

INTELLECTUAL AND ICE-BREAKING GAMES IN THE GRADUATE COURSE ON SCIENTIFIC REASONING

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Game activities are currently suggested as an additional item for the master's course in scientific reasoning (critical thinking) for the following reasons:

- i, change in the present research environment nationally and internationally with quickly emerging and likely quickly disappearing scientific teams;
- ii, more complicated and psychology-oriented interview procedures which, however, are quite inadequate as they often lead to making wrong decisions in forming research and development teams and distribution of tasks;
- iii, growing team work activities in the frame of the course on scientific reasoning and other graduate and undergraduate courses aimed at more complex instructor's tasks and responsibilities for generating team spirit in different situations and combinations;
- iv, necessity to develop a number of game rules to have a more interactive course on scientific reasoning or others;
- v, possibility to apply all the games developed to the department or laboratory meetings, workshops, journal clubs, student and amateur circles of molecular biology, genetics including public lectures, off-class activities and other public events.

Classroom games may be found at www.multiplication.com/teach/classroom-games. They are subdivided into individual, pair, small group, classroom games, and they are also classified by duration (short, long, flexible), complexity (easy, hard), noise (quiet, loud), computational linkage (computer games or computer-free games), age (games for children, adults or elderly citizens), literacy-elevating (illiteracy-reducing) games (i.e. based on the alphabet, counting or primary knowledge of natural sciences or humanities), etc.

Ice-breaking games are intended for establishing in a newly created team in a short period of time or that is already hard working but probably experiencing lack of time for outdoor activities or informal contacts. Each ice-breaking game has its own rules, preferences and constraints. For instance, "People Bingo", "Marooned", "Table Topics", "The Power of Story", "Expectations", "Two-Minute Mixer" and many other games are attributed to ice-breaking games. "Expectation" is a powerful game for students and researchers, when the audience is able to express a range of opinions on the course that is taught. Opportunity to have prescribed expectations for the course would serve as an ice-breaking factor. Two-minute dating is also a proper tool, when the department or a laboratory team of 20 students, researchers or teachers meet for the first time. So the game is consisted as a series of 2-minute dates. Each person talks to another person only for 2 minutes and then moves on to the next. Such ice-breaking 2-minute mixer was used by a team of the graduates in Biology in a current course on Scientific Reasoning.

"Bingo" is one of the most popular ice-breaking, intellectual and social games, all in one. Before the game, it is recommended to make "The Bingo Maker" shown in Table 1 below.

Instead of the bingo numbers, an interesting team member's characteristics or any type of probable issues may serve as the pre-text for the meeting. Each participant gets a bingo card to be then asked to walk around the room and find the person who might fit those characteristics. So, the game would give each participant an opportunity to talk with people and get familiar with colleagues.

Table 1. Example of “The Bingo Marker”

B	I	N	G	O
Doesn't like to fill out any tax declaration form	Born in the city	Able to make a poster	Can write the thesis without any sleep	Polish shoe toes before the interview
Eats chocolates during lab seminars	Loves poetry	Is afraid of radioactivity	Is allergic to phenol	Chews fingernails when nervous
Wins regularly community charity projects	Free space	Prefers gardening	Is fond of swimming	Has a bad habit to never be ready for journal club
Goes to see the sunset at the ocean	Talks too much while preparing stock solutions	Has pictures of own children	Keeps posting news in the hallway	Is a vegetarian sometimes angry before the breakfast
Is jogging mornings	Loves jazz improvisations	Won both Edmund S. Muskie and William J. Fullbright fellowships	Beats glassware when upset	Never looks in the mirror

Icebreakers (the organizers of ice-breaking games) play an essential part in having research teams or other social groups united and connected to one another by a gradually formed team-spirited environment. Icebreakers can also strengthen teaching process by moderating, narrating and promoting participation, networking, collaboration, and designing “umbrella” projects and feed-back from graduates and regional volunteers.

Icebreakers are able “to boost” a number of **positive effects** on a research team study or lively involvement by means of:

- o Assistance to members of a newly set team in getting to know each other.
- o Assistance to newcomers of that team in becoming its members.
- o Assistance to members in feeling comfortable while performing joint activities.

- o Explaining the core and aims of collaboration, and encouraging it.
- o Explaining how to listen to other team members.
- o Encouraging team-work and explaining how to create appropriate conditions for its higher efficiency.
- o Developing off-class activities, charity projects, social and evaluation skills.
- o Building courteous, democratic and steady relationships with principal investigators, science managers, journal editors, potential employers and top administrators.
- o Encouraging people to leave their former ineffectual teams or previous unprofessional cliques.
- o Creating a special atmosphere for innovation, learning, participation and chain-reaction involvement.
- o Creating atmosphere to jointly explore theoretical and practical measures that will diminish the role of bureaucracy on future national and international scientific developments.

Related self-work patterns submitted by the graduates to the instructor that we managed to analyze may be subdivided into language games (in Kazakh, Russian, or English), ice-breaking games for adults, student train-travel intellectual games, illiteracy-reducing “Amazing Kazakh Letters” game and others.

Major **requirements** to ice-breaking games are:

- Simple, easy and inexpensive in accomplishment
- Safe
- Success- or at least slightly positive output-orientation
- Interactive
- Amusing both for participants and spectators.

Possible **undesirable conditions** preventing proper running of the game may be too stressful work or long study period before the game, too crowded, cold, overheated or stuffy room, the presence of people of much different ages or participation of more than three principal investigators or leading administrators in the game, unfriendly comments of occasional spectators, and technical problems in cases when it is necessary to explain certain game rules or anticipated outcomes.

Finally, apart from the lecture and self-work the topic imposes such few questions as:

1. What is an intellectual game?
2. Why is the issue of ice-breaking game so close to scientific reasoning?
3. Which games and rules are already known to you?
4. Can you formulate rules for a new intellectual or ice-breaking game on your own or in collaboration with your graduate group?
5. What is the difference between your game and other likely games that are already known?
6. Discuss pre-requisites (requirements) and limitations (undesirable conditions) of your game.
7. Why have you designed a new game yourself (with that group of people, in pairs)?
8. Present an evaluation of others games, their stronger and weaker parts.
9. Which game do you find effective (useless, dangerous, cute, etc.) and why?
10. Give an evaluation to all the ice-breakers (including principal investigators, leading administrators or occasional spectators involved), and so on.

Conclusion

Ice-breaking games are expected to foster quicker research teams formation as interactive graduate teaching. The question is: "How may it be in consistence with our history and habits? Will our research administrators, journal editors, employers and instructors be ready to play this sort of games with young investigators or widely, with the public? Will this, in case of success, make an impact on science and education development in this country and abroad?"

Used web resources:

1. Graduates self-works in three languages (instructor's folder to be presented at the conference)
2. <http://xa.yimg.com/kq/groups/4749922/973654884/name/Icebreakers.pdf>
3. <http://www.inspireyourgroup.com/media/surefire3.pdf>
4. http://insight.typepad.co.uk/40_icebreakers_for_small_groups.pdf

5. <http://www.ultimatecampresource.com/site/camp-activities/ice-breakers.html>
6. <http://www.playmeo.com/activities/search/category:ice-breakers>
7. <http://www.squidoo.com/ice-breakers-fun-group-games>
8. http://www.ehow.com/how_2075131_plan-party-games-senior-citizens.html
9. <http://www.howtodothings.com/family-and-relationships/a2885-how-to-plan-party-games-and-activities-for-senior-citizens.html>
10. [Free Retro Games - www.retrogamer.com/](http://www.retrogamer.com/)
11. <http://www.buzzle.com/articles/funny-games-for-groups.html>

Supplementary video resources:

12. http://www.ehow.com/how_2075131_plan-party-games-senior-citizens.html
13. <http://www.howtodothings.com/family-and-relationships/a2885-how-to-plan-party-games-and-activities-for-senior-citizens.html>
14. [Free Retro Games - www.retrogamer.com/](http://www.retrogamer.com/)
15. <http://www.buzzle.com/articles/funny-games-for-groups.html>

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