

# Icebreaker Activities That Aren't Lame

We all know the first week or two of the school year is devoted to establishing a class culture, procedures, and helping everyone get to know each other. For the latter, plenty of activities have been devised—some better than others.

Here are the better ones.

## Venn Diagram Interview

First, print out a roll for the class sorted by birthdays. Then, pair off the students based on whose birthdays are closest to each other (if you have an odd number, the student closest to your birthday has you as a partner). Have them interview each other for about 15 minutes based on easy, non-personal facts like favorite foods, number of siblings, etc., organizing the answers with a Venn diagram. At the end of the time, each student introduces their partner to the rest of the class.

## Chinese Fire Drill

If you don't feel like organizing the students by birthday yourself, have them do it! Simply tell them to line up in birthday order. They'll obviously have to talk to each other to figure it out. Beware; it will be very noisy and active. Then have them sort themselves out by other categories.

## Parking Lots

You might be familiar with parking lots, large pieces of posted paper that students add to throughout the class, as a formative assessment strategy. It also works for sharing getting-to-know-you information. Simply make the question something interesting but non-personal, then post it up on the wall and ask students to stick their answers to it with Post-It notes. They will look forward to adding their two cents and checking out everyone else's.

## The "Test"

It's also important for the students to get to know you during the first days. Announce that you're giving a pop quiz. They will absolutely freak out since you haven't covered any actual material yet. Then reveal the quiz, which is made up of questions all about you. They'll obviously have to guess. Then everyone shares their guesses, which tends to be very funny for all involved. Then, of course, share the right answers to the quiz.

## Puzzle Time

In a similar vein, print out some personal pictures of yourself and your family (not *that* personal). Cut them up into random pieces and leave them in an envelope on each small group's table, then have them assemble the pieces as a team. When everyone finishes, give the backstory to each picture.