

Community Building Activities

The following are ideas for activities that can be prepared and led by students to build a sense of community and help students create a safe and welcoming space. Allow students to choose and lead the activity or come up with their own ideas!

The activities are divided into sections based on the type of activity:

1. Getting to Know You
2. Team building
3. Brain Breaks
4. Mindfulness



Click on each of the activity types to go directly to the activities page.

To ensure a safe space, if students select to create their own activity, they should share the ideas with the teacher for approval before class.

1. Getting to Know You Activities – These activities are designed to help students get to know each other in a fun and engaging way.

1A. Snowball or Paper Airplanes

(5-8 min)

Required Materials:

- ¼ sheets of paper
- Pen or pencil

Give students a topic or question to write about. This could be an interesting fact, a question they have, something they have struggled with, etc. Once they have written their responses, anonymous or not depending on the goal of the activity and the comfort level of your class, have them crumple the paper up into a “snowball” or fold it into a paper airplane.

Variation: Trashketball – In this variation, students may write about topics that are more personal or sensitive, and part of the activity is to “let go” of those things by symbolically throwing them away.

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1B. Two Truths and a Lie

(5-7 min)

No materials are needed.

Each student should think of two things to share about themselves that are true, and one thing that is false. When it is their turn, they say all three things, and other students will try to guess which statement is false.

Variation: Give students a story topic such as “How I broke a bone.” Each student will tell a story about a time they broke a bone, choosing to tell the truth or make something up. The rest of the class or group must decide if they think the story is true or not.

1C. Would You Rather...

(3-5 min)

No materials are needed.

Provide a series of choice-based type questions and have students pick a side based on their answers. If time allows, have them discuss and share. This can be done in several ways: stand up/sit down, raise a hand, stand to the right or to the left, or assign various corners of a room.

Examples:

- Would you rather read the book or watch the movie? Get up early or stay up late? Have eternal summer or eternal winter?

Variations: Similar activities include This or That, Blobs and Lines, 4-Corners, Categories, etc.

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1D. Common Ground

(5-8 min)

No materials are required.

This activity is designed to help students identify things that they have in common. In small groups, give students 60 seconds to find one thing they have in common. Then, that group pairs up with another group, and they have 60 seconds to find one thing they have in common. Repeat until the “group” is the whole class and students can identify one thing they all have in common. You may need to encourage them to think beyond “We all go to the same school” and find a more unique thing.

Variations: Have students stay in their original groups and see how many things they can come up with in common in 2 minutes.

1E. I Love My Neighbor Who...

(5-8 min)

No materials are required.

Invite students to form a circle around the room. The person leading the activity will stand in the middle of the circle and say, “I love my neighbor who...” and picks something such as “is the oldest in their family” or “likes French fries.” Everyone who agrees with the statement must find a new spot (like musical chairs). The last person without a spot, becomes the person in the middle and will pick the next “I love my neighbor who...” statement.

1F. The Most and Least Interesting Thing About Me

(5-8 min)

No materials are needed.

As a quick “get to know you” question, ask students to identify the most interesting and then the least interesting thing about themselves. Start in partners, and then have two pairs combine to make a group of four, and then a group of eight and so on until you have a large group again. Students can take turns sharing about others in their group.

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1G. I Am Unique

(5 min)

No materials are needed.

As a class or in small groups depending on class size, have one person stand up and say, “I am [name] and something that makes me unique is...” If anyone else in the group shares the same thing, they will stand up. The first person will give another quality that makes them unique, repeating the process until they find one thing that only relates to them. Once the first student finds a unique quality, a second student will stand up and start over. End the game as soon as the second student finds a unique quality.

1H. Never Have I Ever...

(5-8 min)

No materials are needed.

Start by having each student hold up a hand with all five fingers. The first student will make a ‘Never have I ever...’ statement, and anyone who HAS done what the student says puts a finger down. Then another student goes, and the process is repeated until either (1) the first person or people are out, no fingers left, or (2) only one person is left with one or more fingers up.

Variation: For a quicker round, play this game as “Sit down if...” Instead of putting a finger down, students simply sit down if the statement applies to them.

1I. What’s Your #Hashtag

(5-8 min)

No materials are needed.

Hashtags are a quick way to direct content to a particular topic or idea. If you had your own hashtag for your life, what would it be?”

Examples: • #icecreamforbreakfast • #lastyearbestyear • #hussleharder

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1J. Personal Acrostic

(5-8 min)

Required Materials:

- Paper and pen/pencil

What is the one word that most describes your purpose? Use each letter of the word to describe or share something about yourself.” For example: • E: Energetic Extrovert • M: Makes the most of a rainy day • M: Morning person • A: Always looking out for their friends.

Variation: Instead of using their own name, give students a common work, a school mascot for example, and have them work in groups or pairs to create an acronym/acrostic that represents their school.

1K. Line It Up

(5-8 min)

No materials are needed.

Tell students that they will be asked to line themselves up in a certain way without talking.

Examples:

- Alphabetically by first or last name
- By height or by birthday

Community Building Activities

2.Team-Building Activities – These activities are designed to help students work collaboratively in a fun and engaging way.

2A. Nonsense Concepts – What’s it for?

(5-8 min)

Required Materials:

- Uses objects found in the classroom.

Let students choose an object in your room and tell them, “Most people see this item as a _____ (textbook, stapler, etc.); however, it is really a _____.” Make up a nonsense concept, such as, “It is really a booster seat for a small monkey.” Divide students into groups of 4-5 and have them determine at least three different uses for the item. Share their creative ideas.

2B. Humdingers

(5-8 min)

Required Materials:

- List of common/well-known song titles, 2 copies

Distribute familiar song titles to students and tell them not to reveal the titles they have. At least two people should have each song title. Ask students to hum their songs to find others who have the same song. Remind students that they can only hum, not sing any of the words!

2C. Who or What

(5-8 min)

Optional Materials

- ¼ sheets of paper
- Pen or pencil
- Tape

Give each person a piece of paper. Have them write down a famous person's name or a well-known place and gather the papers in a pile. Tape one of the papers on each student's back, making sure they do not see what it is. Students will walk around the room and ask each person a “yes or no” question about the famous person taped on their back, or a “who or what” question before moving on to the next person. The goal is to guess the person or place correctly with the fewest questions asked.

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2D. Upon a Time

(5-8 min)

Required Materials:

- Paper
- Pen or Pencil

Ask each student to write down a person's name, a place, or a thing. Have them share quickly with the rest of the group. Next, have one student begin to tell a story using the person, place, or thing they wrote down within 10-15 seconds. After 10-15 seconds, the next student continues the story, using their word, until each student has added to the story. You can record the story and play it back later as well.

2E. World's Worst Advice

(5-8 min)

No materials are needed.

Pick a profession and have each student give the worst advice that someone in that profession might say. For example, the world's worst dentist might say, "Make sure you eat 20 pieces of candy a day!" or "Never brush your teeth!" Students stand in a circle. Give them a few seconds to think, then have each person say what the world's worst professional would say. They can pass but come back to those who passed later.

Variations: Give students a scenario and have them give bad advice. Have students pick different jobs or professions. You can also play this as the "World's Best Advice."

2F. Extreme Rock-Paper-Scissors

(5-8 min)

No materials are needed.

Each person plays rock-paper-scissors with a partner (best 2 out of 3). The winner finds a new person to play, while the loser follows the winner, cheering them on. After the next round, the winner will have two people cheering for them, and so on. The game ends when 2 players are remaining, and the rest of the class is cheering them on.

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2G. This is Better Than That

(5-8 min)

Required Materials:

- Miscellaneous classroom materials

This team-building game is a fun spin on the classic Deserted Island scenario. To prepare, collect about eight random items from around the classroom: anything from a stapler to a chair. Choose as many odd items as you can. Place students in small groups of 4-5. The goal is for groups to select the item they would bring with them to a deserted island to survive. After teams deliberate, allow each team to present the item they chose and explain why.

Variation: Change up the scenario, trip to the moon or trapped in the mountains in the winter.

2H. Spell It Out

(5-8 min)

No materials are needed.

Put students in groups of 2 or 3 spread out around the room. One student will ask a question, while another student will spell out their answer with their body (like “YMCA” motions), and the other student guesses what is spelled. Repeat until each student gets a turn or for as long as time allows.

2I. Riff-Off

(5-8 min)

No materials are needed.

This is a simple game that can be played as a whole class, in small groups, or with teams. One person sings a song for about 10 seconds. The next person must sing a new song starting with the last word of the previous song. Any person or team who cannot come up with a song is out. Play for as long as time allows.

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2J. Double Charades

(5-8 min)

Required Materials:

- Double [Charades Activity Sheet](#)

Divide the class into two or more teams of at least four students, with an even number of students in each team. Group students within each team into pairs. Give each team a copy of the Double Charades list or project it for students to see. If you choose to project, make sure students who are guessing have their backs turned to the screen. Have each pair use non-verbal communication to get the rest of their team to guess the famous friends from the Double Charades list. Feel free to add your own.

2K. Snap, Clap, Slap

(5-8 min)

No materials are needed.

Sit in a circle or in a way that students can see each other. The first student will choose a motion, either snap, clap, or slap. The next student will repeat that motion and add one to it. The third student will repeat the first and second motions and add their own. This repeats until each student adds a motion. If someone messes up the pattern, they are out.

2L. Spot the Difference

(5-8 min)

Required Materials

- Large sheets of paper

Students should pair up and get 30 seconds to memorize everything about their partner's appearance. When the time is called, they turn away from each other and change something (i.e., take off a headband or button another button). Which pair can identify each other's changes the fastest?

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2M. Worst-Case Scenario

(5-8 min)

Required Materials:

- Worst-Case Scenario [Activity Sheet](#)

Divide the class into groups of 2-4. Give each group a 'worst-case scenario' card. Groups will have five minutes to come up with as many possible plans to survive the scenario. Create a back-up plan for your back-up plan. Share the best plans to the class.

Community Building Activities

3. Brain Breaks – These Activities are designed to give students a brain break by tapping into some more creative challenges.

3A. Doodle Break

(3-5 min)

Required Materials:

- Piece of paper
- Pen or pencil

Give each student a piece of paper, then give everyone a basic shape or element, such as a line or a circle, that they will then have 3 minutes to turn into a drawing of something else. As time allows, have students share their art in small groups or with the class. You can also give a theme such as animals or food that they have to work with.

3B. Build Your Creative Muscles

(5-8 min)

Required Materials:

- Miscellaneous classroom supplies and materials.

Give students materials such as paper, sticky notes, string, tape, paperclips, and anything you have lying around the classroom. Ask them to build small models of different objects (tree, dog, elephant, car) in increments of 3-5 minutes. Pick a winner each time. Keep the same groups or mix them up.

3C. Pictionary

(5-8 min)

Required Materials:

- Paper
- Pen or Pencils
- Whiteboard and markers

Before the activity, cut up a list of possible topics (easily found online) and put them in a hat or bucket. Divide the class in half. The first team will choose a person to draw the topic on the board while the rest of the team tries to guess the topic in about 60 seconds. If the team does not guess the picture correctly, the other team can guess before taking their turn to draw.

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3D. I Spy

(5-8 min)

No materials are needed.

Play several rounds of this classic game, either in small groups or as a class. In the first round, have students “spy” an object in the room. In the next round, students can “spy” people by describing something external (“I spy someone wearing blue”). In the last round, the students will “spy” people by describing something internal, for example, “I spy someone who is thinking about having a special dinner tonight”.

3E. Movie Ball

(5-8 min)

Required Materials:

- Small object that can be tossed

Have students stand in a circle. One participant says the name of a movie and bounces a ball (or a crumpled-up piece of paper) to somebody else. The receiver has five seconds to name a related movie (both Disney movies or both have the same actor). Continue to bounce the ball to individuals in the group. Participants are out of the game if they repeat a movie or fail to say a name within the time limit. Eventually, two people will remain and compete against each other.

Variations: The game can be played with any number of topics so long as students are familiar.

3F. Five-Minute Poetry

(5-8 min)

Required Materials:

- Five-Minute Poetry [Activity Sheet](#)

Have students, either individually or in small groups, write a short poem in five minutes or less using the list of words provided. You can give students a topic to focus on or let the poem be about anything they choose. You can also allow students to choose three “free words” not on the list.

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3G. Brain Teasers

(5-8 min)

Required Materials:

- Brain Teasers [Activity Sheet](#)

In partners or small groups, have students try to figure out the word puzzles. How many can they guess in five minutes?

3H. Snap, Clap, Slap

(5-8 min)

No materials are needed.

Sit in a circle or in a way that students can see each other. The first student will choose a motion, either snap, clap, or slap. The next student will repeat that motion and add one to it. The third student will repeat the first and second motions and add their own. This repeats until each student adds a motion. If someone messes up the pattern, they are out.

3I. Phone Scavenger Hunt

(5-8 min)

Required Materials:

- Phone Scavenger Hunt [Activity Sheet](#)

For this scavenger hunt, students will need their phones. We all probably have 100's if not 1000's of photos on our phones. Let's see if you can find the following types of pictures. You can only use one person per photo!

Community Building Activities

4. Mindfulness Activities – These activities are designed for students to take a pause and reset.

4A. Ear-Nose Switcharoo

(5-8 min)

No materials are needed.

This is a quick and easy challenge to reset the brain. Instruct students to touch their left ear with their right hand, and at the same time touch their nose with their left hand. Then have them switch their hands and touch their right ear with their left hand, and their nose with their right hand. Switch back and forth a few times. Then have them close their eyes, take a deep breath, and exhale.

4B. Focus Ball Breathing

(5-8 min)

No materials are needed.

Certain breathing exercises help you increase your focus. We are going to practice together. Please sit with your legs and feet together. Bring your palms together in front of your chest. Keep your fingertips touching as you pull your palms apart, forming a ball with your fingers. Press your fingertips together until you feel the muscles in your hands and arms. Now, close your eyes and as you breathe in, inflate the ball and as you breathe out, flatten the ball by pushing your palms together.” Repeat for 60 seconds.

4C. 5 Senses Grounding Exercise

(5-8 min)

No materials are needed.

This is a grounding technique that is easy to use by yourself if you are feeling anxious or nervous. Take a deep breath and think about your responses to these statements. Examples: Name 5 things that you see, 4 things you can feel, 3 things you can hear, 2 things you can smell, and one thing you can taste.