



# ICEBREAKERS TO START YOUR SCHOOL YEAR



September 2018

# 15 FUN ICEBREAKERS

## FOR THE FIRST WEEK OF SCHOOL

The sweet hot summer is not really over but the atmosphere in your English classroom is cold and hostile?

Here are some interesting and efficient icebreakers to make sure your school year starts warm and cozy!

### PRIMARY SCHOOL

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# PRIMARY SCHOOL

## English ABC Quiz

1. Name a fruit that begins with A.
2. Name two animals that begin with B.
3. Name a country that begins with C.
4. Name a pet that begins with D.
5. Name a planet that begins with E.
6. Name a season that begins with F.
7. Name two things you wear that begin with G.
8. Name a school subject that begins with H.
9. Name something cold that begins with I.
10. Name a drink that begins with J.
11. Name a room in the house that begins with K.
12. Name something on your face that begins with L.
13. Name two things in our solar system that begin with M.
14. Name a food that begins with N.
15. Name something in the sea that begins with O.
16. Name two fruits that begin with P.
17. Name a person that begins with Q.
18. Name something you wear that begins with R.
19. Name two seasons that begin with S.
20. Name two dinosaurs that begin with T.
21. Name a relative that begins with U.
22. Name a country that begins with V.
23. Name a drink that begins with W.
24. Name ANYTHING that begins with X.
25. Name a color that begins with Y.
26. Name a fun place to go that begins with Z.

## Four Corners

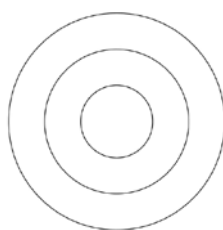
This listening-based icebreaker can be adapted to be used in primary school as well as in secondary school if you use more challenging vocabulary.

- Before playing, label the corners of your room one through four. Then ask get-to-know-you questions. For this activity, asking about students' favorites is a good way to go. For example, ask about their favorite sports, their favorite movie genres, their favorite animals, etc.

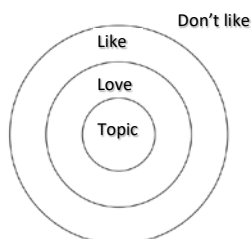
- Not only does this help students get to know one another, it also lets them see what they have in common with other students in your class. And that's a good starting point for chit chat and/or developing friendships.

## Who's in Your Circles?

You don't have to do any prep before class, but at the start of the activity, have each student draw three concentric circles on a blank piece of paper.



- Pick a topic for the round (such as favorite food, favorite season, etc.) and have students write it in the center circle. They should label the second circle "Love," the third circle "Like" and the space outside the circles "Don't Like."



- In the innermost circle under the topic, each student writes something (say, a food) they love. Then students mingle with one another, bringing their papers with them, and ask how a particular student feels about the food they wrote.
- When a classmate answers, the person should write their classmate's name in the appropriate area of their paper.
- Play for a few minutes and then start again with another topic—sport, type of music, favorite season, etc.—with a new sheet of paper.
- After a few rounds, encourage students to discuss common interests with people who share their inner circle on different topics.

## Toilet Paper Roll

This toilet paper icebreaker speaking activity is the perfect way to start your first class off with a bit of fun. It also helps your students get to know each other, as well as you, the teacher. Although some students may have played it before, it's still worthwhile.

- Bring in a roll of toilet paper, and depending on the size of your class, tell the students they can take a certain number of pieces (big classes 1-4, small classes 4-8). Don't give them any other information except for that. Once everyone has their paper, tell them that they have to tell the class one thing about themselves for each square of paper that they have. For each sentence, they "throw-away" one square until they're done.
- A way to extend this activity for higher-level students is to set a higher minimum, perhaps 8 or 10. Then, students can do it in groups of 5 or 6. The first person tells one thing about themselves and throws away a square of toilet paper. Someone (whoever is fastest) can ask a follow-up question. They also get to throw away a square of toilet paper. The next person in the circle says their statement and so it continues with one follow-up question, etc.
- A fun way to use this ESL icebreaker speaking activity for kids is to use some candy, like Skittles or Smarties. The students can eat one candy for every fact that they tell about themselves.

## Bananas!

This one is simple, but it results in tons of laughter.

- Basically, the teacher picks someone to be "it." The main goal of "It" is not to laugh or smile. Then the students in the class ask "It" questions, but "It" can only respond with the word "bananas." (They shouldn't be yes/no questions!!)

*Example:*

*"What is your name?" – Answer: Bananas!*

*"What is your favorite sport?" – Bananas!!*

You can then change the "it" student as many times as you want.

## LOWER-SECONDARY SCHOOL

### Find Someone Who

This writing icebreaker can be used in the class who already know each other, but want to catch up on things after a long break.

- Have students in pairs create a list of instructions for each other. After the writing, they will go around the class trying to find a person that fits.

*Example:*

*Find someone who got injured this summer.*

*Find someone who stayed in Ukraine the whole summer. etc*

After the survey is finished, encourage students to tell what they have found out about each other's summer.

### True False Quiz

On the first day of school give your students a **True/False** quiz all about your summer holiday.

- You can have funny things like “*I jumped with a parachute 3 times this summer!*” It can be done orally or the children discuss the statements about your holiday (written on a piece of paper) in groups and mark what they think is **True** and what is **False**.
- Then it is the students' turn to write a **True/False** quiz about their holiday (5-6 sentences).

Students read their sentences out loud and the class tries to guess which sentences are true about each other's summer.

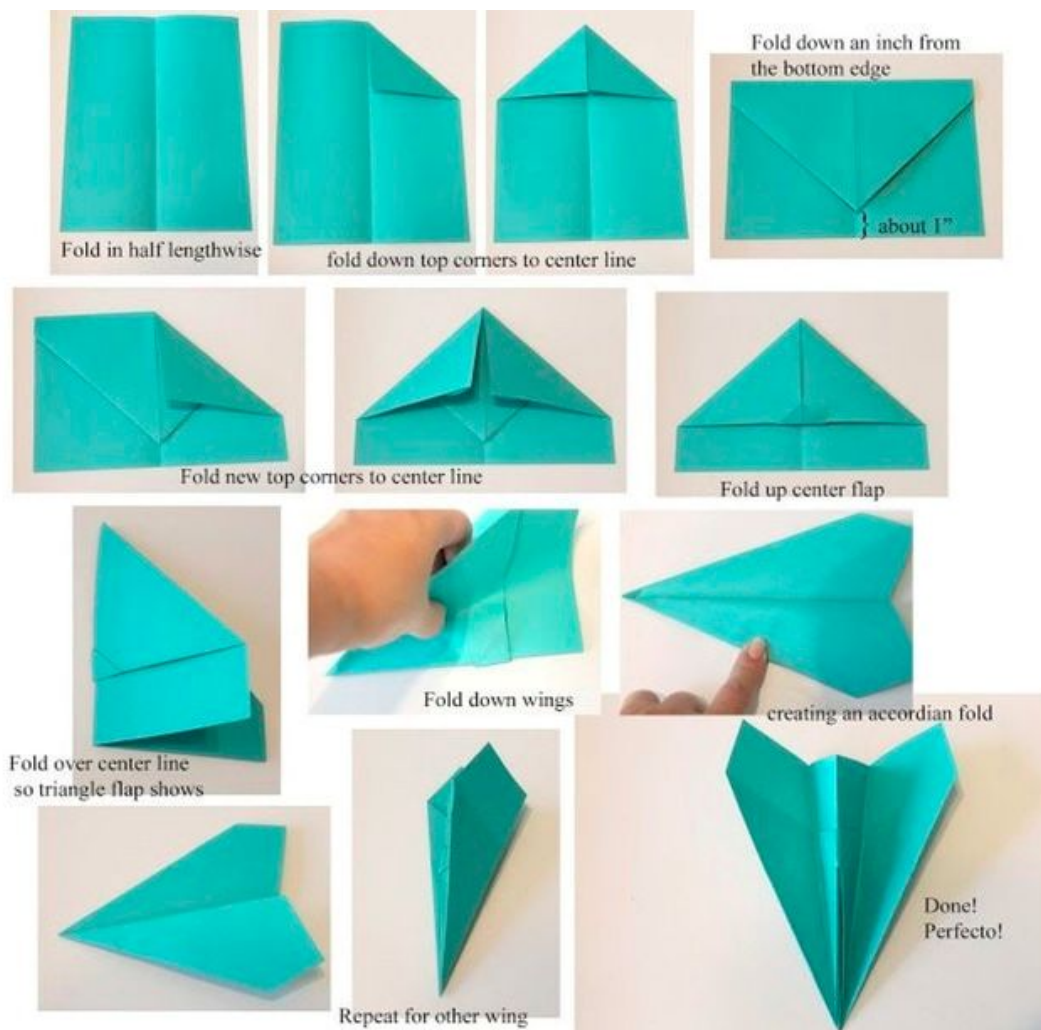
### Summer Snowball Fight

- Students write three interesting/funny/strange things about their summer on 3 pieces of paper. Alternatively, they can write three questions.  
*Example: Where did you go this summer? What was the most interesting thing that happened to you this summer? etc*
- Students crumple the paper up into 3 “snowballs” and have a snowball fight (put on some music).
- When the music stops, everyone grabs the closest snowball, reads it to the class and tries to guess the person, who wrote it or answer the question (if you go for option 2).
- If you really want to liven things up, join in the fight with your class!

## Paper Airplane You

This fun writing icebreaker works well with students that are at least at an upper-beginning level.

- To start, the students write three to five facts about themselves on a piece of paper. Then they put their creativity to work by folding that paper into a paper airplane. If you aren't sure how to make an airplane that flies, here is a scheme for you:

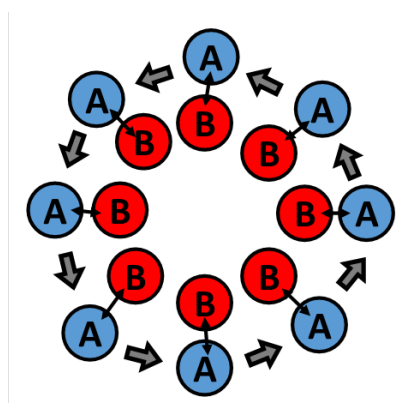


- On your count, everyone flies their planes toward the middle of the room. Then students pick up a plane that landed near them.
- Students take turns reading the facts written on the plane and trying to guess whose it was. Let the class help if individuals get stuck.

## Concentric Circles

You may never have wanted to try speed dating, but your students will definitely love this icebreaker twist on it. It's a fun, active way to get to know lots of people in class in a short amount of time—and it provides excellent practice for real-world conversation your students may have when they meet native English speakers.

- To prepare for the activity, have your class divide into two groups and form two circles in the middle of the room, one inside the other so each person is facing one partner.



- Ask an icebreaker question to the class and give students a chance to answer. After one minute, call out, “rotate!” The outer circle should move one spot counterclockwise. Students should now be facing a new partner.
- Call out another icebreaker question and give students a minute to answer before rotating again. Keep going in this manner until you run out of time or until students are back facing their first partner.



# UPPER-SECONDARY SCHOOL

## Name Acrostics

This is a fun ice-breaker that is a good way to get to know the names of the students and some facts about themselves!

- Depending on the level of the class and to facilitate the activity, brainstorm adjectives of personality and appearance and write them on the board.
- Introduce yourself and then using the different letters of your name, use adjectives to describe yourself.

*Example: "My name's Alex and I'm*

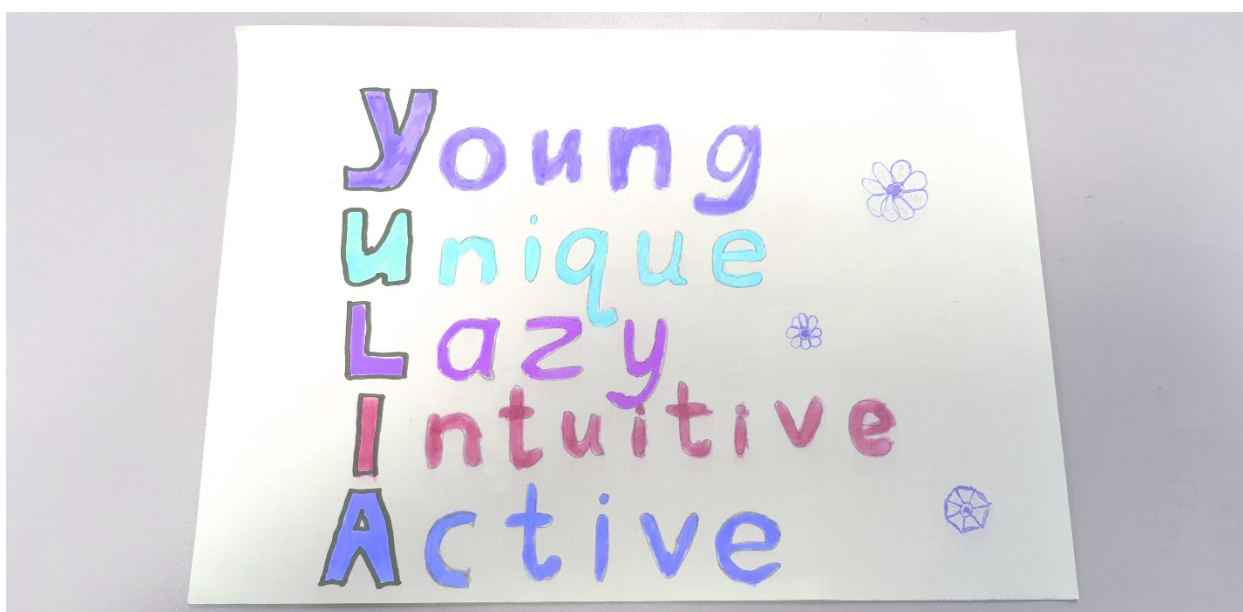
*Amusing*

*Likeable*

*Excitable*

*eXtrovert (x is a tricky one!)*

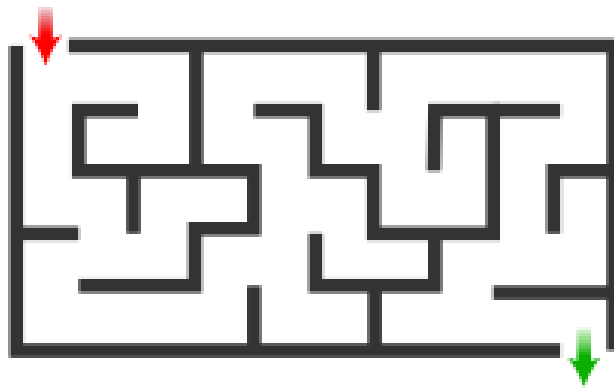
- Give your students some thinking time and once everyone is ready, students go around the class introducing themselves.
- To make the task more difficult for higher-level students, ask them after introducing themselves to repeat the names of the other students and their adjectives. *For example, "My name's Daniel and I'm Dynamic, Amazing, Nocturnal, Intelligent, Engaging and Likeable. His name is Alex and he's..."* Of course this is harder for the students towards the end, but in my experience the other students are always happy to help out and there's always lots of laughter.
- As a follow up you can get students to make posters of their names and their corresponding adjectives which can be put on the walls.



## Maze Graze

On the first day of class you can do a fun activity that allows them to get used to working and speaking English in pair and group settings. This is a little activity that's a lot of fun.

- First find a relatively simple maze. Make sure that the maze is large with only a few turns. Before beginning tell your students that you are going to give them a really difficult activity.
- Pass out the mazes and have the students complete the maze as quickly as possible. You may even make it a race. This should only take the students a few seconds.



- After they finish ask them if it was difficult. They will probably be confused because you told them earlier that this was a difficult activity.
- Now the fun part. Give each student a new maze and assign partners. Tell one students to cover his eyes and their partner must give them directions (in English) to get through the maze. You can explain this to your students and then with lower level classes you brainstorm some of the words and phrases they may need to use. Then make a race of it as students try to navigate the maze.
- As an additional activity when all the students have finished the mazes you can make a real life maze in your classroom out of chairs or desks. Ask the students if they trust their partners. Then ask one student to wait outside the room. Arrange the maze and then bring the student back in the class with his/her eyes closed.

## Two Truths One Lie

This is a more complicated version of “True/False” quiz for upper-secondary school students.

- Think of two true things about yourself and one lie.

*For example:*        *I got a scuba diving license when I was 15.*  
                              *I have been to Tanzania.*  
                              *My parents own a pizza restaurant.*

- Students must ask you questions to find out which is the lie.

*For example:*        *Where did you get certified?*  
                              *Where did you last go diving?*  
                              *What is the capital of Tanzania?*

- You can limit the number of questions or put a time limit on asking questions or simply have them ask questions until they think they know the lie. Finally, the students make their guesses and you tell them if they are right or not.
- Now move on to letting your students try it out. You can put them into pairs or groups and have them take turns questioning each other.
- You can also make it into a game where people compete to find the most lies or who is the best liar.

## Deserted Island

- Put students in pairs or groups.
- Tell the group that they will be trapped on an island for one year and cannot leave.
- They can take 5 things with them.
- On the island: freshwater, monkeys, coconut trees and fish in the surrounding waters
- They must tell the class the 5 things they decided to bring and what the importance of each is.



## Dear Me

“Dear me” is a letter students write to themselves on the first day of school.

- Inside the letter students may discuss their feelings about starting a new school year, what they loved/hated about the previous school year, and what they expect to learn/do this year. The requirements can be changed.
- The teacher collects the letters to put them in individual envelopes. At the end of the school year, the teacher passes out students’ letters.
- The students then read their own letter. This can lead to other activities such as sharing their letters, seeing if their opinions have changed and if their expectations have been met.

At the end of the academic year it is exciting to observe how students react to their own letters (and share with others).

### English ABC Quiz possible answers:

|  |   |
|--|---|
| 1. apple, apricot<br>2. buffalo, bison, bull<br>3. Canada, Colombia, China, Congo, Cambodia, Czech Republic<br>4. dog<br>5. Earth<br>6. fall<br>7. gloves, glasses<br>8. history<br>9. ice<br>10. juice, jasmine tea<br>11. kitchen<br>12. lips<br>13. moon, Mercury, Mars, meteoroids<br>14. nuts, nachos, noodles, nuggets, nutella<br>15. octopus, oars | 16. pear, pineapple, peach, pomegranate, plum, peach<br>17. the Queen<br>18. raincoat, rubber boots<br>19. spring, summer<br>20. tyrannosaurus rex, triceratops<br>21. uncle<br>22. Venezuela, Vietnam,<br>23. wine, water, whiskey<br>24. xylophone, x-ray, x-box<br>25. yellow<br>26. zoo |
|--|---|

### References:

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