CONVERSATION STARTERS WORLD

60 ICEBREAKER GAMES

60 games / Players, time, rules and prompts

Each game says how many people it takes, how long it runs and what you need. The Human Bingo card to copy is on the last page.

QUICK ICEBREAKER GAMES FOR MEETINGS AND CLASS

1. Would You Rather, Pick a Side

Players: 6 to 60 / Time: 10 minutes / You need: Nothing / Good for: Meetings, Class, Kids, Big groups

Read a would you rather out loud. Point to one side of the room for the first choice and the other side for the second. Everyone walks to their side. No standing in the middle.

Each side gets 30 seconds to pick a speaker, who then has one minute to win people over. Anyone who changes their mind can cross the room. Then read the next one. You can keep score by who pulled the most people across, but nobody ever remembers the score.

Twist: On a video call, people hold up one finger or two, and the host picks a defender from each side.

A few to start with:

- Would you rather be 10 minutes early to everything for the rest of your life or exactly on time but always out of breath?
- Would you rather have a rewind button for the last 10 seconds or a pause button that works once a day?
- Would you rather be able to talk to dogs, who all turn out to be kind of boring, or talk to cats, who all have opinions about you?
- Would you rather live in a house where every door is a little too short or every chair is a little too tall?
- Would you rather read every text out loud before you send it or have every text you get read to you by a robot voice?
- Would you rather have every chair you sit on squeak or every door you open creak like a haunted house?
- Would you rather always know when someone is lying to you or never get caught in a lie yourself?

2. This or That Lightning Round

Players: Any size / Time: 5 minutes / You need: Nothing, though a phone or scrap of paper helps / Good for: Meetings, Class, Kids

Read ten this or that pairs, fast. For each one, everyone points left for the first answer or right for the second, all at the same time. No thinking it over. Have people jot their picks as L or R on a phone or scrap of paper.

After the tenth, everyone gets two minutes to find the person whose picks match theirs the most. Then ask the best match in the room which pick they argued about with themselves.

Twist: For a harder round, the person who matched you least is your partner for whatever comes next.

Ten to start with:

- Breakfast for dinner or dinner for breakfast?
- Make the bed or why bother?
- Leave a voicemail or just hang up?
- Stairs or elevator for three floors?
- Thunderstorm or snowstorm?
- Socks in the house or bare feet?
- Fix it yourself or call someone?
- Text back right away or wait until you have a real answer?
- Drive-through or go inside?
- Camping or a hotel with bad Wi-Fi?

3. Hot Takes, Thumbs Up or Down

Players: 4 to 40 / Time: 10 minutes / You need: Nothing / Good for: Meetings, Parties, Work

Read a hot take out loud. On the count of three, everyone gives it a thumbs up or a thumbs down. No sideways thumbs, no "it depends".

Whoever ends up alone on their side has to defend it for 30 seconds. If the room splits down the middle, let both sides argue it out for a minute, then move on. Stop while people still want one more.

Twist: Let each person bring one hot take of their own, written on a slip of paper. The host reads them without saying whose they are.

A few that are safe for a meeting:

- Any movie over two hours should have an intermission.
- The best seat in any room is the one closest to the door.
- Ketchup belongs in the fridge. Anyone who keeps it in the cupboard is living dangerously.
- Self-checkout is just doing the cashier's job for free.
- Leftovers are better the next day, except fries. Day-old fries are a crime.
- A meeting with no agenda is just a hangout with worse snacks.
- Socks with sandals are comfortable, and everyone who laughs at them knows it.

4. One-Word Check-In

Players: 3 to 20 / Time: 5 minutes / You need: Nothing / Good for: Meetings, Virtual, Work

Go around the group. Each person sums up their week in one word. Not two words with a hyphen, not "good". One real word.

Then they get one sentence to explain it. That's it, next person. The fun is in the explaining, since "soup" or "plumbing" always has a story behind it. Takes about 15 seconds a person, so it fits at the top of almost any meeting.

Twist: Swap the one word for a weather report ("Mostly sunny, chance of deadlines") or a movie title that sums up your week.

5. The Fifth Photo Back

Players: 3 to 20 / Time: 10 minutes / You need: Phones / Good for: Meetings, Virtual, Parties

Everyone opens their camera roll and scrolls to the fifth photo back. Screenshots count. If it's private, or you just don't want to share it, skip to the sixth. Nobody asks why.

Go around and each person tells the story behind their photo in a minute or less. You'd be surprised how many people have a blurry picture of a parking sign and a very good reason for it.

Twist: Make it the 50th photo back, or the first photo from this month last year, for older and stranger stories.

6. Desert Island

Players: 3 to 20 / Time: 10 minutes / You need: Nothing / Good for: Meetings, Class, Kids

You're stranded on a desert island and you get three things. Not people, not a boat, not a phone. Everyone takes a minute to pick their three, then says them out loud and explains why.

When everyone has gone, the group votes on who would survive the longest. Most people pick a knife and a lighter. Somebody always picks a hammock, and they're not wrong.

Twist: For a harder round, you pick one thing, and the person on your left picks the other two for you.

7. Rose, Thorn, Bud

Players: 3 to 15 / Time: 10 minutes / You need: Nothing / Good for: Meetings, Virtual, Class

Each person shares three things. A rose: something good that happened lately. A thorn: something that went wrong or bugged you. A bud: something you're looking forward to.

Go around the group, about a minute each. Small stuff is fine. A thorn can be "my coffee went cold twice". Nobody has to share more than they want. It works best as a regular check-in, since people start saving up their roses and thorns for it.

Twist: On a video call, have everyone type all three in the chat first, then hit Enter at the same time.

8. Count to 20

Players: 5 to 20 / Time: 5 minutes / You need: Nothing / Good for: Meetings, Class, Teens

Everyone stands or sits in a circle, eyes closed or looking at the floor. The goal is for the group to count from 1 to 20 out loud, one number at a time.

Nobody decides who goes next. Anyone can say the next number whenever they like, but nobody can say two numbers in a row, and if two people say a number at the same time, the whole group starts over at 1. No going around the circle in order, no pointing, no signals.

So someone says "One." A pause. Someone else says "Two." Then two people say "Three" at once, and it's back to one. The first few tries usually die around six. Then the room goes quiet, people start listening to each other, and it works. You're done when the group gets to 20.

Twist: Once the group gets to 20, try counting to the number of people in the room, so everyone has to say one.

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9. Finish the Sentence

Players: Any size / Time: 10 minutes / You need: A list of sentence starters / Good for: Meetings, Class, Virtual

Read the start of a sentence out loud. Everyone finishes it, one at a time, in a sentence or two. Anyone can pass.

In a big group, take five or six answers per starter instead of going all the way around. When an answer gets a reaction, let the group ask one follow-up question before you move on. Read a new starter every few minutes, or sooner if the room goes quiet.

Twist: On a video call, everyone types their ending in the chat but waits to hit Enter until the host says go, so nobody copies the first answer.

A few to start with:

- The advice I ignored and really should have taken was...
- Something I was weirdly good at in school was...
- The last time I was completely, publicly wrong was...
- The rule at one of my old jobs that made no sense was...
- A food I will never eat again, and the reason, is...
- The thing I'm irrationally scared of is...
- The most useless thing I've ever bought was...
- A skill I taught myself from an online video is...

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10. 20 Questions

Players: 2 to 20 / Time: 10 minutes / You need: Nothing / Good for: Meetings, Class, Kids, Virtual

One person thinks of something: a person, a place or a thing. They say which one it is. The group asks yes or no questions to figure it out, one at a time, and the person who's thinking only answers yes, no or "sort of".

A guess counts as a question. If someone guesses it within 20 questions, they think of the next one. If the group runs out, the thinker wins and goes again. Someone should keep count, because nobody ever does.

Twist: For a team building version, split into two teams and give each team the same answer. Fewest questions wins.

11. Marshmallow Challenge

Players: Teams of 4 / Time: 25 minutes / You need: Per team: 20 sticks of dry spaghetti, a yard of tape, a yard of string and one marshmallow / Good for: Meetings, Work, Class

Give each team 20 sticks of uncooked spaghetti, a yard of masking tape, a yard of string and one marshmallow. They have 18 minutes to build the tallest tower they can that stands on its own with the whole marshmallow on top.

They can break the spaghetti and cut the tape and string. They can't tape it to the ceiling or hold it up when time's up. Measure from the table to the top of the marshmallow. Tallest standing tower wins.

Something to bring up afterward: kindergartners tend to beat business school graduates at this, because they test early instead of planning for 15 minutes.

12. Back-to-Back Drawing

Players: Pairs / Time: 10 minutes / You need: Paper, pens and a few simple pictures / Good for: Meetings, Work, Class

Split into pairs and have each pair sit back to back, so they can't see each other's paper. One person is the describer and gets a simple picture, like a house with a sun over it, or a few shapes. The other is the drawer and gets a blank sheet and a pen.

The describer explains how to draw the picture without saying what it is. So not "Draw a house," but "Draw a big square in the middle of the page. Now put a triangle on top of it." The drawer just draws and can't ask questions.

After three minutes, turn around and compare. Then swap jobs with a new picture. There's no winner, but expect a lot of laughing and at least one house floating in the sky.

Twist: In the second round, let the drawer ask yes or no questions, then talk about which round went better and why.

GET TO KNOW YOU GAMES

13. Two Truths and a Lie

Players: 3 to 30 / Time: 10 to 20 minutes / You need: Nothing / Good for: Meetings, Class, Parties, Virtual

Everyone thinks up three statements about themselves. Two are true and one is made up. Give people a minute, because the good lies take a little thought.

Go around the room. Each person says their three in any order, and the group argues about which one is the lie before voting. Then the person tells which one it was, plus the story behind the strangest true one.

The best lie is a boring one. "I've been to Ohio" fools more people than "I wrestled a bear."

Twist: Hand out a point for every person you fool. Whoever fools the most people wins.

14. Common Ground

Players: Groups of 3 to 5 / Time: 10 minutes / You need: Nothing / Good for: Meetings, Class, Big groups

Split everyone into groups of three to five. They get three minutes to find three things everyone in the group has in common.

The obvious stuff doesn't count. "We all work here," "we're all human" and "we all like pizza" are out. The good ones sound like "we've all lost a shoe in public" or "none of us can whistle."

When time is up, each group reads out its best one. The room votes on the strangest, and that group gets bragging rights.

Twist: Flip it at the end: each person has to find one thing that's true about them and nobody else in the group.

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15. Guess Who Wrote It

Players: 6 to 30 / Time: 15 minutes / You need: Paper and pens / Good for: Meetings, Class, Parties, Virtual

Everyone writes down one thing about themselves that nobody in the room knows. It should be true and something they don't mind people hearing. Fold it and drop it in a hat.

Pull them out one at a time and read them aloud. The group guesses who wrote it, then the writer owns up and tells the story.

Somebody always writes "I'm scared of butterflies." It's a better story than you'd think.

Twist: Online, have everyone send theirs to you in a private message, then read them out on the call.

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16. Human Bingo

Players: 10 to 100 / Time: 20 minutes / You need: Printed bingo cards and pens / Good for: Class, Work, Big groups, Parties

Before the game, make a bingo card for each person: five squares by five, with a free square in the middle. Each square describes a person, like "Has slept in a tent in the last year." Use the 24 below, or copy the card on the last page of this PDF.

Everyone gets a card and a pen and walks around the room. Find someone, ask about one square ("Have you ever ridden a horse?"), and if they say yes, they sign that square. Then find someone new. Each person can sign only one square on your card, so you have to talk to a lot of people.

The first person to fill a whole row, column or diagonal shouts "Bingo." Check the names, then keep going for a full card if the room is having fun. A full card needs 24 different people, so in a group of fewer than 25, let each person sign up to three squares.

Twist: Make the winner introduce the people who signed their winning row and say what they learned about each one.

Here are 24 squares to fill a card:

- Has slept in a tent in the last year
- Can whistle with two fingers
- Has lived in more than three towns
- Can say hello in four languages
- Was in a school play

- Has sung karaoke in front of strangers
- Has met someone famous
- Has seen a whale in the wild
- Has built a piece of furniture
- Has read the same book three times
- Has a nickname nobody here uses
- Has cooked a meal for more than ten people
- Has stayed up to watch the sunrise on purpose
- Can juggle three things
- Has ridden a horse
- Has won a trophy for anything at all
- Has been in a newspaper or on TV
- Has worked a job that involved a costume
- Has a pet with a human name
- Has grown a vegetable and eaten it
- Has been lost for more than an hour
- Can drive a stick shift
- Has a hobby nobody here would guess
- Has been on a boat overnight

17. Speed Friending

Players: 10 to 60 / Time: 20 minutes / You need: Chairs and a list of questions / Good for: Big groups, Class, Youth groups

Set up two lines of chairs facing each other, so everyone has a partner across from them. You call out a question and each pair talks about it for two minutes.

When time is up, say "Move." One line stays put and the other shifts one seat to the left. The person at the end walks around to the other end. Then call the next question.

Eight to ten rounds is about right. After that people start to fade, and the room gets loud.

Twist: With an odd number, you sit in and take a partner. With a big room, run two sets of lines side by side.

A few to start with:

- What's a skill you picked up for a really strange reason?
- What's something you completely changed your mind about?
- What did you believe as a kid that turned out to be totally wrong?
- If someone asked you to teach a class tomorrow, what could you teach?
- What's a rule you grew up with that you later found out wasn't normal?
- What food will you defend even though everyone else hates it?
- What's a place you went once and still think about?
- What would your friends say you're weirdly stubborn about?

18. The Toilet Paper Game

Players: 5 to 25 / Time: 15 minutes / You need: A roll of toilet paper / Good for: Class, Kids, Youth groups, Parties

Pass a roll of toilet paper around the circle and tell everyone to take as much as they think they'll need. Don't say what it's for. Some people will take two squares and some will take half the roll.

Once everyone has some, explain the catch. For every square you took, you share one fact about yourself.

Go around the circle. The person who took twenty squares will regret it, which is most of the fun. In a big group, cap it at ten facts each.

Twist: For people who know each other already, make it one thing you've never told this group for each square.

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19. The M&M Game

Players: 4 to 30 / Time: 15 minutes / You need: A bag of M&Ms or Skittles / Good for: Class, Kids, Work

Pass the bag around and have everyone take a small handful. Tell them not to eat any yet.

Put the color key up on a board or say it out loud. Each color is a topic. Going around the circle, people answer one topic for each candy they're holding, then eat that one.

Five or six candies each is plenty. If someone takes a giant handful, they can pick which ones to answer and share the rest.

Twist: With a nut allergy in the room, Skittles work the same way. Just change the color list.

Give each color a topic. Here's a set:

- Red: something you were wrong about for years
- Orange: a job you would be terrible at
- Yellow: the best thing you've ever found
- Green: something you're secretly good at
- Blue: a rule you'd make everyone follow for one day
- Brown: the strangest place you've ever fallen asleep

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20. Question Jenga

Players: 3 to 8 / Time: 20 minutes / You need: A Jenga set and a marker / Good for: Small groups, Family, Class

Write a question on each block of a Jenga set. It takes a while, so do it ahead of time, or have the group write the questions while you set up.

Play regular Jenga. Every time you pull a block, read the question out loud and answer it before you put the block on top.

Whoever knocks the tower over has to answer a question picked by the rest of the group. Then build it back up and go again.

Twist: Color the ends of some blocks with a marker. Those are wild blocks, and you get to ask anyone at the table any question you like.

A few to write on the blocks:

- What's the best mistake you've ever made?
- What's a story people tell about you that you don't remember?
- What made you laugh so hard you had to leave the room?
- What's a popular thing you've tried three times and still don't get?
- What's a food you refused as a kid and love now?
- What talent would you trade all your others for?
- What's a gift you pretended to love?
- Wild: ask the person on your left anything.

21. Interview and Introduce

Players: 4 to 30 / Time: 20 minutes / You need: Nothing / Good for: Class, Work, Meetings

Put people in pairs, ideally with someone they don't know. Each person gets three minutes to interview their partner, then they switch.

Bring everyone back together. Each person introduces their partner to the group in thirty seconds or less: name, what they do, and the most interesting thing they found out.

Tell people up front they'll be introducing their partner. They listen a lot better.

Twist: Each person slips one made-up fact into the introduction, and the group has to spot it.

22. Human Map

Players: 10 to 50 / Time: 10 minutes / You need: A room with some space / Good for: Class, Work, Big groups

Turn the room into a map. Point to one wall and call it north, then name a couple of landmarks so people can find their way, like "this corner is the West Coast."

Call out a question and everyone goes and stands in the right spot. Start with "Where were you born?" then "Where would you most like to live?" then "What's the farthest place you've been?"

After each move, give people thirty seconds to talk to whoever is standing next to them. That's where the good stuff happens.

Twist: If everyone is from the same town, make it a map of the town instead and ask where you went to school or got your first job.

23. Trading Cards

Players: 6 to 30 / Time: 20 minutes / You need: Index cards and pens / Good for: Class, Kids, Work

Hand everyone an index card. On the front, they draw themselves (stick figures are fine) and rate themselves on three made-up stats out of 10, like "Snack power: 9" or "Morning person: 2." Under the stats goes a special move, something they can really do, like "Can parallel park on the first try." Their name goes on the back and nowhere else.

Collect the cards, shuffle them and hand them out again. Anyone who gets their own card swaps with a neighbor. Now everyone goes looking for the person on their card, by asking about the stats ("Are you a morning person?"), not by flipping the card over.

When you find your person, they tell you the story behind their special move. Then help someone who's still looking.

Twist: Put the cards up on a wall afterward. A new class or team gets a who's who for free.

ICEBREAKER GAMES FOR LARGE GROUPS

24. Rock Paper Scissors Tournament

Players: 20 to 300 / Time: 5 minutes / You need: Nothing / Good for: Big groups, Kids, Teens, Camps

Everyone finds a partner and plays one round of rock paper scissors. The loser doesn't sit down. They become the winner's fan club, following them around and chanting their name.

Winners find other winners and play again. Each time someone loses, they and their whole fan club join the person who beat them, so the cheering sections get bigger and louder every round.

At the end there are two players left, each with half the room screaming behind them. Play the final as best of three and crown a champion.

Twist: For a longer version, everyone starts as an egg (squat down) and each win moves you up to chicken, then dinosaur, then human. You can only play someone at your own level.

25. The Big Wind Blows

Players: 12 to 40 / Time: 15 minutes / You need: A chair for everyone but one / Good for: Big groups, Class, Kids, Youth groups

Put chairs in a circle, one for every player but one, and move the bags out of the way. Everyone sits except one person, who stands in the middle.

The person in the middle says "The big wind blows for anyone who..." and finishes it with something true about themselves, like "...has been to a concert this year." Everyone it's also true for has to get up and find a new seat, and it can't be the seat right next to them. The person in the middle races for a seat too.

Someone always ends up without a chair. They go in the middle and call the next one. There's no winner. Stop when the energy drops, or when someone ends up in the middle three times in a row and starts to look comfortable there.

Some lines for the person in the middle:

- ...has been to a concert this year
- ...has fallen asleep in a movie theater
- ...has a song stuck in their head right now
- ...has ever eaten something off the floor
- ...can say the alphabet backward
- ...is wearing socks that don't match
- ...has ever gotten lost in a store
- ...can name every planet in order

26. Stand Up If

Players: Any size / Time: 10 minutes / You need: Nothing / Good for: Big groups, Meetings, Class

Everyone sits. The host reads a line, "Stand up if you've ever..." and everyone it's true for stands. The host picks one of the people standing and asks for the story in 30 seconds or less. Then everyone sits and the host reads the next one.

Start with lines that get a lot of people up, so nobody feels on the spot, and work toward the rare ones. Those get the better stories. Eight or ten lines is plenty. Someone always turns out to have a story the room is still talking about at lunch.

Twist: On a video call, swap standing for raising a hand, or for turning your camera off for a second, which is more fun to watch.

Stand up if you've ever...

- ...gotten stuck in an elevator
- ...won something in a raffle
- ...had a job most people here have never heard of
- ...been on a stage in front of more than a hundred people
- ...missed a flight
- ...gotten on the wrong bus or train and not noticed for a while
- ...been chased by an animal
- ...lived outside the country

27. Find Your Match

Players: 10 to 100 / Time: 10 minutes / You need: Sticky notes and a pen / Good for: Big groups, Parties, Class

Before people arrive, write famous pairs on sticky notes, one half per note. Peanut butter on one, jelly on another. With an odd number of people, either you play too or you make one group of three, like the Three Stooges.

Hand a note to each person as they come in. Everyone walks around saying what's on their note until they find their other half. Once they're paired up, they sit together and find three things they have in common. Or keep them as partners for the next game, which saves you from counting off.

Twist: For a harder version, stick the note on their back. They have to ask yes or no questions to work out who they are before they can go looking for their partner.

Twelve pairs to start with:

- Thunder and lightning
- Lock and key
- Sherlock Holmes and Dr. Watson
- Cookies and milk
- Romeo and Juliet
- Tom and Jerry
- Fish and chips
- Salt and pepper
- Bonnie and Clyde

- Shrek and Donkey
- Hide and seek
- Rise and shine

28. Clumps

Players: 15 to 100 / Time: 15 minutes / You need: Nothing / Good for: Big groups, Youth groups, Camps

Everyone walks around the room. The host shouts a number, say "Four," and people grab each other into clumps of four as fast as they can. Anyone left over comes to the middle and helps the host pick the next number. Nobody is out.

Once everyone is in a clump, the host reads one question out loud. Everyone in the clump answers it, one after another, so a clump of four hears four answers. Give it about a minute.

Then the host shouts "Walk," the clumps break up, and everyone walks again until the next number and the next question. Six or seven rounds is plenty. By then most people have talked to most of the room.

Twist: Shout a category instead of a number, like "same birth month" or "same favorite season," and let people find their clump by yelling it out.

Questions for each round:

- What's a smell that takes you straight back to being a kid?
- What were you scared of as a kid that makes no sense now?
- What would your entrance song be?
- What's a weird food combination you secretly like?
- What small thing annoys you way more than it should?
- What's something you've kept for years for no good reason?
- What's the longest you've ever waited in line, and was it worth it?
- What's a talent you had at age ten that's gone now?

29. Line Up Without Talking

Players: 8 to 40 / Time: 10 minutes / You need: Nothing / Good for: Big groups, Class, Work

Tell the group to line up in order of birthday, January 1 at one end of the room and December 31 at the other. Just the month and day, not the year. The catch is no talking, no mouthing words and no phones. Pointing, fingers and wild hand signals are all fine.

When they think they're done, go down the line and have each person say their birthday out loud. Count how many are in the wrong spot. There are always a couple, and there's always one person who was sure they were right.

Twist: Once they've got it, do it again by something harder, like how far they live from here or how many states they've been to. Or split into two teams and race.

30. Four Corners

Players: 12 to 60 / Time: 10 minutes / You need: Nothing, or four signs / Good for: Big groups, Class, Kids

Number the four corners of the room 1 to 4. Read a question and its four answers, pointing to a corner for each one. Everyone walks to the corner that matches their answer.

Give each corner a minute to talk about why they picked it. Then ask one person from each corner to give the room their best reason. The smallest corner usually has the best one. Read the next question and everyone moves again. There's no winner, but people notice who keeps ending up in the same corner.

Twist: Little kids like the old version better. One person closes their eyes and counts to ten while everyone picks a corner, then calls out a number, and everyone in that corner is out.

Questions with four answers each:

- Where would you rather live for a year? A treehouse, a houseboat, a castle or a space station.
- Which pet would you take care of for a week? A parrot, a snake, a pig or a tarantula.
- Which sport would you join tomorrow? Curling, sumo wrestling, synchronized swimming or dodgeball.
- Which job would you take for a week? Zookeeper, astronaut, chef or movie stunt double.
- Best way to spend a snow day? Sledding, building a fort, movies under a blanket or sleeping until noon.
- Which monster would you want as a roommate? A vampire, a werewolf, a mummy or a ghost.
- Best time of day? Early morning, lunchtime, right after school or late at night.
- Which would you rather find in your backyard? Buried treasure, a dinosaur bone, a secret tunnel or a lost puppy.

31. Snowball Fight

Players: 10 to 60 / Time: 15 minutes / You need: Paper and pens / Good for: Big groups, Class, Youth groups

Give everyone a sheet of paper. They write three things about themselves that most people here don't know, with no name on it, and crumple it into a ball. Move the coffee cups first.

On "Go," everyone throws their snowball, picks up whatever lands near them and throws again. Give it 30 seconds, then everyone grabs one snowball.

Now each person reads theirs and goes around asking until they find who wrote it. Once they do, they get the story behind one of the three things. In a smaller group, finish with everyone introducing the person they found.

Twist: In class, have everyone answer the same three questions instead, like a book they liked, a place they've been and something they're bad at. The papers are easier to compare that way.

32. Who Am I?

Players: 8 to 60 / Time: 20 minutes / You need: Sticky notes and a pen / Good for: Big groups, Parties, Class

Write a famous name on a sticky note for each person. Real people, cartoon characters, anyone the whole group will know. Stick one on each person's back without letting them see it.

Everyone walks around asking other people yes or no questions about who they are. "Am I alive?" "Am I a cartoon?" One question per person, then find someone else. That keeps everyone moving.

When you figure it out, move the note to your front and keep answering questions for everyone else. It ends when everyone knows who they are, or when the last three people need a lot of help.

Twist: For a class, use names from whatever you're studying, like historical figures, animals or characters from the book you just read.

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33. Heads or Tails

Players: Any size / Time: 5 minutes / You need: A coin / Good for: Big groups, Meetings, Kids, Camps

Everyone stands up. Before each flip, they pick: a hand on your head for heads, or a hand on your behind for tails. Your own head and your own behind, so nobody touches anyone.

The host flips a coin and calls it. Everyone who guessed wrong sits down. Keep flipping until one person is left standing. If everyone left guesses wrong on the same flip, they all stay in and you flip again.

A room of 30 takes about five flips. Have a small prize for the winner. It's pure luck, which is the point. Nobody can be bad at it.

Twist: Use it to pick who goes first in the next game. Nobody can say it was rigged.

ICEBREAKER GAMES FOR ADULTS AND PARTIES

34. Hot Seat

Players: 4 to 15 / Time: 15 minutes / You need: Nothing / Good for: Parties, Meetings, Teens

Pick someone for the hot seat and start a 60-second timer. Everyone else fires questions at them, one at a time, as fast as they can think of them. The person in the seat answers each one in a few words. No skipping, no "pass" and no "let me think about that."

When the timer goes off, the person in the seat picks who goes next. Keep going until everyone has had a turn, or until people run out of questions, which happens sooner than you'd think.

Twist: At work, give the person in the seat one veto. Most people save it and never use it.

Some quick ones to get the questions going:

- What's a trend you were way too into?
- What's a food you pretend to like?
- What's a job you had for less than a month?
- What's an app on your phone you've never opened?
- What's a skill you have that never comes up?
- What's the oddest thing in your car right now?
- What's a movie you've seen way too many times?
- What would you be famous for in a small town?

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35. Salad Bowl

Players: 6 to 20 / Time: 45 minutes / You need: Paper, pens, a bowl and a timer / Good for: Parties, Family, Small groups

Everyone writes five names on separate slips of paper: famous people, characters, anyone most of the room will know. Fold them, drop them all in a bowl and split into two teams.

A turn: one player pulls slips from the bowl one at a time and gets their own team to guess as many as they can in one minute. Get one, pull another. When time's up, the bowl goes to the other team. Teams take turns until the bowl is empty. That's round one.

Then every slip goes back in for round two, and again for round three. Same names every round, new rules. Round one, use any words but the name. Round two, one word only. Round three, act it out with no sound. Most correct guesses after three rounds wins.

Twist: Add a fourth round where you can only make sounds. It's the loudest ten minutes of the night.

36. Most Likely To

Players: 4 to 15 / Time: 15 minutes / You need: Nothing / Good for: Parties, Teens, Small groups

Someone reads a "Who is most likely to..." line. Everyone counts to three and points at the person they think it fits. Pointing at yourself is allowed if you're being honest.

Whoever gets the most fingers has to explain themselves, or argue their way out of it. Then they read the next one.

There are no points and no winner. It works best with people who know each other a bit, so save it for after a couple of other games.

Twist: Strangers can play too. Point based on first impressions only, then the person tells you how close you got. That's usually the funny part.

Who is most likely to...

- ...get lost in their own neighborhood
- ...talk to a stranger's dog longer than to the stranger
- ...still be at the party after the host goes to bed
- ...end up on the news for something ridiculous
- ...come home from a weekend away with three new cats
- ...start a fight with a vending machine
- ...answer a text three weeks later like nothing happened
- ...win a game show and lose it all on the last question

37. Charades

Players: 4 to 20 / Time: 30 minutes / You need: Slips of paper and a timer / Good for: Parties, Family, Kids

Split into two teams. Each team writes movie, book, song and TV show titles on slips of paper for the other team to act out.

On your turn, draw a slip and act it out for your team in two minutes, with no talking and no mouthing words. Start with the sign for what it is: crank an old movie camera for a movie, open your hands like a book for a book. Hold up fingers for the number of words, then for which word

you're on. Tug your ear for "sounds like."

Teams take turns. Most titles guessed wins.

Twist: For little kids, skip the titles and act out animals and everyday things, like a cat chasing a laser pointer or someone brushing their teeth.

38. Pictionary

Players: 4 to 20 / Time: 30 minutes / You need: Paper or a whiteboard, and a timer / Good for: Parties, Family, Kids, Virtual

Split into two teams. One person on a team gets a word and has one minute to draw it while their team guesses. No letters, no numbers, no talking and no pointing at things in the room.

If the team gets it before time runs out, they get a point. Then the other team's drawer goes. Switch drawers every turn so everyone has a go, including the person who swears they can't draw. They're usually the most fun to watch.

First team to 10 points wins.

Twist: On a video call, use the meeting app's whiteboard, or have the drawer hold their paper up to the camera.

39. Paper Telephone

Players: 5 to 12 / Time: 20 minutes / You need: Paper and pens / Good for: Parties, Teens, Family

Give everyone a booklet with one page for each player (fold a few sheets and staple them, or use small notebooks). On page one, everyone writes a sentence, something odd like "A goose robs a bank." Pass the booklets to the left.

Everyone turns the page and draws the sentence they just got. Pass left again. The next person looks only at the drawing, turns the page and writes what they think it shows. Then the next person draws that, the next one writes, and so on, back and forth, until each booklet comes back to whoever started it. In a group of ten, that's ten pages.

Read them out page by page. Nobody wins. The goose is usually gone by page four.

Twist: With more than 12 people, split into tables of six to eight, so the booklets come back before people lose interest.

40. Contact

Players: 3 to 10 / Time: 20 minutes / You need: Nothing / Good for: Parties, Small groups, Family

One player is the word keeper. They think of a word, say "penguin," and tell everyone only the first letter: "P." Everyone else is trying to work out the word.

To get the next letter, a guesser thinks of any word that starts with the letters given so far (just P for now) and gives a clue for it without saying it: "Is it a bird that can talk?" If another guesser thinks they know, they shout "Contact." The two count down from five together and say their word at the same time.

The word keeper is trying to stop them. If the keeper gets the clue before the countdown ends, they say "It's not parrot," and the contact is blocked. If the two guessers say the same word, the keeper has to give the next letter: "P, E." If they say different words, nothing happens and someone tries a

new clue. The guessers win when anyone says the keeper's word out loud, and that person keeps the next word.

Twist: It needs nothing but voices, so it's a good one for a long car ride.

41. Psychiatrist

Players: 6 to 15 / Time: 15 minutes / You need: Nothing / Good for: Parties, Teens, Small groups

One person is the psychiatrist and steps out of the room. Everyone else agrees on a secret rule for how they'll answer any question. A good first one: answer as if you were the person sitting on your left.

Bring the psychiatrist back. They ask people anything they like ("What did you have for breakfast?" "Do you have a pet?"), and everyone answers following the rule. The psychiatrist's job is to work out the rule from the answers.

If someone gets the rule wrong, whoever notices shouts "Psychiatrist," and everyone gets up and switches seats, which makes it harder. When the psychiatrist figures it out, the person whose answer gave it away goes out next.

Twist: On a video call, the psychiatrist turns their camera and sound off while the group picks the rule.

Some secret rules to try:

- Answer as if you were the psychiatrist.
- Anyone wearing shoes lies. Anyone in socks tells the truth.
- Touch your face before you answer.
- Answer as if you were 90 years old.
- Every answer has to mention a food.
- Answer the question the person before you got.
- Only tell the truth when the psychiatrist is looking you in the eye.
- Start every answer with the last word of the question.
- Answer in exactly three words.
- Anyone whose first name has an E in it lies.
- Answer as if it were 100 years ago.

42. End-of-Night Awards

Players: 6 to 30 / Time: 10 minutes / You need: Nothing, or paper for certificates / Good for: Parties, Camps, Big groups

Near the end of the night, take five minutes to write up a list of awards, enough for most people there. Then call everyone together and hand them out like an awards show. Read the award, pause, then announce the winner.

The winner stands up and gives a ten-second acceptance speech. Thank their agent, thank their mom, whatever comes to them.

Make sure nobody gets an award that stings. The idea is for people to leave laughing, not to settle scores.

Twist: At a camp or a retreat, put out a ballot box on the first day and let people nominate each other all week.

Some awards to hand out:

- Most Trips Back to the Dip
- Most Likely to Still Be Here at Breakfast
- Best Laugh, Heard From the Next Room
- Worst Poker Face
- Best Supporting Role in Someone Else's Story
- Most Confident Wrong Answer
- Best Entrance
- Quietest Person With the Wildest Story

ICEBREAKER GAMES FOR TEENS AND YOUTH GROUPS

43. Human Knot

Players: Groups of 8 to 12 / Time: 15 minutes / You need: Nothing / Good for: Teens, Youth groups, Class, Camps

Get 8 to 12 people standing shoulder to shoulder in a circle. Everyone reaches into the middle and grabs two hands from two different people, not the people right next to them.

Now they untangle into one big circle without letting go. That means stepping over arms, ducking under them and turning around. Loosen your grip when someone has to twist. Ending up in two linked circles counts. If it's truly stuck after ten minutes, let one pair let go and grab again.

It's a lot of hand holding, so let anyone who'd rather not be the coach who shouts directions from outside.

Twist: Try it with no talking. It takes twice as long and is about three times as funny.

44. Paranoia

Players: 4 to 12 / Time: 20 minutes / You need: A coin / Good for: Teens, Parties, Small groups

Sit in a circle. Whisper a question to the person on your left. The answer has to be someone in the circle, like "Who here would be the worst at keeping a secret?" They say their answer out loud, just the name. Nobody else heard the question.

Then the person who got named flips a coin. Heads, the question gets said out loud. Tails, it stays a secret and everyone gets to wonder. The person who answered whispers the next question.

Keep the questions the kind that make people laugh, not the kind that hurt someone's feelings.

Twist: Let the named person do a small dare to hear a tails question anyway. Most people take that deal.

A few to whisper:

- Who here would be the first to get caught sneaking out?
- Who here would be the worst person to be stuck in an elevator with?
- Who here would cry at a dog food commercial?

- Who here would survive the longest in a horror movie?
- Who here would sell out the whole group for a free pizza?
- Who here would make the worst teacher?
- Who here would win a staring contest against a cat?
- Who here would be the worst at keeping a pet fish alive?

45. Never Have I Ever

Players: 4 to 15 / Time: 15 minutes / You need: Nothing / Good for: Teens, Parties, Youth groups

Everyone holds up five fingers. Go around the circle. On your turn, say "Never have I ever..." and finish it with something you've never done. Everyone who has done it puts a finger down.

If only one person puts a finger down, they have to tell the story. That's the best part of the game.

When you're out of fingers, you're out. The last person with a finger up wins, which mostly means they've lived a very careful life.

Twist: Go after one person: pick things you know they've done and you haven't. It's a little sneaky, which is the point.

Never have I ever...

- ...walked into a glass door
- ...clapped when the plane landed
- ...sent a text to the person I was talking about
- ...been asked to leave a store
- ...gotten stuck somewhere I climbed into
- ...fallen asleep on a bus and missed my stop
- ...pretended to know a song and made up the words
- ...hidden from someone I knew at the grocery store

46. Mafia

Players: 8 to 25 / Time: 30 to 60 minutes / You need: A deck of cards / Good for: Teens, Youth groups, Parties, Camps

Pick a narrator, who runs the game and doesn't play. Take one card per player from a deck: two kings (three with 15 or more players), one queen and the rest number cards. Deal them face down and everyone looks at theirs in secret. King: you're mafia. Queen: you're the doctor. Anything else: you're a townsperson.

Night: everyone closes their eyes. The narrator says "Mafia, wake up." The mafia look up, find each other and silently point at one person to take out, then close their eyes. Then "Doctor, wake up," and the doctor points at one person to save. If it's the same person, nobody is out.

Day: everyone opens their eyes and the narrator tells the story of the night, the sillier the better. Whoever was taken out shows their card and is out. The rest argue about who the mafia is and vote one person out, who shows their card too. Then it's night again. The town wins when every mafia player is out. The mafia wins when there are as many of them as everyone else.

Twist: Add a detective (a jack) who wakes each night, points at someone and gets a nod if they're mafia. Then they have to convince the town without giving themselves away.

47. Wink Murder

Players: 8 to 30 / Time: 15 minutes / You need: A deck of cards / Good for: Teens, Parties, Class

Take one card for each player from a deck, and make sure the ace of spades is one of them. Deal them face down and have everyone look at theirs in secret. Whoever has the ace is the murderer.

Everyone sits in a circle and chats, looking around. The murderer kills people by winking at them. If you get winked at, wait a couple of seconds, then die as dramatically as you can.

If you think you know who it is, say "I accuse" and name them. Get it wrong and you're out too. The murderer wins if they get it down to two players.

Twist: With a big group, have everyone walk around the room instead of sitting, and add a second murderer who doesn't know who the first one is.

48. The Questions Game

Players: 4 to 20 / Time: 10 minutes / You need: Nothing / Good for: Teens, Parties, Class

Two people face off in front of the group and have a conversation using only questions. "Is this seat taken?" "Do you see anyone in it?" "Why are you so rude?"

You're out if you pause too long, repeat a question, or say anything that isn't a question. The rest of the group are the judges, and they will be strict about it.

When someone's out, the winner stays and the next challenger steps in. Whoever lasts the most rounds wins.

Twist: Give each pair a scene, like two strangers waiting at a bus stop in the rain or a customer trying to return a pet snake. It's easier to keep going when there's a situation.

49. Truth or Dare

Players: 4 to 12 / Time: 20 minutes / You need: Nothing / Good for: Teens, Parties, Kids

Sit in a circle. On your turn, ask someone "Truth or dare?" Truth, they answer a question honestly. Dare, they do what the group gives them. No switching once they hear it. Then they ask the next person.

Set the limits before you start: nothing that hurts, breaks anything or leaves the house, and nothing someone really doesn't want to do. Everyone gets one pass for the whole game.

Play until people start picking truth every time. That's how you know it's winding down.

A few of each to start:

- Truth: What's a nickname you'd hate for this group to find out?
- Truth: What's a word you said wrong for years before anyone told you?
- Truth: Who here would you call if you got stuck somewhere at 2 a.m.?
- Truth: What's the dumbest thing you ever believed for way too long?
- Dare: Talk in a movie trailer voice until your next turn.
- Dare: Sell the person on your right a pencil like it's the last one on earth.
- Dare: Give a two-minute tour of the room like it's a museum.
- Dare: Let the group pick a new name you have to answer to until your next turn.

ICEBREAKER GAMES FOR KIDS

50. Question Ball

Players: 8 to 30 / Time: 10 minutes / You need: A beach ball and a permanent marker / Good for: Kids, Class, Youth groups

Before the game, write questions all over a blown-up beach ball. Twenty or so, spread out so every part of the ball has one.

Toss the ball to someone. Whoever catches it reads the question under their right thumb and answers it, then throws the ball to someone who hasn't had a turn yet.

Keep going until everyone has caught it at least once. If someone gets a question they really don't want, they can answer the one under their left thumb.

Twist: For a class that's learning something, mix a few review questions in with the fun ones.

A few to write on the ball:

- What's a sound you could listen to all day?
- Which animal would be the worst at keeping a secret?
- What rule would you add to every school?
- What's something that scares you even though it makes no sense?
- What's the worst thing to have in your pocket on a hot day?
- What food would you ban forever?
- What would you do with one day where everyone else was frozen?
- What's the most trouble you got in for something that wasn't your fault?

51. Zip Zap Zop

Players: 6 to 20 / Time: 10 minutes / You need: Nothing / Good for: Kids, Teens, Class

Everyone stands in a circle. The first person claps their hands together, points them at anyone in the circle and says "Zip." That person points at someone else and says "Zap." The next one points and says "Zop." Then it starts over with "Zip," always in that order: zip, zap, zop.

Go faster as people get the hang of it. You're out if you say the wrong word, take too long, or point at someone who's already out. Once you're out, step back and help call mistakes. The last two players standing win.

Twist: For theater groups and warm-ups, skip the outs. Just laugh at the mistake and start again from whoever made it.

52. Telephone

Players: 6 to 20 / Time: 5 minutes / You need: Nothing / Good for: Kids, Class, Family

Line everyone up or sit in a circle. Whisper a sentence to the first person. They whisper what they heard to the next person, and so on down the line.

Each person gets to whisper once. No repeats, even if they ask.

The last person says out loud what they heard. Then the first person says what the sentence really was. It's usually not close.

Twist: With a bigger group, run two lines with the same sentence and see whose version ends up weirder.

A few sentences to start with:

- The purple llama borrowed my bike and never gave it back.
- Seven sleepy penguins missed the bus to Tuesday.
- Never trust a sandwich that winks at you.
- The pirate lost his left boot in a bowl of chili.
- My neighbor's parrot only says mean things in French.
- Somebody put pancakes in the mailbox again.

53. Hot Potato Questions

Players: 6 to 25 / Time: 15 minutes / You need: A ball, some music and a list of questions / Good for: Kids, Class, Family

Sit in a circle and start the music. Everyone passes the ball around the circle as fast as they can, like it's too hot to hold.

When you stop the music, whoever is holding the ball answers a question you read out. Then the music starts again.

Stop the music at random, and don't look while you do it, so nobody thinks you're picking on them. Play until everyone has had a turn or the questions run out.

Twist: If the same kid gets caught twice, they pick the next question for someone else.

A few to start with:

- Would you rather be able to talk to sharks or understand what babies are saying?
- Would you rather live in a castle with a moat or a spaceship parked in the backyard?
- Would you rather have to hop everywhere for a week or talk only in rhymes for a week?
- Would you rather sneeze glitter or burp bubbles?
- Would you rather find a secret door to a candy factory or to a dinosaur park?
- Would you rather have a pet hamster the size of a bus or a pet T. rex the size of a hamster?
- Would you rather be the fastest kid in the world or the funniest?
- Would you rather have a bedroom with a slide or a bedroom with a trampoline floor?

NAME GAMES

54. The Story of Your Name

Players: 3 to 25 / Time: 10 minutes / You need: Nothing / Good for: Class, Meetings, Small groups

Go around the room and have each person tell the story of their name. Who picked it, what they were almost called instead, and every nickname that ever stuck, good or bad.

You go first so people hear how short it can be. A minute each is plenty.

Some people don't know their name's story, and that's fine. They can tell where a nickname came from, or make up a better origin story and own it.

Twist: Have everyone finish with the name they'd pick for themselves if they had to change it tomorrow.

55. Name Adjectives

Players: 6 to 25 / Time: 10 minutes / You need: Nothing / Good for: Class, Kids, Camps

Sit in a circle. The first person says an adjective that starts with the same sound as their name, then their name, like "Jumpy Jasmine."

The next person repeats "Jumpy Jasmine," then adds their own. Every person repeats every name that came before, so the list gets longer as it goes around.

The last person has the hardest job, so you take that spot. By the end, everyone knows everyone's name, plus one word they'll be stuck with for the rest of the year.

Twist: Swap adjectives for foods ("Pancake Paul") with younger kids, since they come up with those faster.

56. Name and Motion

Players: 6 to 30 / Time: 10 minutes / You need: Nothing / Good for: Class, Kids, Camps

Stand in a circle. One at a time, each person says their name and does a move with it. A wave, a spin, a karate chop, anything. Then the whole group says the name back and copies the move.

Go all the way around once. On the second round, people do only their move and the group has to shout the name.

A small move counts. Nobody has to do a cartwheel.

Twist: For older groups, make the move something they actually like to do, like casting a fishing line or shooting a free throw.

57. Name Ball

Players: 6 to 20 / Time: 10 minutes / You need: A soft ball or two / Good for: Class, Kids, Camps

Stand in a circle. To start, people say their own name when they catch the ball, so everyone hears all the names once.

Then switch. Before you throw, you say the name of the person you're throwing to. If you don't know it, ask. Keep going until the ball has been to everyone a few times.

Once the group has it down, add a second ball, then a third. It falls apart fast, which is the point.

Twist: Set a fixed order, then time how fast the group can get the ball all the way around. Then try to beat it.

58. Bang

Players: 8 to 30 / Time: 10 minutes / You need: Nothing / Good for: Class, Kids, Camps

Everyone stands in a circle with the host in the middle. The host points at two people, who step into the middle and stand back to back, like an old Western duel.

The host says "Walk," and each of them takes three steps away from the other. Then the host says "Bang." Both spin around and try to say the other person's name first. Whoever says it first wins the duel.

The loser goes back to the circle, and the winner faces the next person the host points at. Forgetting a name mid-duel is very funny for everyone except the person who forgot.

Twist: Let the winner call the next challenger's name instead of the host. They'll pick the person whose name they're surest of.

VIRTUAL ICEBREAKER GAMES

59. Whose Desk Is It?

Players: 4 to 20 / Time: 15 minutes / You need: Phones / Good for: Virtual, Work, Meetings

The day before, everyone sends the host a photo of their desk, just as it is. No tidying. Anyone who'd rather not show their desk can send a bookshelf or the inside of their fridge.

The host shares the photos one at a time. Everyone types a guess in the chat for whose it is. Then the owner owns up and explains the strangest thing on it. Most correct guesses wins. Most explaining to do is a close second.

Twist: Next time, do fridges. A fridge tells you a lot more about a person than a desk does.

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60. Caption This

Players: 3 to 50 / Time: 10 minutes / You need: A few odd photos / Good for: Virtual, Work, Teens

The host shares a weird photo on screen. A goat on a car, a sign with a typo, a very serious dog. Everyone types a caption in the chat but waits to hit Enter until the host says go.

Read them out loud. The group votes for the best one with a reaction or a show of hands. Do five or six photos and keep a running score, or just let the funniest person in the room have their moment.

Twist: Have the team send in photos of their pets ahead of time. The owner doesn't get a vote on their own pet.

HUMAN BINGO

Find someone who fits a square and have them sign it. One square per person (for a full card in a group under 25, up to three). Fill a row, a column or a diagonal and shout "Bingo."

Name: _____

Has slept in a tent in the last year _____	Can whistle with two fingers _____	Has lived in more than three towns _____	Can say hello in four languages _____	Was in a school play _____
Has sung karaoke in front of strangers _____	Has met someone famous _____	Has seen a whale in the wild _____	Has built a piece of furniture _____	Has read the same book three times _____
Has a nickname nobody here uses _____	Has cooked a meal for more than ten people _____	**FREE**	Has stayed up to watch the sunrise on purpose _____	Can juggle three things _____
Has ridden a horse _____	Has won a trophy for anything at all _____	Has been in a newspaper or on TV _____	Has worked a job that involved a costume _____	Has a pet with a human name _____
Has grown a vegetable and eaten it _____	Has been lost for more than an hour _____	Can drive a stick shift _____	Has a hobby nobody here would guess _____	Has been on a boat overnight _____