Virtual icebreakers for meetings and training sessions

Virtual icebreakers are short prompts that help an online group start talking before the work begins. This page lists 42 original prompts grouped by situation, keeps the exact 15-minute opening run of show, and includes a printable prompt-card file for facilitators.

15 minutes | 4–20 participants | Online and adaptable in person

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The outcome

Participants make an initial contribution and find a useful connection to the session topic without having to share personal information.

Before the session

- Choose one prompt that relates to the session purpose. Read it aloud and paste it into chat. Avoid surprise personal disclosure.
- Explain that people can answer aloud, type, use a fictional example or pass. Keep cameras optional.
- Use pairs or groups of three above eight participants. Prepare a prompt sheet and announce a clear return time.

Included in this kit

A facilitator run of show, participant worksheets with real tables, reference tables, debrief questions, adaptation notes and a follow-up plan. Use the editable Word copy to tailor examples and prompts before delivery.

Original material by Superglue. Timings are suggestions; adjust them to your participants. This resource has not been independently evaluated.

What is inside

The participant sheets come first so you can print one page per person. Your own facilitator section follows them.

- Participant worksheet — Copy this page for participants.
- Prompt cards — Print this page and cut along the table borders.
- Facilitator run of show, reference tables, debrief questions and adaptation notes — for you, after the participant sheets.

Participant worksheet

Copy this page for participants. Write directly in the editable file or use the space below. Share only what is relevant to the session; keep sensitive personal information out of shared notes.

Prompt 1 | A small win: What recent work moment became easier, and what helped?

Prompt 2 | Useful conditions: What helps you contribute when a group is thinking together?

Prompt 3 | A question to keep: What question would make today worth your time?

Prompt 4 | Notice a strength: Think of a helpful team habit you have seen. What did people actually do?

Prompt 5 | Choose a metaphor: If today's work were a journey, what would help you get started? A literal answer is welcome.

Prompt 6 | One helpful instruction: What should someone know to make it easier to collaborate with you today?

My chosen prompt and brief answer

One request I am comfortable sharing with the group

Prompt cards

Print this page and cut along the table borders. All 42 prompts are here, each labelled with the situation it suits.

Prompt	Situation	My note
Name one thing within reach that you used today.	For a quick start under five minutes	
Say the first task on your list after this meeting.	For a quick start under five minutes	
Describe your screen setup in five words.	For a quick start under five minutes	
Name a small win from the last week and what made it possible.	For a quick start under five minutes	
Say which part of the meeting you are most ready for.	For a quick start under five minutes	
Give one word for your energy level right now.	For a quick start under five minutes	
Name something you can see out of a window or doorway.	For a quick start under five minutes	
Say what you are hoping this session will not be.	For a quick start under five minutes	
Name one thing that changed on your team since the last meeting.	For a group that meets regularly	
Describe a decision that got easier because of something the group agreed last time.	For a group that meets regularly	
Say what you would like to stop doing in these meetings.	For a group that meets regularly	
Name one person you worked with since we last met and what they did.	For a group that meets regularly	
Say which recurring agenda item should be shorter.	For a group that meets regularly	
Name a question you keep meaning to ask this group.	For a group that meets regularly	
Describe the last useful thing you learned from a colleague.	For a group that meets regularly	
Type one word for how the week has gone, then explain it only if you want to.	When people are quiet or cameras are off	
Write down a fact about the project that you are certain about.	When people are quiet or cameras are off	

Prompt	Situation	My note
Type one question you would like answered by the end.	When people are quiet or cameras are off	
Name something you already know about today's topic.	When people are quiet or cameras are off	
Write the smallest useful contribution you could make today.	When people are quiet or cameras are off	
Type one thing you would like to understand better.	When people are quiet or cameras are off	
Name an instruction that would make participating easier for you.	When people are quiet or cameras are off	
Describe a time someone explained something to you clearly and what they did.	Before a training session or skill block	
Name a situation where you had to ask for information twice.	Before a training session or skill block	
Describe a conversation where the other person changed your mind, and how.	Before a training session or skill block	
Name something you have learned by watching a colleague rather than reading about it.	Before a training session or skill block	
Say what makes practice feel safe for you.	Before a training session or skill block	
Name a skill you would like to use more often at work.	Before a training session or skill block	
Describe what a useful mistake looks like in your role.	Before a training session or skill block	
Type the town or city you are joining from.	For larger groups	
Name one thing that helps you concentrate in a busy week.	For larger groups	
Type the first step you will take after this meeting.	For larger groups	
Name one thing your team is better at than a year ago.	For larger groups	
Type a question you would ask a new colleague on their first day.	For larger groups	
Name something the group could stop doing that would save time.	For larger groups	
Type one word that describes how you want this session to feel.	For larger groups	

Prompt	Situation	My note
Name one condition that helps you say something difficult.	When the topic is sensitive	
Describe how you prefer to hear about a problem: early, in writing, or face to face.	When the topic is sensitive	
Say what helps you stay calm when a conversation gets tense.	When the topic is sensitive	
Name something a colleague did that made a difficult conversation easier.	When the topic is sensitive	
Describe what you need before you can commit to a decision.	When the topic is sensitive	
Name one ground rule you would like for this discussion.	When the topic is sensitive	

Facilitator run of show

1 Explain the invitation | 2 minutes

Say: “We will take a few minutes to arrive and hear each other. Pick a work-related example, type if you prefer, or pass. There are no clever answers to find.” Show the chosen prompt and model a short, ordinary answer.

2 Give quiet thinking time | 2 minutes

Invite participants to write a few words before anyone speaks. Tell them they can keep those notes private. This prevents the fastest speaker from setting the direction for everyone.

3 Share in pairs or trios | 6 minutes

Give each person up to two minutes. Ask listeners to hear the whole answer before asking one curious question. With a pair, use the remaining two minutes to find a connection. Avoid making someone report a partner’s story without permission.

4 Connect to the workshop | 3 minutes

Back together, invite three brief contributions about what would help people work well today. Ask for a theme or request, not a report on another person. Write any practical requests where the group can see them.

5 Make a small agreement | 2 minutes

Choose one request the group can act on now, such as putting instructions in writing. Say how you will use it. Move into the workshop with a clear connection to its purpose.

Debrief and next steps

Questions for reflection

- Did everyone have a usable way to contribute?
- What did we learn about how to work together today?
- Which request can we put into practice immediately?

Adapt the session

- For 4–8 people, share in the main room with a one-minute limit per person; shorten the reflection to fit.
- For 20 people, use trios and invite only three voluntary reflections in plenary. Do not extend the activity to hear every pair report.
- For a group with tension, use the question-to-keep prompt. Avoid forced compliments, rankings, personal histories or competitive scoring.

After the session

Revisit the group's practical request at the first break. Ask if the adjustment is helping. Rotate prompts across repeat meetings instead of requiring the same disclosure each time.

Questions people ask

How many virtual icebreakers should I use in one meeting?

One. The run of show on this page takes fifteen minutes and uses a single prompt. Two prompts in a short meeting usually costs the time you needed for the agenda.

What if nobody wants to answer?

Lower the cost rather than pushing. Ask for one word in chat, let people pass without explanation, and answer the prompt yourself first so the group hears what a plain answer sounds like.

Do icebreakers work for online training?

They help a group start talking, which makes the practice part easier to run. They do not replace the practice itself, and this page makes no claim about learning outcomes.

How do I choose a prompt for my group?

Match the prompt to the situation rather than to the topic: quiet groups, large groups and sensitive sessions each need different openings. The picker at the top of the prompt list chooses one for you.

Can I print the prompts?

Yes. The bundle includes a prompt-card document that prints one card per prompt, with the grouping and the fifteen-minute run of show.

Use and sharing

Free to use and adapt in your own training sessions, including paid client work. Do not resell or redistribute the unmodified download as a standalone product. Share the resource page instead.