



Warm Up/Ice Breaker
Building Block (Elective Activity)

One of the goals of FAST is to build a sense of community among the participants. Each FAST night it's very important for folks to meet and greet one another, learn each other's names, and have fun together. The youth-led ice breaker activities are important to help everyone relax, connect, and enjoy their time together. We are recommending that you do an ice breaker for the first few FAST sessions. However, many sites have chosen to make the ice breaker/warm up activity part of the program every week. Encourage the youth partners to do research to find their own activities.

In the first session, families are asked to form a circle, with families remaining in a unit. The FAST team introduces themselves, and then a youth partner/team member will start the introduction activity. It might be helpful to start this time with an ice breaker:

- String Toss: toss a string to another person and say your name. After doing this activity once or twice families get to know each by first and last names.
- Going on a Picnic: each week a different youth team member starts the activity by saying his/her name and a food/picnic item beginning with the first letter of their first name, for instance, "My name is LaSonda and I'm going on a picnic and I'm going to bring lettuce." It goes around the circle with everyone saying their name and picnic item until everyone has had a turn. After each participant, the teen team member says, "Yes, you can come to the picnic!" if the letter of the item being brought starts with the person's first name.

NOTE: Icebreakers are youth led! It is one of the youth leadership development activities that will help build self-efficacy in the youth partners. The youth team members can suggest their own ideas for ice breakers when they have their team meetings and the team decides which icebreaker they will use for the next week.

Be mindful of the time this will take if you have a large number of teens and their parent/mentor/guardian. This activity should take around 10 minutes to complete. The first week it may take longer since everyone is still getting to know each other.

Team members should space themselves between families to offer support during this activity. Remember not to get between a teen and their parent/mentor/ guardian.

Icebreakers and Group Initiatives

You can do these with the whole group and/or break into smaller groups.

1. Ball Juggle:

Have the group gather in a circle and introduce structure. Explain that the object of the activity is to learn each other's' names, and that to do so, you are going to pass the ball around the circle. The ball needs to travel to each person, once and only once. It's best if it travels across the circle, rather than just being given to the person next to you. Model asking the person across the circle for their name and then throw them the ball. Make sure it gets to each person once and then comes back to you at the end. Make sure people say the name (loudly) of the person they are throwing it to. Try it one more time to make sure everyone knows names – GO IN THE SAME ORDER.

For added challenge, you can – tell the group that you are now going to time the ball and see how fast we can get the ball to travel around. Try it once or twice. OR

You can introduce the idea of “group juggle”. Explain that we are going to go in the same order, but now add additional balls. The object is to see how many balls you can have in motion, without dropping them.

For added fun, play one final round where you tell everyone that they are going to go in the same order, but this time, no one can stand still. So the group is moving around the room, continuing to toss the ball in the same name order.

2. Hula-Hoop or Balloon Challenge

These involve holding hands! 😊 For the hula-hoop challenge, the group stands in a circle, and grabs hands. Then the facilitator breaks one hand connection and places a hula-hoop on the arm of one of the circle members. Then the hands are reclasped. The object is for the group to work to get the hula –hoop around the circle without breaking hands. It involves some fun, funky body movements. (I advise a LARGE hula-hoop for adults). You can add a challenge by timing it.

The balloon challenge is similar. Hands are held and a balloon is introduced into the center of the circle...the object is to keep the balloon afloat as long as possible, (or for a specific period of time – like 2 minutes), without dropping hands.

3. Sentence Unscramble

Pre-made cards with words that spell out a significant phrase (maybe something meaningful for the day?) are placed on the floor. As a group, or in small groups (with multiple phrases), they work together to re-assemble the phrase. This can lead to discussion of the phrase or topic.

4. Birthday/Height Line-up:

You can do this activity with blindfolds, or with eyes closed or with eyes open. You stand everyone in a line (shoulder to shoulder) and then inform them that the activity involves complete silence. No talking can be used to complete the challenge. The object is then for them to re-arrange themselves in their birthday order – with Jan 1st at one end of the line and Dec. 31st at the other. You can also incorporate years so that the oldest person is at one end and the youngest at the other.

The Height line-up is similar...but is best with blindfolds or eyes closed. Then ask everyone to try and form a line in height order.

5. Count Off:

This is a harder challenge – best for when the group has established a connection. The object seems easy – to count off to the number of people in the group. The trick is that each number can only be said once, and each person can only say one number. No words other than the numbers themselves, in order, are allowed. There is no planning allowed, and if two people say a number at the same time, you go back to number one. So basically the group has to work to be really aware of when others are about to speak, and patient with the process of letting each person go, etc. For added challenge you can ask everyone to close their eyes.

6. Unity and cooperation are graphically demonstrated in a "yarn circle."

Everyone should stand in a circle. Someone begins by mentioning something he is thankful for. He then tosses a ball of yarn to another person in the circle, being careful to hang on to the end of the yarn. The recipient of the ball of yarn then mentions something he's thankful for, and tosses it to another person, holding on to his bit of yarn. This goes on until everyone has had a chance to contribute at least once. By this time, the yarn should have created an intricate pattern, interweaving all of your members.

Then, slowly, a few of the members should drop their sections of yarn, making the pattern sag. In order to take up the slack, all remaining members of the circle must back up. Repeat this a couple of times.

Then, everyone should have a chance to reflect on what just occurred. It should be brought out that the beautiful pattern was possible only with everyone's involvement. And when some members dropped out of the involvement, the yarn design became ugly and the group was ultimately forced to grow farther apart. This is a good exercise to repeat periodically. *Excerpted from GROUP Magazine.*

7. Five Things in Common in pairs

Split the group up into pairs. Each pair will have 30 seconds to find 5 things they have in common. At the end of the 30 seconds, put two pairs together and give the foursome a minute to find something all 4 students have in common. Finally, each group can present the list of things they have in common. You can use this activity to form groups.

8. **THINGS IN COMMON in teams.** Teams will race to create lists of things that all the team members have in common. **Supplies:** You'll need paper and pencils.

Form equal-sized teams of three to six. Give each team a sheet of paper and a pencil. Tell teams their challenge is to list everything they can think of that all team members have in common. For example, team members might all attend the same school, prefer the same kind of music, or like the same brand of tennis shoes. The only rule is that they can't list similar body parts, such as "We all have two arms, a brain, and a nose."

Tell teams they have three minutes to create their lists, so they need to work quickly. (Groups of five or six may need more time, but don't allow more than four to five minutes.) To add to the urgency and excitement of the game, inform teams when there's one minute as well as 30 seconds remaining.

When time is up, find out which team has the longest list and ask team members to read the similarities they listed. Then ask teams who had similarities not already listed to share them. To conclude, have the entire group discuss the following questions. Ask:

- *How easy was it to discover something in common with another team member with every team member?*
- *What does this reveal about the extent to which we're alike? the ways in which we're all different?*
- *How can our similarities draw us closer together? How can our differences help us grow closer?*

9. **Skittle Skuttle Ice Breaker Activity**

Overview: Participants select a skittle candy from a dish and match to the color listed on a worksheet. **Have the people choose the skittle BEFORE they see the questions.** You can come up with many, many different questions to use.

Goal: To get to know each other during introductions.

Time Required: 1 minute to select a candy, 2-4 minutes to share an experience.

Material Required: One Bag of Skittles and a candy dish or bowl and questions.

Match the color skittle you have drawn from the cup to the questions listed below:

- Red Boy! I was embarrassed when...
- Orange My strangest job ever was...
- Purple My best vacation was...
- Green Something I like to treat myself to...
- Yellow Dessert I cannot live without...

10. **Line UP in Order:** This activity can be used many times to help group members get to know one another. The leader of the group would call out different orders: “Lineup”
- in order alphabetically by first name
 - in order by shoe size.
 - in order by length of arm's reach.
 - in order alphabetically by favorite color.
 - in order by number of siblings you have.
 - in order by hair color, lightest to darkest.
 - in order by age, youngest to oldest.
 - in order by length of time with current employer.
 - in order alphabetically by last name.
 - in order by number of pets owned.
 - in order by hair length, longest to shortest.
 - in order by the number of bones you've ever broken

Note: There are many websites with free ice breaker activities.
Ask your youth partners to research for more ideas.

<http://www.businessfundamentals.com/IceBreakers.htm>

<http://www.kimskorner4teachertalk.com/classmanagement/icebreakers.html>

http://www.funattic.com/game_icebreaker.htm