up, then the group tosses the balloons in the air and after 30 seconds of balloon tossing have each person grab a balloon. Once everyone has a balloon they need to pop it and find the person who wrote the fact. Slip of paper can include more than just one fact; it could have a whole series of questions each person would answer about themselves.

Blind Black Jack: Give each participant a playing card and ask them not to look at it. When everyone has a card you will say, "GO!". At this point, each player holds their card up to their forehead (never looking at it). Players have 20-30 seconds to get into groups of 3 or more people (you could allow 2, but more is better) trying to get as close to 21 as possible (face cards are 10, aces are 1 or 11). Players are not allowed to indicate the value of any other player's card. Counting down the last few seconds before yelling, "FREEZE!" is always a hoot too. At this point, the teams that were just formed can calculate their blackjack score. Players on the winning team get one point (honor system). Collect the cards, shuffle and redeal.

Wink Murder: Ask for one or two volunteer "sleuths". Send them out of the room. Get all other participants to sit in a circle and close their eyes. You will then begin walking around the circle and tell them that you will be touching one or two of them on the head. These folks are the killers. Go around and tap one or two of them on the head and when you have completed one full revolution around the group, ask them to look up. Tell them that they must look around the circle at each other and if you are winked at, then you are to let out a blood-curdling scream and keel over and die. Then you pick yourself up and move out of the circle. It is the task of the sleuths to figure out who the murderer(s) are.

Famous Duos: Print out a list of famous duos and cut them out e.g. Scooby doo, Shaggy; Han Solo, Chewbacca; Lennon, McCartney etc.etc. Then tape them to random peoples' backs and tell them they are to mingle around, introduce themselves to people and ask one YES/NO question about who they are. Once they have figured out who they are, they need to find their match.

Dance Move: This game is similar to the Alliteration name game. Get your group to sit in a circle. Go around the circle and have each person say their name and do a dance move. Then each person must repeat the names and associated dance moves of all those who went before them.

Big Booty Big Booty: This game is actually two difficult to explain in words (trust me a tried). It is a really fun game, but it needs to be demonstrated. Hopefully we will have a video of it that you can look at.

Charlie's Angels: Get your group in a circle. One person is 'IT' in the middle. The person who is IT spins around with their eyes closed and then stops a few seconds later pointing at somebody (call them person A). They say person A's name. Let the person to the right of A be called 'B' and the person to the left of A be called 'C'. People A,B,C have to make a Charlie's Angels pose. A (middle) has to pose like they are talking on the radio, B (right) has to pose like they are holding a gun (James bond pose), and C (left) has to pose like they are karate chopping (like a ninja). The last person of the group of three to successfully hold their pose is now 'IT'. Repeat.

Zip, Zap, Zop: Get your group in a circle. In this Group Activity Builder you go

around the circle saying your name and then one of “zip” “zap” or “zop”. Zip (accompanied with a two handed gun point to the right) sends the talking to the person on your right, zap (accompanied with a two handed gun point to the left) sends the talking to the person on your left, and zop (accompanied with a two handed gun point to someone across the circle) sends the talking across the circle. Continue until someone screws up. Repeat.

YeeHaw: This GAB is similar to Zip Zap Zop but with more possible things to say and you don’t say your name. YeeHaw (accompanied with an arm movement) keeps the talk going the same direction around the circle. Hoedown makes the talk go in the opposite direction. Toss the bail (accompanied with a tossing motion) makes the talk go across the circle. Barn doors closed (accompanied with a arms up, elbows together motion) send the “toss the bail” back to the tosser (this can only be used against a “toss the bail”). Ride the pig makes everyone bend their knees and pretend they are riding a pig and keep the talk going on in the circle. You can make other create commands if you would like.

Bang Bang: This game is similar to Charlie’s Angels. Get your group in a circle. One person in the middle spins around and stops pointing at somebody. The person they point at has to duck and the person to the left and the right of the ducking person have to say “bang bang” and point pretend finger guns at each other. The last person to say bang bang is then it. Alternatively, if the center person doesn’t duck before the two people on the sides say bang bang, then the center person is it. Repeat.

Interlocking Hands: (indoors) Everybody lies down on the ground in a circle. Everybody puts their right arm over the next person’s left arm (and therefore left arm under). You go around the circle taping the ground with your hand. One tap continues the chain around the circle in the same direction and two taps changes direction. If somebody screws up, moves when they aren’t suppose to, that hand is taken out of the circle. Game continues until there are only two people left.

Follow the Leader: One person exits the room (goes away and turns back to group). Pick a leader. The person who exited is the detective. They have to go in the center of the circle. Everyone starts clapping their hands and change activities only when the leader changes activities (ie: snapping, patting legs). The detective has to try and guess who the leader is.

Scuba Goggles: This game is a bit difficult to describe (thus, there is a cheat sheet located in the same folder as well as an online cheat sheet with pictures). Everybody starts by getting into a circle (they can either stand or sit). Everybody sings the “Lone Star Ranger” song and right after singing the song, they say “Scuba Goggles” and put their hands up to their eyes in a binocular-like fashion. One person starts by saying “boop” and with their hands still in the binocular-like fashion, they point with their hands in the direction they want to “boop” in. The next person in the circle can then “boop boop”, pointing twice in the opposite direction the “boop” came in to reverse the direction of the “boop” or “boop” in the direction the “boop” was originally in or “hey-o” which is skipping the person next up for the “boop” or lastly, can do a “ba-ooo-up” which is an extension of the binoculars to anybody else in the circle (think how a cartoon character has their eyes pop out of their heads in amazement and try to mimick that with your binocular hands). They “hey-o” is done by extending / stretching your hand up and in the direction of the “boop”. The next person is then skipped and the person after the next person then continues to pass the “boop”. The game restarts if at any point, the person messes up, either in the direction or in the signaling.

Side notes: You cannot “boop boop” a “ba-oo-up” or a “hey-o”. A “hey-o” cannot be used to reverse the direction of the “boop”.

High Risk activities:

Move Your Butt: Have the group sit in a circle. One person stands in the center; that person then says "Move your butt if..." and gives a particular characteristic. Appropriate examples include "Move your butt if you're wearing blue" or "Move your butt if you have a sister." Avoid inappropriate or personally invasive characteristics.

What Are You Doing: Group in circle, first person turns to person next to them and mimes an action, say brushing their teeth. The person next to them asks "what are you doing" the first person says anything but brushing their teeth, say "I'm tying my shoelaces" that person now starts miming tying their shoelaces and the person next to them asks "what are you doing" they could say "I'm flying a kite" and then that person starts miming flying a kite then next person in the circle asks "what are you doing" and so on.. around the circle.

Human Knot: The group starts out in one or two tight circles. Everyone in the group reaches across the circle with their right hand to grab another group member's right hand. The group then reaches in with their left hand to grab a different group member's left hand. The object is to untangle the group without letting go of hands until a circle is formed. If the group is having extreme difficulty, you can administer “knot first-aid” and break one set of tangled hands (with group consensus), otherwise group members may not let go at any time. You may have to decide as a group that the knot is not solvable, after prolonged attempt. NOTE: Can have group do without talking if they are advanced enough.

Machine Game: The object of this game is to create a machine out of a group of people (i.e. ceiling fan, hot air balloon, watch, washing machine, coffee percolator, bread maker, toaster, photocopier, record player etc.) You might want to split your group into two or three smaller groups. Each person is required to be accountable for one noise and one motion of the machine. The group members should then put their motions and sounds together to create the machine. Give each group about 5 minutes to work together and prepare, and then have the groups present to everyone. Ask the other groups to guess what machine the group is.

Machines to Build: Washing Machine, Photocopier, Bread Maker, Coffee Perker, Record Player, Toaster, Paper Shredder, Blender/Food Processor, Juicing Machine, Car Wash, Lie Detecting Machine, Airport X-Ray Machine, Lawn Mower, Laminator, Iron, Electric can opener, Vacuum Cleaner, Typewriter, Film Camera...

Look Down Look Up: Get everyone in your class to get up and stand in a relatively tight circle. Instruct everyone to look down and quickly choose someone randomly in the circle that they will look at when they are told to “look up. Say, “Look up”. If you are looking at someone who is also looking at you then let out a blood-curdling scream and then “remove” one eye (by closing an eye). Continue with game whilst choosing a new random group member to look at each time. If you find yourself looking at someone who also happens to have chosen you, again let out the cat-dying scream and if you only had one eye remaining, you now step-out of the circle. Game continues until there is one winner.

Everybody's It: This is a quick game of tag where everyone is “it”. If you tag

someone, they are “out”, and the game continues until either one or two players are left. The biggest rule here, is that there is NO RUNNING. As a primer, get someone to volunteer to demo the fine art of “speed walking”. This in itself is a good laugh.

Jukebox: Tell your group to be as creative as possible with their bodies and materials around them. You start off a musical something or other (a short melody, a beat) and ask the group to slowly add on (a harmony if they can, alternate beats, random noises) so that in the end you (hopefully) have a cacophony of joy.

Lines of Communication: In groups of about 5 or more, get them to sit on the floor in a line facing forward with about a foot in between them. Give the first person in each team-line (i.e. facing you) a piece of paper and a pencil. Tell the participants that the goal here is similar to playing “telegraph” where the last person in line will be shown a simple picture of something (perhaps a flower or a house). After viewing for a few seconds, and once all the other last-in-line folks have seen it, they must draw on the back of the person in front of them and so on and so on until the person in the front with the paper and pencil can draw a final picture (trying to resemble the original drawing, but chances are will look like a chicken had pencils attached to their legs and was walking aimlessly about).

Gotcha: Get everyone in a circle with about a body’s width in between them and the next person (and yes, this means a circle so that no one is standing behind anyone) and ask them to raise their left hand to their side as if they were a server carrying a tray. Then get them to place their right index finger more or less perpendicularly in the palm of the left hand of the person to their right (confused? Reread that.... It’ll make sense). Tell your participants that you will be telling a story, and that everytime you say the word “?????”, you must simultaneously try to grab the finger that is in your left palm, and also move your right finger so that it does not get caught. Safety rules here, if your finger is “grabbed”, don’t fight it because you’ll just dislocate your finger, and let’s face it, that ain’t a good time at all.

Building a Greeting: Ask your participants to partner up with someone (if there is an odd number, then you can play too). With this partner, they are to creatively think-up a greeting with 3 “moves” (e.g. high five, handshake, hipbump). After they have got this down-pat, ask them to find a brand new partner. With this new partner, they should teach and learn both greetings and then add them both together to give you a super greeting. If you think your group is capable of then progressing to the “uber-greeting” then by all means do so. At the end, ask for volunteers to demo their creations.

Huey, Louie, Dewey: Ask the group to get into groups of three and form one large circle (so that it looks sort of like a sun with the rays being 3 people long...). Tell them the first person is Huey, the next is Dewey and the last in line is Louie. Ask the Huey’s to take off one shoe and throw it into the centre of the circle. Let them know that you will call either Huey, Dewey or Louie and when you do, that person must run around the outside of the circle (in a designated clockwise/counterclockwise direction) and then through the legs of the other two team members and find the matching shoe.

Concentration: Split your group up into 4 teams. Ask for one volunteer from each team and have the 4 total volunteers to face into a small circle (about 5 ft in diameter). Have the other folks line up behind their respective team member. The way this game works is that you will name a category, and one person in the small circle will then have to name ONE thing that fits in the category that you chose (e.g. if the category is “cars” then players can name off “mustang, Ferrari, Chevrolet, fiesta etc”. You can decide

which order in which they would go in (clockwise/counterclockwise) and when a player in the small circle has named something, they move to the back of their line and there is a new rep for their team in the small circle. The category ends when one of the team reps in the small circle cannot think of something in ample time (which is arbitrarily decided by you). Continue this for as long as you want and the winning team is the one with the least “mess-ups”.

Knights, Maidens, Cavaliers: Get your group to pair up with someone of approximately the same size. Demonstrate the following positions (and alternate positions).

Knights: one partner is kneeling on one knee and the other partner sits on the knee that is up (alternative, partner two doesn't put any weight on knee).

Maidens: one partner jumps up into the arms of the other partner (alternative, partner two lifts one leg and partner one holds it up)

Cavaliers: one partner jumps onto the back of the other partner (alternative, partner one bends at the knees and partner two stands behind them with their hand in the air)

Ensure that you have demonstrated the alternative poses so that nobody hurts themselves. You will call out a position and the last pair that gets into this position is out of the game. Continue until there is one group left (or you have gone on too long).

Chuck the Chicken: This ACTIVITY requires that you have a rubber chicken. Break your group into two smaller groups. The way the game works is one member of group A throws the chicken. Then group A huddles as close as they can together while one member of their group runs around the entire group counting every time that person gets a full rotation around. While this is happening group B runs to the chicken and gets in a line behind it. They have to pass the chicken over their head and under their legs one after another until the chicken gets to the end of the line; where it is then thrown and the groups switch roles (with group A running after the chicken and group B huddling together). Do this a certain number of times and the team with the most running around their group wins.

Vis-à-vis: Get your group to find a partner. The way this GAB works is that you call out “ ‘body part’ to ‘body part’ ” (ex: head to head, or knee to but) and all the groups have to touch the two body parts together. Do a few of these and then call “vis-à-vis”. When this is called everyone has to switch partners and find somebody they haven't been a partner with yet. The last pair of people to become partners is out. Repeat.

Tunnels, Gates, Bridges: Ask your group to quickly get into teams of 3 (if this doesn't work out, then you can participate, or you can get one group of 4 or something as well), and ask them to form a circle. Explain the three actions:

- A bridge is two people crouching down with their arms extended as low as possible and hands just touching.
- A tunnel is two people standing up tall with their arms up in the air and hands touching so that it sort of looks like a tunnel with a space in between (more like a house I guess, but humour me).
- A gate is two people standing with arms extended with their hands just touching.
Get each person on a team to designate themselves as the tunnel, bridge or gate.

Have soft toys or candy or something in the middle as prizes. So the way the game works... you will make up some story and if within that story you say the word "tunnel" the people designated as "tunnel" will have to run around the outside of the circle in a clockwise/counterclockwise direction (its up to you, BUT BE SURE TO TELL THEM WHICH WAY YOU WANT THEM TO GO). The other two team members have to form the corresponding structure as described above and the "tunnel" person will then run through the tunnel once they have run around the circle and try to collect one of the prizes before they all go. This activity is a lot of fun, but make sure no one cracks any skulls. Tell them no diving or something. Believe me... I have seen diving.

Alphabet Charades: Form groups of 4-5 players and have each group designate a starting actor. The facilitator (you) will then call out a letter and the actors will try to act out words that begin with the letter you called out, and the rest of the team has to guess. If they guess right, the actor yells "yes" and they chalk up one point. Continue for as long as you see fit, and then switch up actors amongst the group

Human Scavenger Hunt: Break the large group into smaller groups of about six to twelve people each. Have each group stand or sit together in a place that is separate from the other groups but of equal distance from you - the leader who stands in the middle of the room. Read one item from the list at a time. The team who sends up a person or group of people to you first that fits the description you have just given earns a point. For example, you might say "two people who have the same middle name" and within each group the members must talk, find out if any two have the same middle name, and then quickly send those people up to you. The first group of people with the same middle name to reach you earns a point for their team. You may give a bonus point for different items if it applies - for instance, if a group has three people with the same middle name they may earn a point for this round even if they were not the first group to get to you. The group with the most points at the end of the game wins.

Human Scavenger Hunt List

1. Two people who have the same first and last initial
2. The person in your group who was born the farthest away from here
3. Two people with the same middle name
4. A group of people whose ages add up to 100
5. Two people with the same birthday (or birthday month)
6. A group of people whose shoe sizes add up to 40
7. The person in your group who lives the closest to here
8. A group of people who have attended school for a total of 38 years
9. A group of people who can spell a word by putting together the first letters of their first names
10. A group of three people who all have different colored eyes

Variations

~ Ask for items such as "a 1982 coin" or "an expired drivers license" or any other items that group members may be able to find in their pockets, purses, wallets, or on themselves.

~ Add a stunt to each item on the list - for example, "Two people who have the same first and last initial must leap frog up to me".

