

## Ideas for Remote Icebreaker Activities

### 1. **Simple real-time activities:**

- a. "Riddle game"  
In an online Zoom meeting, have breakout sessions of around 5 students each. Let them play a riddle game: One student thinks of something amazing or funny that happened to them during their time at UO. Others have to find out by solely asking yes-no-questions.
- b. "Two Truths and a Lie"  
In a Zoom meeting, play "Two Truth and a Lie" either with the whole class (<25 students) or in small break-out groups.
- c. "Random question"  
In a Zoom meeting, play this game with a full class (<25 students) or breakout groups. Supply a list with question, for example this one:  
<https://www.signupgenius.com/groups/getting-to-know-you-questions.cfm>  
Share a link to a random number generator (e.g. on [www.random.org](http://www.random.org)). Students take turns creating a random number and answering the question that corresponds to that number.

### 2. **More elaborate real-time activities:**

- a. "Fun facts:"
  - i. Have each student send you (privately) a fact about themselves that they are not afraid to share and that they think will be hard to guess for others. We are looking for unique and out-of-the ordinary things here, like "I can hypnotize a chicken" or "I worked as a marmite taster last summer."
  - ii. Group the fun facts (ca. 5 per group) and prepare one Word file or PDF per group. Write students's names at the bottom of the page - not next to their statements! Important: have an \*even\* number of groups!
  - iii. Create an online Zoom meeting and pre-assign breakout rooms according to the groups you just created. Swap fun facts between two groups at a time, i.e. group A gets a sheet with group B's fun facts and vice versa, group C gets a sheet with group D's fun facts and vice versa.
  - iv. Have the groups discuss - based on the profiles students posted in Canvas Discussions - which statement could belong to which person. After some time, merge the two groups by moving one group's participants into the other room (thus, students in group A are moved to group B, students in group C to group D etc). Let the groups compare.
  - v. When it's time to move on with your lecture, end all breakout rooms - this automatically brings students back to the main room.
- b. "Leaking Space Station"/"Sinking ship"  
This one can be done as a fully real time or a hybrid real time-asynchronous activity:
  - i. Prepare a canvas discussion
  - ii. In a Zoom meeting, tell students to access this discussion. Make sure you have the backend open as well, so you can quickly unpublish.

- iii. Tell your students they should open a new comment and be ready to type - they will only have a few seconds to answer.
- iv. Give them the following scenario: "You are on a ship (optional: space station) that has to be evacuated and you have 15 seconds to take 5 things with you. Write down what you take"
- v. Give students a warning after 10 seconds, so they save their answers in time (unsaved posts will be lost) and proceed to unpublish the discussion module after 15 seconds. (Tip: practise that in advance!)
- vi. Then, publish the discussion again and look at the posts together. Let students comment on their own posts (explaining their choices) and on each other's posts. Alternatively, you can do this step as a homework assignment, letting students comment by posting on the discussion board.

Important: Check in advance if there are any accessibility issues in your class that could prevent students from participating in this activity (slow internet connection, students who use alternative input software etc.)

### 3. *Asynchronous activities*

#### a. Using Canvas Discussion board

Have each student post three pictures that describe them. Then, let each student comment on at least three other students' posts to start a conversation with the poster.

Alternatively, you can ask students to post:

- one word that describes them in 20 years from now
- what they wanted to be when they grew up
- one emoji that describes how they feel right now
- three things they would take to a deserted island
- one animal they would like to be
- etc. (be creative!)

#### b. Using email

(This is based on *Advanced Methods in Distance Education* by K. Dooley, J. Lindner, and L. Dooley)

Each student will develop a question to pass on to the next student (e.g., "Where was the tallest tree you have ever climbed?"). The student then emails the question to another student. The second student answers the question and then emails the response, along with the original question, on to the next person. The process is repeated until everyone has had a chance to answer. Then the responses are returned to the originator of the question.