



Icebreaker: Answer with Your Feet

Objective: Participants and facilitators learn about characteristics and composition of the group and a little about one another in a fun and dynamic way.

When to use: This exercise should be used near the beginning of a workshop. It works well for large groups (20 or more participants). It replaces the often-used activity of self-introductions, which is typically not suitable for large groups.

Time required: The icebreaker can be completed in 20 minutes, but we suggest budgeting 30 minutes. Larger groups will require more time.

What you will need: This exercise requires no materials, but does require sufficient open space that will allow all participants to move around to form groups and to form a single line or large circle.

Preparation: Before conducting the icebreaker, you will need to develop 4 questions that will divide participants into 2 or 3 categories each. For example, "Are you a woman or a man?" Sample questions and categories are listed below. Categories selected must be ones that help the participants and the facilitators better understand the composition and characteristics of the group.

Instructions

1. Have all participants stand and move to an open space where there is sufficient room to move around and to form a single line or large circle. All participants should be standing close to one another in the center of the space.



2. Explain the exercise to participants by saying, "We are going to learn about each other and the group as a whole. Understanding group characteristics is important for helping one another learn during the workshop. We will do this by asking everyone to place themselves into categories and move to different parts of the room based on how they respond to questions.
3. Give the following instructions as a warm-up so participants will understand how the exercise works:

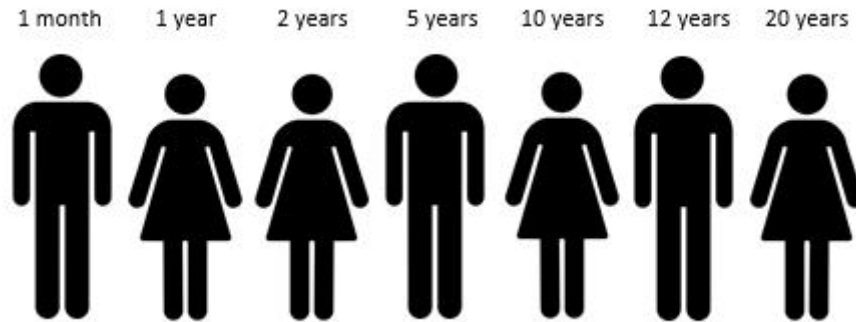
"If you are a woman, please move to the right side of the room. If you are a man, please move to the left side of the room."



While this very simple categorization is effective in demonstrating how the exercise will work, it also raises awareness about gender balance in the group. Make an observation to the group about what has happened. For example, "I see that we have a very balanced group of women and men," or "I see that we have many more male participants than female."

4. Continue with the exercise using the questions and categories that you developed for the icebreaker. Make observations at each stage.
5. After completing the last movement, ask participants organize themselves in a single line or, for large groups, in a circle based on their "experience," however you define this, with the least experienced person on one end and the most experienced on the other. If you form a circle, you will first need to identify the two people with the most and least experience and ask them to stand next to one another and ask others to form the circle with these two people as reference points. "Experience" may be the number of years

worked at their organizations; the number of years they have worked in their current job; the number of weeks, years, months they have worked on climate change, etc. Allow several minutes to pass until a single line or a full circle is formed. You may need to assist with this process, particularly with larger groups.



6. Ask participants to introduce themselves to the people on their right and left.
7. Ask the least experienced person introduce themselves and include how much experience they have. (Expect or encourage applause if this person is particularly new.) Walk down the line selecting a few people at random to introduce themselves and how much experience they have. Conclude with the person with the most experience at the end of the line. (Expect or encourage applause if this person has significant experience.)
8. Ask the participants to return to their seats.

Sample questions to use for the icebreaker activity

Where do you work?

- If you work at WWF (or the organization hosting the workshop), move to the right. If you work at another organization, move to the left.

Where do you live? OR Where were you born?

- If you live (were born) in country/region A (often the country where the workshop is being held), move to the right. If you live (were born) in country/region B (often a place where many other participants are from), move to the left. If you live (were born) somewhere else, move to the center.

What field do you work in?

- If you work in conservation move to the left. If you work in development, move to the right. If you work in another field move to the center.

What biome do you work with? (Used in groups of conservationists only.)

- If you work on terrestrial issues, move to the right. If you work on freshwater issues, move to the center. If you work on marine issues, move to the left.

How important is climate change in your work?

- If "climate change" is in your job title or in the name of your department or organization, move to the right. If you work on climate issues, but it is not the main theme of your job, move to the center. If you do not *yet* work on climate issues in a significant way, move to the left.

What is your primary language? (Used in groups with mixed language ability.)

- If you speak only English (or the working language of the workshop), move to the left. If you speak only Spanish (or another language that many participants will speak), move to the right. If you are comfortable in both English and Spanish, move to the center.