

# **GROUP DIVISION TECHNIQUES**

## **Yo-yos Add Creativity**

Have one yo-yo for each course participant. A slip of paper bearing a single skill the course will discuss is taped to the side of each toy. Instruct participants to begin playing with their yo-yos as they circulate through the room, working to form groups with those whose yo-yo labels match their own.

When groups are formed, ask students to discuss the skill shown on their group's yo-yos – what they know, what they don't know, what they hope to learn. Encourage them to play with the toys throughout the discussion.

After about 10 minutes, ask the groups to choose the most skilled yo-yo operator from their teams. This person becomes the spokesperson for the team and is asked to summarize the group's discussion. Give each leader a yo-yo that lights up when it spins. Turn out the classroom lights and invite the leaders to put on a show.

## **Happy Birthday to WHO?**

Organize participants into groups of 10 and tell each group they must line up in ascending order by the birth date of their favorite person. The catch? They cannot speak to each other.

Allow five to 10 minutes for the exercise, monitoring the frustration level as time runs out and jumping in with a tip or two if needed. Typically, a leader will emerge and realize the group can communicate via their hands or other tools lying about the room such as pen and paper.

When time is up, ask each group to call out its line-up.

## **Energize Groups with Kazoos**

Give participants kazoos and ask them to select the name of a simple song -- "Happy Birthday," "Yankee Doodle," "Mary Had a Little Lamb" -- from a box. There are several slips showing each song title. The number of titles is equal to the number of small groups you want to create.

Instruct attendees to play the song they've selected on their kazoos and locate others playing the same tune.

Less-outgoing folks are protected from being made overly uncomfortable because the cacophony makes telling one "musician" from another difficult for anyone not nearby.

## **Reenergize/Reorganize After Lunch**

Give each returning participant a piece from one of several puzzles you've made using recognizable images like Mount Rushmore, Michael Jackson, or a Coca-Cola logo. Puzzles are made simply by gluing magazine photos to tagboard and cutting them up.

Instruct the class to find others with pieces that match. These are the new small groups for the afternoon session. The number of puzzles distributed should match the number of tables in the room.

If there are only enough participants for groups of four but the puzzles consist of six pieces each, place the remaining two pieces of each at the center of a different table;

once the group has found its members, they seat themselves at the table where they find their missing pieces.

### **Pairing Up Made Easy**

Number off the participants. Ex.: in a class of 16, participants should be numbered one through 16. Then ask participants to locate the person whose number, when added to their own, is one greater than the total number of students in the class (17 if the class has 16 members, for example, which means person #1 would be paired with #16, person #2 with #15, and so on).

So long as the class has an even number of participants, everyone will be paired with one other person. If the number in the session is odd, the person who goes unpaired can be added to another pair or can work with the instructor.

### **Pick a Card, Any Card**

As a variation of helping participants choose a leader for small groups of 5-7 people, deal 7-10 playing cards to each group.

Then ask participants to draw cards each time you need to change group leaders.

You can vary the winning criteria each time: high card, low card, low face card, etc. After a few variations, ask participants to draw cards and then arrange for the person who hasn't been a group leader to be the next leader.

### **A Different Kind of Leader**

Keep a list of interesting ways to select team leaders. Examples:

- shortest or longest hair
- closest birthday to current date
- most rings on hands
- biggest or smallest watch face

- longest/shortest time employed
- most brothers and sisters
- most pets

### **Color My World**

Hand out paint chips as participants arrive for the training. Then ask them to find others with the same color paint chip.

This exercise forms the first small group, and subsequent groups can be formed by asking participants to form groups in which none of the paint chips match or groups in which there are no more than three colors included. This same technique can be used with playing cards, colored index cards, or colored stickers on attendee name tags.

### **“Family Reunion” Name Tags**

To break sessions into small groups, create name tags in advance using the names of groups of famous people (just first names) -- such as the Kennedy's, the “Bonanza” brothers, The Three Stooges. Randomly distribute the name tags and have participants find and sit near their “siblings.”

### **Candy Bars and New Friends**

Participants tend to stick close to friends and acquaintances in training sessions. To avoid that, place a bowl of miniature candy bars on each classroom table, with instructions for each attendee to take one. The number of candy choices is the same as the number of tables (six tables=six choices).

After everyone has selected a treat, ask participants to sort themselves according to the candy chosen - all Milky Ways in one

group, all Butterfingers in another, and so on  
- and to sit with the others who chose  
likewise. (Note: It's important that the  
total number of any type of candy bar is not

greater than the number of seats at a single  
table.)

## **Hum-Dinger: A Getting-Acquainted Activity**

### **Goals:**

- I. To break a large group into smaller groups in a non-threatening manner.
- II. To facilitate contact between all members of a large group with fun and humor.
- III. To explore a novel way of generating movement and activity.

**Group Size:** Unlimited. Minimum of 8 participants.

**Time Required:** Approximately 30 minutes.

**Physical Setting:** A room large enough for participants to circulate in smaller groups.

**Materials:** A folded strip of paper with the title of a common, popular song for each member of the group (one set of song title strips for each sub-group desired).

### **Process:**

- I. The facilitator begins by stating that "There is a great deal of talent and skill in this room. We are here to explore some of this talent. Each of you will be given a piece of paper on which is written the title of a common song. Please look at the title, but don't share it with anyone else. When I say go, please mill around the room humming your tune until you find all of the other members of your group with the same song."  
*Suggested Songs:* "Three Blind Mice," "Jingle Bells," "Home on the Range," "Auld Lang Syne," "Happy Birthday," "Deep in the Heart of Texas," "Today," "Kum Bah Yah," "For He's a Jolly Good Fellow."
- II. When the groups have been formed, the facilitator asks each group to sit in a circle. Groups are asked to share how they felt beginning and during the exercise, when they found the first group member, and when their sub-group was completely identified.
- III. The total group is reassembled to share its feelings and expectations.

### **Variations:**

- I. When the facilitator knows participants, songs can be distributed to form desired groupings.
- II. The facilitator can tell how many others have the same song to accelerate the activity.
- III. Instead of one song per strip, several songs can be listed. For example: (1) "Mary Had a

Little Lamb,” (2) “Jingle Bells,” (3) “Home on the Range.” The first song is used to form dyads, the second song quartets, and the third a task group of any number for a later activity.

- IV. Group members can be assigned the task of coming up with a group name or a song title to express their feeling as a group.