

ACCESSIBILITY GUIDELINES

These are a set of guidelines to help you when conducting your next icebreaker game. It is not the goal of these guidelines to construct or facilitate the perfect icebreaker game which is fully accessible to all humans - that does not exist.

It is our goal to enable you to have knowledge of accessibility so that you can make intentional choices around icebreaker design and facilitation to suit your current and future participants' needs. It is this intentionality and awareness which Weiner (2015) identifies as crucial for icebreakers to be more meaningful, effective and inclusive. The guidelines are broken into categories below based around the components of an icebreaker game.

PHYSICAL SPACE

- Make sure the environment is clear of any obstacle which would limit movement in a wheelchair or via use of a walking frame
- Make sure the environment is well-lit
- Make sure the environment enables voices to be heard throughout the room
- Make sure the environment allows excessive noise to escape
- Make sure the space has a clearly accessible exit, and a safe, quiet space for participants who need to leave (see Emotional Safety)
- Often relevant to the following symbols



MOVEMENT AND PHYSICAL ACCESSIBILITY

- Allow participants to choose whether they stand, sit or position themselves another way during your icebreaker, and allow them to change this position. If there are specific physical actions required within your icebreaker, allow participants to choose an action physically comfortable for them to perform
- Make items the participants will handle (cards, props, writing equipment, etc.) of a reasonable size
- Often relevant to the following symbols



CONVEYING INSTRUCTIONS/PROCEDURES

- Use large, clear fonts for all written instructions
- Use expanded spacing between letters on printed materials so that it can be read more easily by people who have dyslexia
- Break instructions down into small steps using clear language and/or pictures
- Use high contrast, colour-blind friendly colours on all materials
- Use visual and audio cues to supplement each other during your icebreaker
- Often relevant to the following symbols



COMMUNICATION ACCESSIBILITY

- Facilitate the use of a variety of communication methods within your icebreaker game (Braille, sign language, verbal, written, picture/symbol-based, speech generating device, gestures, etc.)
- Provide interpreters where needed
- Use symbols or shapes to supplement colour differentiation to allow colour-blind individuals to participate
- Repeat what participants have said to the whole group if communication across the room is not possible
- Often relevant to the following symbols



COGNITIVE ACCESSIBILITY AND TIMING

- Provide name tags or other visual identifiers to aid with memory
- Provide alternatives to reading, writing and spelling requirements
- Be flexible with time limits for responses, and where possible avoid the use of icebreaker games which rely on reaction time
- Be mindful of the different speeds participants may engage with an instruction in your icebreaker game and provide support where needed
- Most often relevant to the following symbols



EMOTIONAL SAFETY

- Create an accessible “opt-out” option for all stages of your icebreaker. Reinforce this as an acceptable action for any participant to take.
- Facilitate an environment where consent is required for all physical contact
- Allow time for participants to prepare themselves before beginning
- Be mindful that some people find the presence of (new and familiar) people to be draining.
- Be mindful of people with public speaking fears, performance anxiety or social anxiety who may experience distress or panic at participating in icebreaker games, particularly those involving speaking or performing.
- Create team environments where possible, relieving the pressure for participants to act or speak in a solo capacity
- Avoid using sexist, racist, ableist, homophobic, transphobic or aphobic language in all instructions and communications
- Use gender neutral language when presenting instructions
- Avoid creating gender-based groups to fully include non-binary and gender diverse participants
- Ask people what their name and pronouns are before beginning
- Most often relevant to the following symbols



FINAL WORDS

- If your icebreaker game requires a participant to do a thing they physically, cognitively or emotionally cannot do - you need to rethink what you're doing.

Consider asking an accessibility consultant or someone knowledgeable about diverse groups of people to review (a colleague, a supervisor, etc.)