



RECYCLING ICE BREAKERS

Things to Consider When Choosing an Ice-breaker:

1. Know your Audience (size, age group, how well they know each other)
2. Purpose of the Ice-Breaker: energize a group, inform students, start a discussion, build communication skills

“Eco-Aerobics”

Type: Energizing Age Groups: All (5-15 people) Materials: None

Description: An opportunity for students to stretch out; good for energizing a group when they seem like they could use it. Make sure there is enough space for all students to stretch out. Ask participants to repeat and mimic your actions after you, repeating until they are ready to continue with the workshop or time runs out:

- *Trees up here good; trees down here bad*
- *Bees buzzing good; sickly bees bad*
- *Clean energy good; dirty energy bad*
- *Recycling our things good; land-filling bad*
- *Happy animals good; sad animals bad*
- *Kids playing and running good; kids without parks bad*

“Where the Wind Blows”

Type: Team Building Age Groups: All (10-20 people) Materials: Participant’s shoes

Description: Participants form a circle with a decent space in the middle. Students take off their shoes, as placeholders for the activity. A participant is chosen to stand in the middle of the circle and say: “the big wind blows for those who _____”. They should say something about themselves or something they like. If students in the circle share the said experience, trait, they have to run to someone else’s spot. Whoever is left without a spot must then go to the middle. The facilitator can cater it so that everyone gets a turn to run around. For example, when doing outreach in a school in Brooklyn, a facilitator can be in the middle and say “The wind blows for those that live in Brooklyn.” Chances are most students will need to participate, as most are likely to live in the borough. You can also encourage participants to make their statements relevant to recycling or the environment.

“Name the Stream”

Type: Informational Age Groups: All (5-15 people)

Materials: A bean bag or ball to toss around, clean, sample waste materials

Optional: Quick review of recyclables and what goes in which bin.

Description: This game will involve circling up and tossing a soft object from person to person. When it is your turn, you toss the ball to somebody, and call out an item, such as “shampoo bottle” (the thrower must know which stream this goes in). The recipient/*tosee* catches it and as quickly as possible calls out the stream it goes in (MGPC, Paper, Organics, or Landfill). If they are correct, they turn to somebody else and call out a new item as they throw the ball. If the item is not identified correctly, the *tosser* calls out, “Try Again.” The catcher gets one try – if they don’t give the correct answer, the *tosser* calls out the correct stream. Either way, the *tosee* then gets a turn to pass the ball and call out a new item to somebody else. Repeat until all items have been named or time runs out.



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“Ninja Says Recycle.”

Type: Team-Building Age Groups: Older, more mature groups (5-15 people) Materials: None

Description: This game has nothing to do with recycling, but it is a great energizing/team building exercise for students mature enough to play it. Ask participants to stand in a circle, facing inward. They will then think of their favorite ninja pose and assume this pose when the facilitator says: “Ninja says Recycle.”, taking a step back as they do so. Players must stay still in this pose. The facilitator starts by trying to tap the person to their left or right with only one movement. The person targeted to being tapped can try to dodge the tap with one single movement. If the targeted person is tapped, he/she is out of the circle and the person who tapped goes on to tapping someone else. The game goes on until everyone has been eliminated.

Note: the game is best explained by showing with example. It is very important to know that the group is mature enough and knows each other well enough to play harmoniously. Good for high school green teams.

“Human Barometer”

Type: Discussion Starter Age Groups: 5th-12th grade (as many as space permits) Materials: None

Description: This ice-breaker is meant to inform groups and get them thinking about recycling and how it might connect to their everyday life. Form an imaginary line and have students line up right in the middle, forming a straight line. Designate one side of the line to be the place to stand for a yes/true answer to the statements about to be given, and the other side for a no/false answer. The middle area is designated for those that are unsure. Read statements regarding recycling aloud and have students align on either side of the line after hearing them. Statements can be facts or opinions.

Sample statements:

- *NYC has a diversion(recycling) rate of 15% (fact)*
- *Recycling has a positive impact on our environment (opinion)*

(Cater the statements to the age groups and level of knowledge of your participants)

After all participants have chosen a place to stand on the human barometer, have one participant on each end of the line explain why they chose that answer. Invite discussion of opinion if time allows.