



Family Learning
COMMUNITY
Network

Community Building TOOLKIT



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National Center for
Families Learning

Community Building TOOLKIT

Community Builders: Getting Started

When starting a meeting, event, or new cohort, one way to get participants warmed up and engaged is with a community builder. With so many community building ideas out there, how do you choose the right one? You can begin by asking yourself a few questions.

1. Who is my target audience?
2. What are my goals for this community builder?
3. Do the participants already know something about each other?
4. Am I looking to spark a conversation or complete an activity?

The answers to these questions should guide your selection process. If you have a group of participants who do not know each other, general and fun conversation starters are a good place to start. You can ask questions about dream jobs, dream vacations, favorite sports teams, music, art, or culture. These questions should give the participants an opportunity to find similarities with each other and begin building relationships.

Sometimes you want your community builders to have a symbolic meaning. For example, have a group plant seeds and decorate the pots anyway they chose, but they have to write “I plant the seed of...” and fill in the blank with whatever skill or characteristic they want to work on. Some choices might be love, perseverance, patience, determination, and kindness.

You also want to make sure everyone in your group can participate in community builders. For example, if you chose to do conversation starters which are typed, printed, and left on the table, be sure to provide copies in all the languages represented in your target audience. If you’re planning an activity that is outside, consider your participants and how comfortable they will be completing certain activities. Think about the weather and physical exertion of each participant.

While preplanning might not be able to predict every outcome of your community builder, participants will enjoy the thoughtfulness you put into creating comfortable environments and situations that allow them to get to know each other in a safe and positive space!

PURPOSE

Team building brings people together by encouraging collaboration and teamwork. Fun activities that help people see each other in a different light and let them connect in a different setting. Community building is useful in many different settings. It can be used at home with families, in classrooms, or in businesses. Community building gives participants an opportunity to develop stronger relationships and trust among each other. Certain activities can be designed to improve communication and limit conflict in a group.

COMMUNITY BUILDING TOP 10

1. Improve communication
2. Make the workplace more enjoyable
3. Motivate a team
4. Get to know each other
5. Get everyone “on the same page”, including goal setting
6. Teach the team self-regulation strategies
7. Help participants learn more about themselves (strengths & weaknesses)
8. Identify and use the strengths of team members
9. Improve team productivity
10. Practice effective collaboration with team members

WHO CAN USE THIS TOOLKIT?

This Community Building Toolkit can be used by any entity looking to build relationships.

- Families
- Teachers
- Principals
- Managers/Supervisors
- Community Leaders

HOW TO USE THIS TOOLKIT

This toolkit is broken down into three sections of community building activities.

1. Teenagers to Adults

- 5 - 30 mins
- 30 - 60 min

2. Children

- Pre K – 3rd Grade
- 4th grade – 8th grade

3. Remote Teams

Community Builders: Teenagers to Adults (5 – 30 Minutes)

2 TRUTHS, 1 LIE

Objective: To break the ice and get people involved

How to Play:

1. Ask the players to sit in a circle.
2. Each player thinks of two truths and one lie about himself.
3. Each player then gets up in the center of the circle and says the three statements about himself (two truths, one lie).
4. The rest of the group guesses which of the statements are truth and which is a lie.
5. Repeat the process for all other players.

BACK-TO-BACK DRAWING

Objective: To develop and improve communication skills

What You'll Need:

- Paper
- Pens or markers
- Printouts of simple line drawings or basic shapes

How to Play:

1. Split your group into pairs and have each pair sit back to back.
2. Give one person a picture of a shape or a simple image and give the other person a piece of paper and pen.
3. The person holding the picture gives verbal instructions to her partner on how to draw the shape or image she's been given—without disclosing what the shape or image is.
4. After a set amount of time, have each set of partners compare their images and see which team drew the most accurate replica.

COMPANY COAT OF ARMS

Objective: To increase team bonding and company pride

What You'll Need:

- Paper
- Pens
- Markers

How to Play: Have teams create a coat of arms for their company.

1. In the first space, ask them to draw something that represents a recent achievement.
2. In the second space, they should draw something that reflects their company's values.
3. In the third space, ask that they draw something that represents where they see the company going in the future.

CAMPFIRE/MEMORY WALL

Objective: To bond teams and break the ice

What You'll Need: Post-It notes or a whiteboard

How to Play: This activity works well when the facilitator and participants are from the same organization or company.

1. Write a few general work-related topics on the white board or on sticky notes posted to the wall: "My first day," "Teamwork," "Work travel," or "Classroom experience," etc.
2. Gather your team together and have everyone choose one of the topics and share a story from their time with your company to laugh and bond over shared experiences.
3. Or, pass out sticky notes and have everyone write down positive memories of working together or special team accomplishments. They can use words or pictures to record these memories.
4. Then have everyone share their memory and post it on the wall, forming a positive memory cloud.

Community Builders: Teenagers to Adults (30 – 60 Minutes)

OFFICE TRIVIA

Sometimes, you need a quick activity to break the ice and get people involved in an event. Asking relevant “trivia” questions about your workplace works well in such situations. This game doesn’t require any equipment or significant preparation. It can also be held indoors or outdoors, with small teams or large teams, making it a flexible option for team building.

Objective: To get people engaged and improve team bonding

How to Play:

1. Come up with a list of trivia questions related to your place of work. Questions like “What does the poster in the lobby say?” “How many people named ‘John’ work in the IT department?” “How many people work in the accounting department?”, etc.
2. Write all questions and their answers on index cards.
3. Ask the whole group questions and solicit answers out loud.
4. The participant who gets the most answers right wins at the end.

Optional: To make it more competitive, consider dividing participants into teams and adding ‘buzzers’ for each question.

ODD COUPLES

On any team, you’ll have people with different personalities. But sometimes, these different personalities have things in common. Getting these team members to appreciate their differences and similarities can improve team bonding.

Objective: To improve team bonding and communication skills

How to Play:

1. Create a list of odd pairs of objects that, for some reason, go well together. Like “Peanut butter & jelly,” “chocolate & coffee,” “salt & pepper,” etc.
2. Write the names of objects from each pair on separate sheets of paper.
3. Tape a sheet of paper to a participant’s back. Do this for all participants. Try to tape opposing pairs on people with opposing personalities, though this is isn’t necessary.
4. Participants’ objective is to figure out what’s written on their backs. They will move throughout the group asking others only yes/no questions (“Do I add flavor to food? Do I make the food spicy?”).
5. Once participants figure out what’s written on their backs, they must find the other half of their pair.
6. After pairs are found, participants must find three things they share in common with their opposing pair.

Community Builders: Children (PreK – Grade 3)

HULA-HOOP PASS

This activity helps children work on listening, coordination, and strategizing skills. It works best with smaller students. Have your students stand in a big circle. Place a Hula-Hoop on one student's arm and have her join hands with the student next to her. Ask all the other students to join hands to close the circle. The objective of the game is to pass the Hula-Hoop all the way around the circle without unclasp hands. Students will have to figure out how to maneuver their bodies all the way through the hoop to pass it on.

MINGLE, MINGLE GROUPS

This activity is good for encouraging children to mix it up. Students mill about the room saying, in a quiet voice, "Mingle, mingle, mingle." Then, the teacher calls out a group size, for example, groups of three. Students must break into groups of that size. The goal is to form different groups of individuals every time. If a child tries to join a group with whom she has already partnered she must find a different group. After a few rounds, the process may take a bit of rearranging.

Community Builders—Children (Grade 4 – Grade 8)

MARSHMALLOW-AND-TOOTHPICK CHALLENGE

Divide students into groups of equal numbers. Pass out an equal number of marshmallows and wooden toothpicks to each group. Challenge the groups to create the tallest, largest, or most creative structure in a set amount of time, each member taking turns doing the actual building. Afterward, have each group describe what they made.

ALL MY FRIENDS

This game is a quick way to take note of your students' interests. Start by having your students form a circle. Stand in the middle and say, "All my friends like" filling in the blank with anything you enjoy—hiking, sushi, reading—anything! Any student who also enjoys one of the things you mentioned has to switch spots with another person in the circle. Much like musical chairs, that person doesn't have a spot in the circle and goes to the middle and says, "All my friends..." starting the process all over again.

STORYTELLING ROUND-ROBIN

This activity helps students pool their creative resources. Students can sit in a circle or at their desks. The teacher will begin with the first line of the story. For instance, "Once upon a time there were three children walking through the forest" One by one, each student adds one sentence with new details to the story. The story cannot end until every student has participated.

Team Building Activities for Remote Teams

WHOSE OFFICE IS IT, ANYWAY?

Objective: To bond teams and break the ice

What You'll Need:

- Internet connection
- File sharing tool

How to Play: Have your team members send a photo of their home offices, and then have everyone guess whose workspace is whose. Keep the game going with photos of everyone's coffee mugs, desktop backgrounds, or the view outside their window.

CONFERENCE CALL TRIVIA

Objective: To bond teams and break the ice

What You'll Need: Internet connection

How to Play: Divide remote participants into teams and play trivia. You can find good trivia questions and answers online, or pull out some Trivial Pursuit cards. It's a great way to learn about people's non-work interests and personalities.

ONLINE MULTIPLAYER GAMES

Objective: To enhance creative problem solving and collaboration skills

What You'll Need: Internet connection

How to Play: Pick a game, like Travian or 1066, that will let your team work together to strategize and problem solve. There are many free games as well as ones that will charge you to subscribe. There are games that build STEAM skills. Use your computer's built-in microphone and speakers to chat or use headsets.

CHARADES OR CATCHPHRASE VIA VIDEO HANGOUT OR SKYPE

Objective: To build collaboration skills and bond teams

What You'll Need:

- Internet connection
- Video chat app

How to Play: Divide your group into two teams and play classic party games like Charades or Catchphrase via video call. You can send everyone the link to an online Charades or Catchphrase ideas generator that will provide word prompts for you.

ONLINE KARAOKE PARTY

Objective: To bond teams and break the ice

What You'll Need: Internet connection

How to Play: Let loose with an online karaoke party! Use the built-in microphones and speakers on your computers to challenge teammates to a karaoke battle, compare high scores, or just have fun showing off your singing skills.

Question Starters for Families and Mixed Age Groups

POWER OF RELATIONSHIPS

- Is texting used to avoid face to face interactions?
- What is the purpose of Social Media? Keep in touch with friends and family? Show off your outfits? Follow the latest news? Something else?
- What is your favorite spot in your house? Why?
- If you had to pick one meal to eat for the rest of your life, what would it be?
- What is your favorite outdoor hobby/activity?
- If you could have witnessed one event in history, what would it be?
- What is the best advice you've ever received?
- If you were stranded on a desert island, what three things would you want to have with you?

EXPRESS CARE

- How do you act around someone you have a crush on?
- How do you know when someone loves you?
- What would be your ideal way to spend the weekend?
- What's the best single day on the calendar?
- How do you relax after a hard day of school or work?
- What is the most heartwarming thing you've ever seen?
- What could you give a 40-minute presentation on with absolutely no preparation?

SHARE POWER

- When is the last time you changed your opinion/belief about something major?
- If you could share power with anyone of your choosing, who would it be and what would you change? (e.g., CEO of company, politician, coach of a favorite team)
- If you were going to start your own country, would it be a Monarchy (King/Queen has power) or a Democracy (Elected officials have power)? Why?
- In what situation or place would you feel the most out of place?
- What risks are worth taking?
- What would be the most annoying thing about having yourself as a roommate?
- What would be your spirit animal?

CHALLENGE GROWTH

- How do you hope you'll change as a person in the future?
- What gives your life meaning?
- What is the most surprising self-realization you've had?
- Have you ever gotten in the way of your own success?
- What chapters would you separate your autobiography into?
- What annoys you most about the in-groups you are a part of?
- Which of your scars has the best story behind it? (physical or emotional)
- What do you want to be remembered for?
- Among your friends or family, what are you famous for?

SUPPORT AND POSSIBILITIES

- How would your country change if everyone, regardless of age, could vote?
- What smartphone feature would you be excited for a company to implement?
- What superhero would it be the most fun to change places with for a week? Why?
- If you were going to be a lobbyist or advocate, what issue would be most important to you?
- Who or what object do you run to when you need support or comforting?
- Describe the outfit that makes you feel the most confident and empowered
- If you could hop on a plane and travel to anywhere in the world, where would you go and why?
- If magic was real, what spell would you try to learn first?

GROWING TOGETHER

- What team Olympic sport would you want your family to compete in and who would you nominate as the family team captain?
- If you had only one sense (hearing, touch, sight, etc.), which would you want?
- If you had unlimited money to start your own business, what would it be?
- If you see a puddle on the ground, do you walk around it or over it?
- If you could spend a day in someone else's shoes, whose would they be? Why?
- If you could invite three people, dead or alive, to a dinner party, who would they be, and why?

INVESTIGATION

- Picture your perfect and ideal neighborhood. What are its characteristics?
- Think of a time when someone wasn't pulling their own weight. How did that make you feel? How did you handle it?
- If you had a personal mascot, what would it be?
- What is the best way to stay motivated and complete goals?
- Does technology simplify life or make it more complicated?
- What is your favorite app on your phone? Why?
- What song/artist always puts you in a good mood?

INVESTIGATION/CHALLENGE GROWTH

- What do you do to get rid of stress?
- If you had intro music, what song would it be? Why?
- What's your favorite season? Why?
- Is free will real or just an illusion?
- What does it mean to live a good life?
- Where does your self-worth come from?
- What is holding you back from being the person you want to be?
- How much time do you spend on the internet? What do you usually do?
- What is the silliest fear you have?

Adapted from "225 Conversation Starters" Retrieved from <https://www.gifts.com/blog/conversation-starters>

Resources

- <http://www.innovativeteambuilding.co.uk/benefits-of-teambuilding/>
- <http://www.voicecoachinglondon.co.uk/why-is-team-building-important.html>
- <https://www.teambonding.com/6-reasons-for-team-building/>
- <https://www.workamajig.com/blog/team-building-activities>
- <https://www.weareteachers.com/team-building-games-and-activities/>
- <https://www.wrike.com/blog/ultimate-guide-team-building-activities/>