

A handy guide to: Limbering up for a public meeting

Putting good practice into practice. Good habits come with practice. We have included some fun, but professionally developed exercises which will help you practice the key skills that make any meeting work really well.

Listening skills ice-breakers

Newspaper puzzle

Divide into teams of five or six people and give each team a copy of the **same** newspaper. Ask them to spread the newspaper out in front of them. Describe a particular advert, article, fact or picture from the paper and ask all the teams to find it, rip it out and bring it to you. The first team to bring it gets a point. Continue calling out items and the winning team is the one with the most points. Watch the paper fly...

Line up

Ask the group to line up. (This works best with 8-10 in a line. If you've got a bigger group, split them up and challenge each line to complete the task first.)

Ask the group to form a new line in order of....

- Height, from smallest to tallest;
- Birthdays, from January through to December;
- Shoe size, from smallest to largest;
- Alphabetical (A-Z) or reverse alphabetical (Z-A) first names;
- Alphabetical mothers first names;
- Alphabetical grandmother's first names;
- Anything else you think up.

Who am I?

Prepare a self adhesive label or post-it note for each person in your group. Write on it the name of a well-known or famous person or fact. This can be an historical character or current sportsman, musician, TV personality, celebrity etc. Make sure your post-it notes have a good mix of men and women.

Have a good mix of men and women. Keeping the names hidden, stick the post-it notes on the foreheads of everyone in the group. They must then ask questions of the others to find out their identity. Each person takes a turn to ask questions and figure out who they are. For example, Am I alive? Am I female? Am I in a band? Only yes or no questions can be asked. If the answer is no, their turn is over. If the answer is yes, they can ask another question and keep going until they get a no, or guess who they are. Keep playing until everyone has guessed, or if time is short, stop after the first few correct answers. (© 40 Ice breakers for small groups: Grahame Knox)

Persuasion skills ice-breaker

So where do you stand?

This group exercise will take about 30 minutes. The aim is for each group to win converts to their side by reason of their arguments. If you have less time just use your favourite or contentious statements.

Read the statement and ask participants to stand by the sign **AGREE**, **DISAGREE** or **DON'T KNOW** depending on how they feel. Each group then has to agree who their spokesperson is and try and convince other people to change their position. The examples below are just suggestions and you could easily include items such as 'We think the age for receiving the pension age should be raised'; or 'Older people are listened to and respected for their views'.

The key is for it to be a debate and that people have to listen to the views of the other group. Make sure you have a referee!

Statements

- Life can be hard when you are young
- Older people get a raw deal
- Life is no fun when you're old
- Some young people are lonely
- Some older people are lonely
- When you are old you are afraid a lot of the time
- When you are young you are afraid a lot of the time
- Young people always want their own way
- Older people always want their own way
- Older people have got no sense of humour

To summarise

"We do not suddenly become old. We are growing older slowly, gradually day by day, and the choices we make each day affect the kind of person we will be tomorrow".