

3 Back-to-School Icebreakers

In every classroom across the globe, the first day of school means one thing — introductions. Whether you're teaching one set of students all year or tasked with memorizing over 150 names, the first day is an anxious one for both learners and instructors. It might not seem like it, but your introductions and syllabus review set your students up for what to expect all year.

Your first impression is key. Every teacher has their own way of tackling this task — games, info sheets, creative projects, etc. — but **if you want your first day to be a memorable one, one that helps you memorize names, glean individual insights and put your students in the right learning mindset, it needs to be unique, hands-on and challenging.** To help you make this the best year yet, we've compiled some of our favorite icebreaker activities!

HANDS-ON STEM EDUCATION



For over 30 years, PCS Edventures has inspired students to develop a passion for Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM), focusing our efforts on making learning and discovery a fun and interactive process for grades K-12.

- CLASSROOM
- AFTER-SCHOOL
- HOME LEARNING

Pass the Power

This action-packed icebreaker comes from *The Science of Superpowers*, where the world of comic books comes to life through superhero-themed exercises in biology, physical science, engineering and technology.

To get started:

- Have everyone stand in a circle.
- Then ask students to introduce themselves one at a time, sharing their name and what their preferred superpower would be, giving a quick explanation of why they chose it. It's okay if superpowers are repeated, just encourage learners to think of different reasons why they would want that specific ability. (Throughout the introductions, keep a list of the superpowers chosen on a sheet of paper.)



Once the group finishes sharing their powers, transition into the **Pass the Power** activity.

- Start by reading off one superpower from your list.
- Then, call on a student to act that power out — sound effects are encouraged!
- After they've finished, circle clockwise, having the next person copy their movement until everyone in the group has repeated the action.
- Then, start over by giving the next student in the circle a superpower to act out, again letting the action circle the group. Continue until each learner has had the chance to invent a motion for a superpower. If a power is repeated, it needs its own unique movement.
- To make this game a little harder, change the rules up so that each power demonstration follows a sequence, with each student tasked with completing the previous moves before adding their own power to the end of the routine.

To complete the activity, ask these follow-up questions:

- **Can anyone remember everyone's name and their chosen superpower?** (If you have a large group, instead call out a superpower and have students say the names of whoever chose that ability.)
- **Are there any other superpowers that might be cool, fun or important to have?** (Encourage creativity! Even if history hasn't held a particular super-skill set, there's always room for a new breed of hero.)

Blobs and Lines

This next icebreaker comes from *Summer Camp Classics*, a STEAM enrichment solution which combines the joys of summer camp with team-building challenges. What's great about this icebreaker is that it gets everyone moving, talking and it helps students quickly discover the things they have in common.



To begin, have learners either line up in a particular order (by birthday, height, etc.) or gather in “blobs” based on something they have in common. Then, give instructions to the class about how to rearrange themselves.

Sample game prompts:

- Line up alphabetically by first name.
- Line up by your last names.
- Find people with the same eye color as you.
- Find those who travel to school like you (car, bus, walk).
- Line up in order of birthdays, from January 1 through December 31.
- Line up in order of how many languages you speak.
- Gather into three blobs: Those who have LOTS of chores at home, those who have A FEW chores at home, and those who have NO chores at home.
- Gather with people who have the same favorite food as you.

These rearrangement prompts can be tailored to your subject or classroom, and for the fearless, they can be used to really get to know your students. To really ramp things up, after the first few rounds, challenge your learners by adding a time limit!

Castaway Clubs

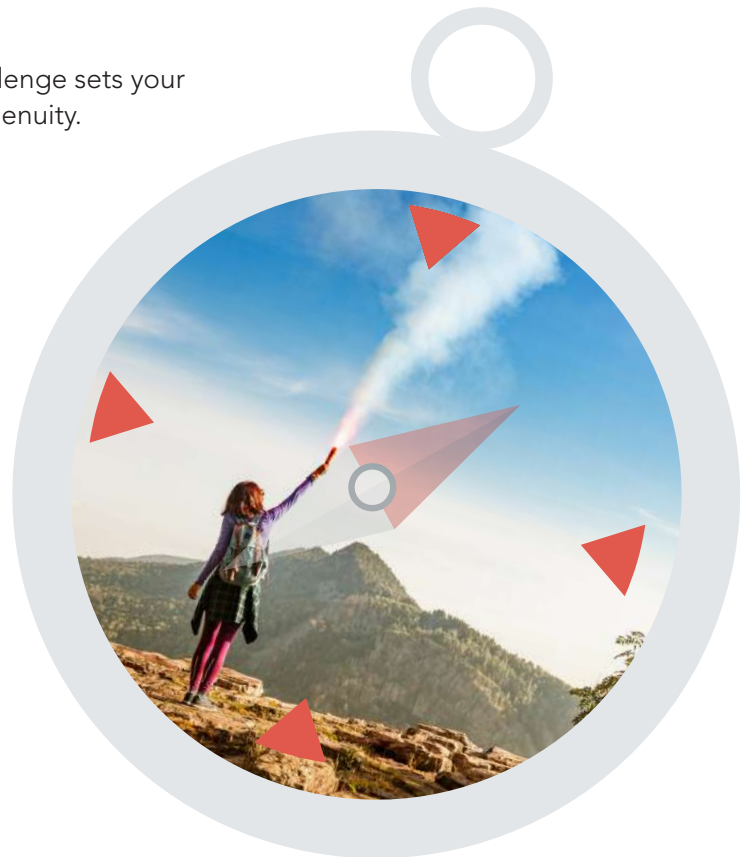
This icebreaker comes from the *Survivor* Enrichment Camp, a 12-day hands-on exploration of the science, technology, engineering and math of wilderness survival. While students may never find themselves marooned on a deserted island, learning to stay positive, think creatively and support each other are essential skills for surviving the challenges of everyday life.

To begin, set the stage by reading this prompt to the class:

Hello Castaways! You have been dropped in a remote area somewhere in the United States. There are no buildings, cars, roads, cell phones, computers or other people. It is just you, the other castaways and Mother Nature!

- Now, break your students up into groups of four, and challenge them to come up with a name for their Castaway Club.
- Once internal introductions are out of the way, have your castaways decide the four items their club would want to have on this survival expedition.
- When each club is ready, gather the groups and have each student introduce themselves, the club they belong to and the survival item they want.
- Once every club has addressed the class, discuss as a whole group the items chosen for survival. Is one better than the other? What items can serve multiple purposes?

On top of being a fun icebreaker, this challenge sets your learners up for a year of teamwork and ingenuity.



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