

Icebreakers and Starter Activities for PAL Sessions

1. **Secure, unsure & curious**

Choose a topic that the students have covered recently in their lectures. Ask the students to think about one aspect of the topic they felt they understood well, one aspect they were unsure about and one they would like to know more about. Ask students to share their thoughts with the rest of the group. Information gathered from this task might then be able to use for future PAL sessions.

2. **Odd one out**

Come up with about 5 groups of 3 facts. In each group, one fact must be an odd one out. Put the students into teams. Get the teams to discuss each group of facts. and decide which the odd one out is. Ask them to justify their answers. You may find they identify different facts as the odd one out to you but this is ok if they can justify their choice.

3. **Pairs task**

Create pairs of facts that clearly link with each other. Write each fact on a card. Hand out cards at the beginning of the session. Students then have to find the person with the fact that links to theirs. You can ask them to explain the link to the rest of the group. This expectation can be made clear to them at the beginning.

Have two sets of the cards then if lots of students turn up you can split into two groups and run the task for each group.

4. **Articulate**

Create a list of about 10 key words/facts from a recent topic covered by the students. Get students to pair up, choose one person to explain and one person to guess. Once the students guessing have turned to face away from the board, put the list of words up for the describers. Words/facts can be skipped over and returned to at the end.

5. **Loop cards**

Create a set of loop cards with questions and answers on a piece of card. Do not number the questions or answers.

Answer 10	Question 1
Answer 1	Question 2
Answer 2	Question 3
Answer 3	Question 4
Answer 4	Question 5
Answer 5	Question 6
Answer 6	Question 7
Answer 7	Question 8
Answer 8	Question 9
Answer 9	Question 10

Cut the cards so the answer and question adjacent to each other remain on the same piece of card.

Hand out the cards to the students in the group. Choose a student to read out their question to the group. The person who thinks they have the answer to the question, reads out their answer and then reads their question out. Another student should then have the answer to this second question. They read out their answer followed by their question. This continues until final answer is reached which should be on the card of the student who read out their question first.

Have two sets of the cards then if lots of students turn up you can split into two groups and run the task for each group.

6. Problems Tree



- 1) Draw a tree on the board or flip chart paper
- 2) Start making the first branch
- 3) Allow students to add their own problem branch.
- 4) Review all the problems
- 5) Allocate time in the PAL session to explore all of the branches. This could be in future PAL sessions.

Other ideas

There are also some great clips on YouTube and TED.com which can provide a great opening to a session.

Additional icebreaker activities <http://www.icebreakers.ws/>