

Ice Breakers for In-Person and Online Classes

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Whether you're teaching face-to-face or online, building community helps students feel more comfortable, connected, and ready to engage. Ice breakers may seem small, but they can create a welcoming atmosphere and foster a sense of belonging that supports learning throughout the course.

Use these activities in your first class, or revisit them throughout the term to check in, re-energize, or introduce new material in a light-hearted way.

QUICK ICE BREAKERS (SYNCHRONOUS OR IN-PERSON)

What's on Your Desk / In Your Bag?

Ask students to show or describe one item nearby that represents something about them (a water bottle, sticker, keychain, etc.).

Two Truths and a Lie

Each person shares two facts and one fiction about themselves. The group guesses the lie.

This or That Poll

Use a show of hands (in-person) or polling tools (online) to choose between light options: coffee or tea, cats or dogs, beach or mountains, etc.

Where Are You Joining From?

Have students mark their city or town on a shared map (Google Maps or Padlet), or describe their current location in a sentence.

Three-Word Check-In

Invite students to describe how they're feeling or how their week is going in just three words.

CREATIVE AND FUN STARTERS

Describe Yourself in 3 GIFs or Emojis

Students post or describe three GIFs or emojis that reflect their personality, current mood, or interests.

Book, Movie, or Game of the Moment

Ask: What are you currently reading, watching, or playing? Invite a 1–2 sentence summary or recommendation.

What's in a Name?

Ask students to share the story or meaning behind their name (first, last, nickname, or chosen name).

My Life as a Playlist

Have students name one song that captures their energy, mood, or a current goal. Bonus: create a shared class playlist.

Show & Tell: Photo Edition

Students share (or describe) a photo that means something to them—a place, a pet, a project, etc.—and explain why.

REFLECTION-BASED ICE BREAKERS

Rose, Thorn, and Bud

Ask students to share:

- A *rose* (something going well)
- A *thorn* (a challenge)
- A *bud* (something they're looking forward to)

What's One Thing You'd Teach the Class?

Each person shares a non-academic skill, fact, or hobby they could teach someone else.

Values Card Sort (Online or On Paper)

Students choose 3–5 values from a list (e.g., creativity, balance, independence) and reflect on how these show up in their learning.

Your Learning Superpower

Ask: What's one strength or strategy that helps you learn best? Students can share and learn from one another.

"I Learn Best When..."

Students finish the sentence with their ideal learning environment or approach—great for setting group norms too.

LOW-PREP ICE BREAKERS FOR DISCUSSION BOARDS OR CHAT THREADS

Favourite Meme of the Moment

Invite students to post or describe a meme they love (remind them to keep it classroom-appropriate).

Self-Care Check-In



Ask students to share a go-to snack, activity, or routine that helps them recharge.

Emoji Mood Check

Start or end a session by asking: Which emoji best represents how you're feeling today?

Fill in the Blank Prompts:

- “If I could teleport anywhere right now, I’d go to...”
- “One thing I’m proud of this week is...”
- “If I had a personal mascot, it would be...”



Assiniboine College is privileged to provide learning opportunities on the lands of the Dakota Oyate, Nakoda Oyate, Ininiwak, Nehethowak, Nehiyawak, Anishinewuk, Denesuline, Anishinaabeg, and the National Homeland of the Red River Métis.