I have often started a class by asking them, "what is an academic source?" Or what does it mean when information is academic? Students call out responses and I write it on the board and it does get them thinking.

I've done a "carousel" type activity. I use whiteboards or giant post-its around the room with a question prompt at the top of each one like "How do you know something is authoritative?" "How can you tell if a website is not trustworthy?" "What is a good website you have used for research?" or any other evaluation type questions I want them to start thinking about. I break them into groups -- an equal number so that each group has a question prompt to start and give each a different color marker. Groups write down as many answers as they can to the prompt and then after a couple of minutes they rotate to the next prompt. They write additional answers to that prompt. If they agree with something a previous group wrote, they put a check mark next to it. If they think they might disagree, they put a question mark. A few minutes later, rotate again. Since each group has a different color ink, you can then ask "Why did you question this?" or "What did you mean?" It also provides a good way to dispel some misconceptions they might have ("Wikipedia is always bad!" ".org is unbiased!"). I like the exercise because they get engaged right away with the content and they are moving so they aren't sleepy.

I've also borrowed Tom Angelo's Icebreaker Pretest. In that you have a list of questions or stats and have students see how many they can answer. You start them individually, then have them get in pairs and compare answers and decide who is right. Angelo's idea is that students want to be social so instead of just having them state their name, direct their social energy into immediately engaging each other *with the content* so they start to see how we can learn through our interactions with each other. If your info lit course is attached to a discipline (like when I was embedded in a Latin American politics course), you can use that content. In that example the icebreaker pretest involved stats about Latin American countries and students started exploring resources they'd later use in the semester. That also opened up opportunities for rich conversation about assumptions they made, confusions they had (difference between mean age and median age), and potential research questions (why does X country have such a low GDP but it's neighbor a much higher one?).

I hope these ideas help!

I've done something similar to that, called a snowball fight. Have each person write down a fact about themselves (or, if you want, a question that they want answered) on a sheet of paper, and crumple it up. Then everyone throws the crumpled "snowballs" around for about 30 seconds. When you call stop, everyone gets a snowball, and people take turns reading out loud from the snowball. The person who contributed the snowball says it was them and can elaborate on the fun fact or the question that they want answered. The question can either be related to the class, or it can be a general question about life, the universe, and everything ("why can't you eat just one Pringle?").

Here are instructions for a game called "Neighbors." http://www.theatreteachers.com/theatre-games/neighbors
I've played a version of it where the person in the middle says "change places if you're wearing Converse tennis shoes" and everyone scatters to find a place in the circle, including the person from the middle. Ignore the maximum person number -- I played this with 78 middle-schoolers and had a blast.

Divide the class into 4 groups and tell them they are folding name tents and they need to follow instructions carefully

1) no one start folding until you say go
2) show them (8.5x11 in half, then the halves in half... and write their name...)
3) some speech about how this is too easy so

a) group one can only use their dominant hands (other hand behind their back
b) group two can only use their non-dominant hands (other hand behind their backs)
c) group three can use two hands
d) group four can only use their non-dominant hands and can't use tables, chairs, floor (i.e must work as team, fold on someone back or whatever...)
4) tell them that you are timing them, and will call of a 30 second intervals, and that they should remember when they finish
5) on go they can begin (call off 30, 60, 90 and 120 seconds, which is stop...)

then make a chart on the board showing how many people finished under each time frame (number under 30, under 60, under 90, under 120, over 120)

now the fun part, start a discussion about how it was (hard, easy, etc.) and explain that they can think of this as life based on an education level

group 3 is graduate level education (all the advantages)
group 1 is a bachelors level of education (some advantages)
group 2 is some associates or some college (little advantage)
group 4 is HS diploma/GED no advantage

then you lead the discussion to how their education (and your class) are investments in their human capital, what that means, and why they should take school in general seriously/how the class will benefit them beyond a grade/credit.

This originally came from the Fed Reserve Bank of St. Louis's Financial Literacy curriculum.

When I taught freshman English in my previous life, I would have the students write their name, major (information I wanted to know) on one side of an index card and then on the other side write a strange thing that had happened to them, an odd fact about themselves, or a funny event from their lives (letting them know it would be something shared with the whole class later). I then shuffled the cards and redistributed them. Students then read off the story/event/fact and whoever it was would "'fess up," introduce themselves, and elaborate a little bit on the story (a lot of times I would ask a follow-up question to help draw out the more reserved students). Then they read the card they held and so on. At the end I collected the cards and saved them to refer to through the semester.

I found that we laughed a lot, they seemed to gel as a class more quickly, and it gave me something memorable to connect to them which made it easier for me to get their names straight. I think it worked well because they had time to think and jot something down rather than be put on the spot, something I always hated in ice-breaker games, and even the most "boring" responses (student's words, not mine) ended up seeming funnier or more interesting from being shared this way.

I just tried a new one where we went around the room, had everyone say their name, and what they had for breakfast....if anything.

I have one that I've used several times that I really like. I combined a couple of other icebreakers that I read about into this one. It gets students up and moving around the room, and really talking to each other (not just checking off boxes). I usually start by explaining that research shows (sorry I don't have a citation) that students who know their classmates tend to get better

grades, and also that we will do a lot of group activities & discussion, so they'll need to get to know each other.

Icebreaker

Give each student a blank index card. (Instructors may also participate).

Instruct students:

"Write one unique or interesting fact about yourself on the card. Make sure it's something you're willing to share with the class. Do not write your name." (You might have to prompt: hobbies, skills, career interests, places they've traveled, pets, etc. as possibilities).

Gather the cards. Shuffle and pass them out again.

Instruct students:

"Find the person who wrote the card you have in your hand. Introduce yourself and get the person's name. Find one thing you have in common with this person. Remember, someone else is also looking for you, so you will connect with two people in the room."

Pandemonium ensues! After a reasonable time, call for quiet. Have each student introduce the person they found and tell the class what was on the card and what they have in common. The person they introduce then does the next introduction, etc. (The class may be in one big chain of introductions, or there may be several separate loops).

Now each student will have met (and made a connection with) at least two people in the classroom.

Sometimes I follow up in subsequent classes – "Point to someone you met the first day. Do you still remember their name?"

I have taught for the past couple of years with a "peer mentor" helper and tasked them with coming up with the icebreaker. Both have chosen two truths and a lie where each person tells two true things about themselves and one lie and everyone has to guess which is which. The students seem to really like it and it does start some interesting conversations about our backgrounds.

I would also recommend seeing if your library (or one near you) has a copy of The New Encyclopedia of Icebreakers by Miriam McLaughlin and Sandra Peyser (2004). This has a ton of ideas and they are really well laid out for easy use. When I worked in the corporate world, I had something similar to that title and used it extensively. Now I find myself referring to my library's copy of it whenever I do faculty training or a community instruction event.

I'm a big fan of the "pair and share" exercise – you pair off the students in your class, give them five questions to ask each other (you can determine these, although I like to include things like "the most risky thing you've ever done" and "your favorite place to travel/to which you have ever been"), and then have them do a micro-presentation (2-3 minutes) of their partners for the class.

Not only is it an excellent ice-breaker I've found, it also gives students the opportunity to meet at least one person in their class – many of my "pair and share" partners still work together in the class, and others have joined those with similar interests to them.

I am the only one in the room who…

My name is Linda Bane. I am the only one in the room who lived in Tokyo.
Her name is Linda Bane. She is the only one in the room who lived in Tokyo. My name is Jill Gardner. I am the only one in the room who has seven cats.
Her name is Linda Bane. She is the only one in the room who lived in Tokyo. Her name is Jill Gardner. She is the only one who has seven cats. My name is….. and I am the only one in the room who…

By the time you've gone through the room, they know each other very well and because each one has identified some unique characteristic, they remember each other and have some idea of who they might like to do group work with.

I just had my first day of class yesterday, and here's what I used:

1. I introduced myself and shared a little bit about my background, and my favorite research website (I used google public data explorer as my example).

2. I asked the students to partner up.

3. The students have to find out their partner's name, where they're from, and their favorite research website. I had to specify that it could be for personal research, otherwise I think everyone would have chosen Wikipedia.

4. I had a volunteer come to the whiteboard and record the favorite websites as the students introduced their partners. This way we could record a "winner" and see if there are any that the other students hadn't heard of. I took a photo of the list and posted it to our course moodle page. (also attached)

In the past, I've also used "research persona" with my example being Sherlock Holmes. The students have to come up with a famous person or character who embodies their style of research.

My colleague used one yesterday that I also liked: The students had to come up with a research study they'd like to conduct if they had lots of money (I think she specific $100,000).

Another one that my colleague used is an example of an information conflict or information overload that the students have encountered, and how they've dealt with it.

I did this in a Freshman Experience class I taught. I did a take on "one minute dating" and called it "one minute classmating". I had a timer and gave it a set amount of time. Everyone in the class had to meet everyone else and briefly meet and introduce themselves and chat for a moment. It was great fun and everyone met everyone!
It was great to hear snippets of the conversations "Oh, you're a Criminal Justice major? I'm a Criminal Justice major!" or "You're from New Jersey? I'm from New Jersey!"

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1) if they could brainstorm what Information Literacy means to them. I don't think it's that cheesy.

2) I also ask them if they could define "research" and what does research mean?

3) For the "first day" I discuss how information sources are not all equal. We brainstorm a list of different sources of information (in their lives) and we try to organize them into how "legit" they are. It gets them thinking about the semester to come.

If you're looking for something really fun and light, people bingo is fun and customizable:

http://www.wrha.mb.ca/professionals/collaborativecare/files/Resource-TeamExercise-3.pdf

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