

ENERGIZERS

**PLEASE NOTE THE SELECTED MATERIAL ON
ENERGIZERS ARE A COMPILATION OF THE
EXERCICES FOUND ON THE FOLLOWING
PUBLICATION**



**101 MORE GAMES FOR
TRAINERS: A Collection
of the Best Activities from
Creative Training
Techniques Newsletter**

*Bob Pike
Christopher Busse*

HRD Press

101 MORE GAMES FOR TRAINERS

A Collection of the Best Activities from
Creative Training Techniques Newsletter



by Bob Pike with Christopher Busse

Copyright © 1995, 2004 by Bob Pike and Lakewood Publications

All rights reserved. Any reproduction in any media of the materials that appear in this book without written permission from HRD Press is a violation of copyright law.

Published by: HRD Press, Inc.
22 Amherst Road
Amherst, MA 01002
1-800-822-2801 (U.S. and Canada)
413-253-3488
413-253-3490 (fax)
www.hrdpress.com

Foreword

This book, *101 Games for Trainers*, is one in a series drawn from the best content of *Creative Training Techniques Newsletter*. The newsletter was conceived in 1988 by editor and internationally known trainer Bob Pike to be a one-stop resource of practical “how-tos” for trainers. The idea was (and still is) to provide timely tips, techniques, and strategies that help trainers with the special tasks they perform daily.

When the newsletter began, it was largely fueled by Bob’s 20 years of experience in the field and by the best ideas shared by the trainers (more than 50,000 in all) who had attended his Creative Training Techniques seminars. As the newsletter grew in popularity, it also began to draw on ideas submitted by its readers. Today, the newsletter continues to search out creative approaches from the more than 200 seminars Bob and the other Creative Training Techniques trainers conduct every year, and from the more than 10,000 newsletter readers.

But no matter where the insights originate, the goal of the newsletter remains the same: To provide trainers a cafeteria of ideas they can quickly absorb, choosing those that best suit their special needs.

As stated earlier, this series of books represents the best ideas from *Creative Training Techniques Newsletter*’s seven years of publication. It is our hope that we’ve created a valuable resource you’ll come back to again and again to help address the unique challenges you face daily in your role as a trainer.

Sincerely,

The Editors

Introduction



Like it or not, the age of entertainment in which we live demands that classroom trainers must work hard to capture and *hold* the interest of participants. If we don't, we run the risk of being passed by in favor of "sexier" learning methods, such as high-tech computer- or video-based training.

Fortunately, trainers have long known that one of the best ways to entertain and engage adult learners is to encourage them to play games in the classroom. And one advantage we have over any of the high-tech mediums that are capturing the attention of "cyber-trainees" is that we're able to adapt the courses and the games we offer to match precisely the needs of our audience. We can assess participants, decide what kind of exercise is appropriate (and *when* it's appropriate), and use games that will ensure that trainees are entertained... and course material is retained.

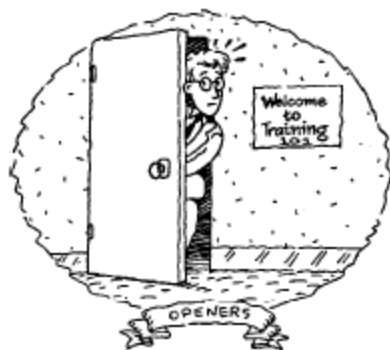
That's where *101 More Games for Trainers* comes in. Carefully selected and properly implemented, the exercises in this new volume (a companion to the earlier *101 Games for Trainers*) can help you actively involve trainees in course openers, bring a weary group back to life, develop communication skills, promote teamwork, lead an audience through a spirited review session, or address the special concerns of certain topical courses.

A brief description of its purpose is provided with each exercise, as well as a reference for the amount of time the exercise will take, the ideal group size for the exercise, and a checklist of the materials you'll need to make the exercise happen. And because these represent the best of the ideas collected in *Creative Training Techniques Newsletter*, you know they've been successfully "field tested" all over the world by trainers just like you.

Defining the Categories

The exercises in this book fall into one or more of these six categories. Just below the title of each exercise, you'll find a listing of these six categories. The small checkmarks beside each of the categories serve as guides for where best to use the exercise.

Please remember, however, that these are only suggestions. With the right amount of imagination, the exercises here can be adapted to suit almost any training need.



Openers

These exercises, commonly known as "ice breakers," serve as vehicles for getting participants to introduce themselves or for putting trainees into the right "frame of mind" for the coming session.

These exercises might vary according to the type of training being conducted, how big the group is, and

how well the group members know each other.

Also keep in mind the Law of Primacy: People remember best what we do first, so choose your openers carefully. (To be honest, nearly all of the exercises here could be adapted as some form of opener.)

Energizers

Designed to involve a group *actively*, these mid-course exercises are best used during the infamous mid-afternoon slump or anytime you feel a group's attention might be waning.

Often, these games take the form of energetic review sessions or stimulating brainteasers, or even a physical activity that gets people up and moving. The secret here is that these exercises aren't always planned.

The best strategy in developing a course is to have a handful of relevant energizers ready to go at a moment's notice and implement one when you see attention begin to slip.





Communication

Use these exercises to make a point to trainees about the importance of communication, or to show where certain communication skills need improvement. Exercises that help enhance listening skills also fall into this category. As with

“Openers,” a great many of the activities in this book could easily be adapted to make a point about communication skills, depending on how you position them.

Team-building

The purpose of these exercises is to help improve the relationship of individuals within a group—either a specific “work group” or simply a small group formed during your training session.

These exercises are extremely challenging for trainers because they call for participants to work independently in small groups (usually solving some sort of problem) for periods of time that exceed other types of exercises. Your challenge is to keep things moving and to monitor closely the progress of the groups.



Review

The last words any group of trainees wants to hear are, “Okay, let’s review.” To keep participants from completely tuning out, these exercises often help disguise a review session as a light, interactive competition. *One word of caution:* When the competitive juices of some attendees get

flowing, things can easily get out of hand. Your challenge is to keep the competition light and—whenever possible—to promote *cooperation* rather than competition.

Topical

One of the challenges trainers face is finding games and exercises that pertain to a certain kind of session (customer service or diversity training, for example). While many other exercises can be adapted for those kinds of training, we've identified several "topical" games that work particularly well in specific situations.



A Few Words About Using These Games

Whether it's the first time or the five hundredth time you've used games in your classroom, I believe there are some fundamentals you should be aware of when implementing these exercises.

▼ **Assess your audience and know the risks.** Some of the following exercises will be natural hits with certain types of audiences, but others might bomb. Ultimately, it's up to you to decide what kind of game to play with what kind of audience. But you also need to assess your own comfort level with "pulling off" these games. A rule of thumb: If you're even remotely uncomfortable with an exercise, don't use it. Participants will sense your hesitation and share your discomfort.

▼ **Never use a game without debriefing afterward.** It might be obvious to *you* how a game enhances your subject matter, but it's dangerous to assume your participants are on the same page. Follow every game with a debriefing session to help participants ease back into the session itself, see the transition you've attempted to create, and assimilate the game's learning points.

▼ **Be creative. Adapt, adapt, adapt.** Nothing about *any* game in this book is set in stone. The trainers to whom these ideas are attributed were successful in using these games because they adapted the exercises to suit their own needs.

Though you'll be able to pluck many of them right off the page and insert them into your sessions, I challenge you to make these games uniquely your own whenever you can. The result will be an exercise that has even more relevance to you, your company, and your classroom. But most important, the result will be an exercise that's more *fun*.

GAME #2: Autobiographical Scavenger Hunt

- Game Opener Team-building
Categories: Energizer Review
 Communication Topical

◆ **Purpose:** To break the ice and help introduce participants to one another.

◆ **Time Required:** 15 minutes.

◆ **Size of Group:** Unlimited.

◆ **Materials Required:** A list of autobiographical information for each participant, prepared in advance by the trainer.

◆ **The Exercise in Action:** Dale Ditmanson, training specialist for the National Park Service, asks participants to send in an “autobiography” before his courses. As a course opener, he selects a line or two from each autobiography and types them as a list.

Each participant is given a copy of the list as they arrive, and is then sent on a “human scavenger hunt” in the classroom until they discover which person matches each line on the sheet.

GAME #18: True Confession Toothpicks

- Game Opener Team-building
Categories: Energizer Review
 Communication Topical

- ◆ **Purpose:** To challenge participants to think creatively.
- ◆ **Time Required:** 15 minutes.
- ◆ **Size of Group:** Unlimited.
- ◆ **Materials Required:** A large supply of toothpicks.
- ◆ **The Exercise in Action:** Participants are challenged to think creatively, and also to make “true confessions” during this opener recommended by Lori Preston, training specialist at Electronic Data Systems.

Start by giving each participant 10 toothpicks or other counters. Then ask the first participant to talk about something they have never done, for example, “I’ve never jaywalked.” After the statement, anyone in the group who has jaywalked has to forfeit a toothpick to the kitty. Then the next person shares one thing he or she has never done, and again anyone who has done it loses a toothpick. The disclosures continue around the room until someone has lost all 10 toothpicks. It’s an entertaining way for people to get to know one another both by the things they have done, and the things they have not done.

GAME #21: Play Ball!

- Game Opener Team-building
Categories: Energizer Review
 Communication Topical

- ◆ **Purpose:** To lead participants through a creative review session.
- ◆ **Time Required:** 30 minutes.
- ◆ **Size of Group:** Unlimited.
- ◆ **Materials Required:** Any props that might help convert the classroom to a ballpark (for example, plastic bats, baseball caps, etc.).
- ◆ **The Exercise in Action:** Participants in training at Great Plains Software in Fargo, ND, are told to arrive wearing a uniform and sneakers and to be prepared to “play ball” during review sessions.

Internal product trainer Jeanne Rodenbiker quickly converts her training room into a playing field, using chairs as bases, giving baseball hats to participants, and keeping an inflatable bat on hand to add a little ballpark flavor. She divides the class into teams and has them choose their own names, usually something related to the topic.

When the first team comes up to bat, one player draws a baseball card from a hat. Each card is marked as a single, double, triple, or home run. The pitcher (instructor) relays a question of the appropriate level of difficulty (for example, triples are more difficult than doubles). Although only one team member advances the indicated bases, the entire team can discuss the question before answering. This eliminates putting participants on the spot and encourages group interaction. If answers require visual aids, the team uses a whiteboard to diagram its responses.

The instructor serves as pitcher and umpire, providing hints or designating time limits as to when questions must be answered. After three outs (misses), the second team bats.

Rodenbiker says the energy level in this exercise is usually high and teams become quite competitive. She has had teams develop cheers and a few enthusiastic players even slide into bases. In most courses, she fits in the “game innings” after completing major sections of the material.

GAME #23: Group Shuffle

Game Opener Team-building
Categories: Energizer Review
 Communication Topical

◆ **Purpose:** To divide participants into small groups.

◆ **Time Required:** 5 minutes.

◆ **Size of Group:** Unlimited.

◆ **Materials Required:** A deck of playing cards.

◆ **The Exercise in Action:** Here are two ideas for creatively dividing participants into small groups:

- *Use ordinary playing cards.* If you've got 32 participants, for example, and you want them in four groups of eight, simply take eight spades, eight diamonds, and so on out of the deck. Shuffle, distribute the cards, and then assemble groups according to suit. The same can be done more humorously using children's card decks, such as Crazy Eights. Form your groups based on identical pictures in the deck.
- *Use the experience levels that exist in the group.* Divide your participants into two groups and have one form a circle facing inward, the other form a circle inside the first circle facing outward so that each person looks at a partner. Tell the outer group to move clockwise and the inner group to move counterclockwise until you tell them to stop. Have the people directly facing each other spend a few minutes talking about their previous jobs and how those positions prepared them for their current positions. That information is then used for everyone to introduce their partners to the rest of the group. Clusters of partners can form the work groups for the next part of the class.

GAME #26: Sea If Ewe Can Find the Errors

- Game Opener Team-building
Categories: Energizer Review
 Communication Topical

- ◆ **Purpose:** To provide an exercise that challenges participants to think creatively.
- ◆ **Time Required:** 10 minutes.
- ◆ **Size of Group:** Unlimited.
- ◆ **Materials Required:** Flipchart.
- ◆ **The Exercise in Action:** For a smooth transition after a break, write this statement on a flipchart or transparency during the break so that participants can work on it when they return to the room. Allow people to work individually or in groups to find the errors:

"You may not belief that there are six errors in this short paragraph. Studi the paragraph carefully. You can reed it as many times as necessary. Don't give up too easily. See if you can find all of them."

Most participants will find five but few will ever find the sixth. The sixth is simply that there are only five errors (so it's an error to say there are six). The exercise points out how we often think inflexibly and fail to consider all the options when problem solving.

GAME #27: Connect the Dots

- Game Opener Team-building
Categories: Energizer Review
 Communication Topical

◆ **Purpose:** To provide an exercise that challenges participants to think creatively.

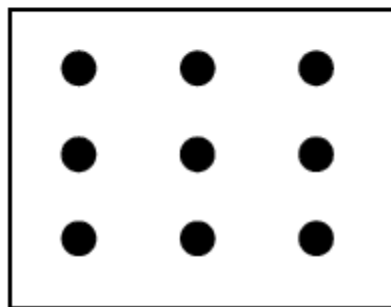
◆ **Time Required:** 10 minutes.

◆ **Size of Group:** Unlimited.

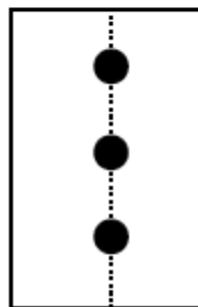
◆ **Materials Required:** Sheets of paper (one for each participant) with the dot pattern shown below.

◆ **The Exercise in Action:** To show his participants the importance of an open mind, creativity, and problem solving, Jack McKown, process controller for Hallmark Cards in Kansas City, MO, uses a “connect the dots” exercise as a brainteaser opener.

Draw a dot pattern (shown below) on a sheet of paper (make dots at least ¼ inch diameter). Then tell participants that if they are creative, they can draw a line through all the dots with only one line. The only rule is that the line must be drawn straight.



To set up the brainteaser: Give each participant a sheet of paper with nine evenly spaced dots on it. Tell participants the objective of the exercise is to connect all the dots with only one line.



Solution: Fold the paper over onto itself toward the center (so one-half of each dot from the left side of the sheet connects with one-half of each dot from the right side). Then draw a line down through the aligned dots.

GAME #32: Playing the Numbers

- Game Opener Team-building
Categories: Energizer Review
 Communication Topical

◆ **Purpose:** To engage participants in a creative exercise after a break or lunch.

◆ **Time Required:** 10 minutes.

◆ **Size of Group:** Unlimited.

◆ **Materials Required:** Flipchart.

◆ **The Exercise in Action:** Here's a quick exercise you can use after lunch or a break. Place these numbers on a flipchart or whiteboard:

8, 11, 15, 5, 14, 1, 7, 6, 10, 13, 3, 12, 2

Tell the participants, "You're seeing all the numbers from 1 to 15 with the exception of 4 and 9. Your task is to decide why the numbers are arranged in this sequence, then put the missing numbers in their proper places."

Take the test yourself right now. After you've made your decision, turn this page upside down for the correct answer.

8, 11, 15, 5, 4, 14, 9, 1, 7, 6, 10, 13, 3, 12, 2

Answer: The numbers are listed alphabetically. Therefore, 4 goes after 5 and 9 follows 14.

GAME #34: Point of View

- Game Opener Team-building
Categories: Energizer Review
 Communication Topical: Customer Service

- ◆ **Purpose:** To sensitize customer service trainees to customer needs.
- ◆ **Time Required:** 20 minutes.
- ◆ **Size of Group:** 8 to 12.
- ◆ **Materials Required:** A “registration” form, prepared in advance.
- ◆ **The Exercise in Action:** Susan Glasstetter of Indiana Hospital uses this “registration” exercise to motivate their customer service employees to be more empathetic and to walk for a few minutes in the customer’s shoes.
Glasstetter developed a one-page form that participants are required to complete to officially register for a customer service training program. The questions are related to education and personnel policies and are slanted so that only recent high school or college graduates, education specialists, or human resource personnel could possibly provide immediate, accurate answers. Glasstetter’s role is to register each applicant in as detached, professional, and vaguely impatient a manner as possible.
She reports reactions to this little exercise as very enlightening. “It is difficult to maintain my role while listening to comments such as, ‘I don’t remember what my high school Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) scores were! Why do you need that?’ and ‘What do you mean by employee number? I didn’t even know I *had* a number!’”
After the forms are completed and the group is seated, Glasstetter asks participants to comment on the registration process. In general, they don’t like it. Before they begin complaining again, she asks if their experience helped them see how customers might be confused about company policies that the participants find commonplace. For a minute there is silence. As the light dawns, heads begin to nod in agreement and some complaints continue about the exercise “not being fair.”
The empathy-raising exercise has obvious benefits: Employees can truly experience the viewpoint of their customers. It can also have one serious drawback, depending on your group: Those who are neither ready nor willing to admit they need a change of attitude might resent having their eyes opened.

GAME #38: 30 Seconds

- Game Opener Team-building
Categories: Energizer Review
 Communication Topical

◆ **Purpose:** To quickly energize and challenge participants.

◆ **Time Required:** 30 minutes.

◆ **Size of Group:** Unlimited.

◆ **Materials Required:** None.

◆ **The Exercise in Action:** Trainer Gerri Borden of Troy Savings, uses 30-second games to energize participants throughout sessions. Borden chooses a topic and challenges participants to list as many titles as they can from the category, such as professional football or basketball teams or Disney movies. When the 30 seconds are up, participants show how many items they have listed. Borden writes the number after their names on a flipchart.

Borden uses this activity before each break and at the end of the day, but is careful to use a variety of categories, for example, things used in cooking, fruits, vegetables, musical instruments, birds, types of clouds, etc. She awards a prize to the person with the highest total.

GAME #42: A Cup of Group Cheer

- Game Opener Team-building
Categories: Energizer Review
 Communication Topical

◆ **Purpose:** To promote cross-company and interdepartmental collaboration and partnering.

◆ **Time Required:** 10 minutes.

◆ **Size of Group:** Unlimited.

◆ **Materials Required:** None.

◆ **The Exercise in Action:** Irene Ward, president of Irene Ward & Associates, Columbus, OH, helps participants of a one-day team-building seminar foster a true sense of teamwork by asking pre-assigned small groups to develop a team cheer.

They are given about five minutes to do so, Ward says, before sharing the cheer with the entire group. Then, for the remainder of the day, each time the various teams complete a problem-solving assignment and prior to reporting to the entire class, they are asked to do their group cheer to celebrate the victory (usually about three or four times per day, Ward says).

She also asks the groups to do their cheers right after lunch to demonstrate how much the energy level has dropped since the morning session. "It gets everyone laughing at how pitiful the various team cheers sound," Ward says, and the strategy helps heighten awareness about staying alert after lunch.

GAME #44: Just-in-Time Review

- Game Opener Team-building
Categories: Energizer Review
 Communication Topical

- ◆ **Purpose:** To set up a review session before class even begins.
- ◆ **Time Required:** 10 minutes.
- ◆ **Size of Group:** Unlimited.
- ◆ **Materials Required:** Questions on index cards, prepared in advance by the trainer.
- ◆ **The Exercise in Action:** Setting up your review sessions *before* a course begins is a great way to keep energy levels up and avoid the trap of announcing, “Let’s review.” Done well, this technique might not even be recognized by participants as a review tool:

Nancy Hall, a trainer in Winston-Salem, NC, prepares a number of index cards with questions on them and distributes them at the beginning of the session. The cards are numbered, and the questions—while pertinent to the course material—are generally opinion-oriented, such as, “What traits would an ideal supervisor possess?” Then, just before relevant material is covered, Hall reads a number and the participant with the corresponding card reads the question and answers it.

Creative twists can turn Hall’s exercise into a small-group energizer. When a number is called, for example, the instructor may opt to have that participant’s small group (instead of the individual) answer within 90 seconds.

GAME #45: Optical Illusions

- Game Opener Team-building
Categories: Energizer Review
 Communication Topical

◆ **Purpose:** To demonstrate that things aren't always as they seem in everyday encounters with others.

◆ **Time Required:** 15 minutes.

◆ **Size of Group:** Unlimited.

◆ **Materials Required:** A series of optical illusions suggested in part by the book *Experimenting with Illusions* by Robert Gardner (Franklin Watts, 800-621-1115), which contains a variety of noncopyrighted illusions with lines, 3-D illusions, and magic tricks.

◆ **The Exercise in Action:** The human mind is trained to draw conclusions based on what it *thinks* the eyes see, says Bill Lange, a training specialist at Bank One Columbus, Westerville, OH. But judging anything—people in particular—based on visual input alone can lead to misguided conclusions.

Lange demonstrates by displaying a series of optical illusions, one at a time. He asks the participants to discuss what they think they see before moving on to the next one. He doesn't offer any explanations until he has shown the entire set. When he's been through the pictures once, he shows each one again, and explains the trick it plays on the eye.

Lange then ties the lesson to real life: We often judge people based on first impressions. If they appear unkempt, we might assume they're poor or unintelligent. If they grow verbally hostile, we might assume they're irrational or belligerent by nature. Conversely, if they dress well, we may conclude they are well mannered or honest. All these presumptions can be wrong.

Lange asks participants to offer possible explanations for any of the above sorts of people not meeting first expectations. A disheveled person, for example, might have just come in from bad weather; a person who seems inordinately angry might have had a bad experience prior to your encounter.

The lesson is a classic: Don't judge a book by its cover.

GAME #51: Admission Tickets

- Game Opener Team-building
Categories: Energizer Review
 Communication Topical

◆ **Purpose:** To get participants thinking about the training course before they even arrive.

◆ **Time Required:** 10 minutes.

◆ **Size of Group:** Unlimited.

◆ **Materials Required:** “Admission tickets” and a set of instructions, prepared in advance by the trainer and sent to each participant before the class begins.

◆ **The Exercise in Action:** Denise Pare uses a variation of the course admission ticket concept (which many trainers use as a “tickler” to the class) to encourage students to think about what they want from a training session before they attend.

Pare, a reading curriculum coordinator at Cy-Fair Independent School District in Houston, makes tickets about the size of a 3 x 5 inch notecard and sends them—along with a brief set of instructions—to participants a few days before her course begins. She then uses the cards as an opener in the session and refers to them over the course of the class.

The instructions:

- **First line**—Print your name.
- **Second line**—What are your expectations for the course?
- **Third line**—Explain your greatest need in the subject area.
- **Fourth line**—Get the signature of someone with whom you’ve shared those expectations and needs.
- **Fifth line**—Get the signature of a person who will not attend the session with whom you’ve promised to share something you learn from the course.

Thinking about these things prior to attending, Pare says, encourages participants to consciously think about ways that a course can benefit them specifically, rather than passively waiting for knowledge to be served to them in ready-to-use portions and coming away with less than they might have because they neglected to apply lessons to their day-to-day issues.

GAME #54: Murphy's Law

- Game Opener Team-building
Categories: Energizer Review
 Communication Topical: Train-the-Trainer

◆ **Purpose:** To help break the ice, energize participants, and make a learning point in train-the-trainer sessions.

◆ **Time Required:** About 10 minutes at the onset of a course, then a couple of minutes at different times throughout a session.

◆ **Size of Group:** Unlimited.

◆ **Materials Required:** None.

◆ **The Exercise in Action:** After revisiting the idea that “anything that can go wrong, will,” either Lillian Lancaster or Winzie Pollet, instructional support teachers for the training and development arm of Orange County Public Schools, Orlando, FL, shares a training experience that supports the axiom. Several volunteers are asked to recall a similar incident that occurred during the facilitation of a workshop or at some other point during their careers.

At regular intervals during their three-hour training session, a time for sharing examples of Murphy's Law is announced. “The examples often provide an opportunity for follow-up on how the situation was handled or how the problem was solved,” says Lancaster. “Through this ongoing exercise, the learning point about trainer flexibility and creativity is emphasized, and a high level of interest and involvement is maintained.”

GAME #58: Brilliant Brainstorming

- Game Opener Team-building
Categories: Energizer Review
 Communication Topical

◆ **Purpose:** To get team members familiar with brainstorming practices and skills.

◆ **Time Required:** 5 to 10 minutes.

◆ **Size of Group:** Unlimited, but participants should work in small groups of five or six.

◆ **Materials Required:** None.

◆ **The Exercise in Action:** Dottie Kinner, a senior data processing training specialist with USAA (The United States Automobile Association) in San Antonio, TX, asks small groups to pick a four- or five-letter word. Any word will do, she says.

Once a word is chosen by each group, Kinner gives them three minutes to create sentences using each letter of their word, in sequence, as the first letter of a word in the sentence. Sentences must have proper structure, but they don't have to make sense—which adds a few laughs to the exercise. For example, a team might create a sentence from the word *MOLD*—Moonstruck Oranges Like Drinking.

The team creating the most sentences from its one word is awarded a small prize. Kinner encourages teams to pick words relating to the course content. “The exercise gives new teams a chance to develop some synergy and work on brainstorming together,” a skill they'll certainly need in the future, she says.

GAME #60: Listen with Your Eyes

- Game Opener Team-building
Categories: Energizer Review
 Communication Topical

◆ **Purpose:** To demonstrate that listening is more than a passive skill, and that eyes can be as important as ears in perceiving a message.

◆ **Time Required:** 5 minutes.

◆ **Size of Group:** Unlimited.

◆ **Materials Required:** Copies of the American Sign Language (ASL) alphabet for all participants; a presenter who is familiar with ASL.

◆ **The Exercise in Action:** At the outset of any class, there's always some last-minute shuffling around as participants settle into their chairs, pull out pens and notebooks, and so forth. This activity often continues even after the trainer begins the session, with participants assuming they'll get any valuable information by casually listening.

To demonstrate otherwise, Nina Hollingsworth, a trainer with Mead Coated Board, Phenix City, AL, asks an employee who "speaks" sign language to introduce the course. Each participant is given a copy of the American Sign Language alphabet and asked to record what they pick up. The employee slowly signs the word "welcome." That, Hollingsworth says, is when all extraneous shuffling stops, as the participants realize they cannot rely on their ears alone to "listen" to the introduction.

After the exercise, Hollingsworth leads participants through a discussion on the value of using all available resources in order to give someone your full attention.

GAME #65: Coins and Catch Phrases

- Game Opener Team-building
Categories: Energizer Review
 Communication Topical

◆ **Purpose:** To initiate class breaks and help make learning points throughout a course.

◆ **Time Required:** 5 minutes.

◆ **Size of Group:** Unlimited.

◆ **Materials Required:** A handful of coins.

◆ **The Exercise in Action:** Before her training sessions start, Jane Muegge, a rural community advisor for the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture in Clinton, Ontario, randomly tapes various coins to the bottom of participants' chairs. At a point where the group needs an energizer or a stretch, Muegge asks participants to look under their chairs. She asks what they find, then asks how those various pennies, nickels, and dimes can be characterized by one word. When she gets the word she wants—change—she springs it on them: “And in order to make change(s) in the company, we need to get up off of our seats.” Participants then head off to break.

GAME #66: Alphabet Soup

- Game Opener Team-building
Categories: Energizer Review
 Communication Topical

- ◆ **Purpose:** To help large groups mix and mingle.
- ◆ **Time Required:** 10 to 15 minutes.
- ◆ **Size of Group:** No more than 26 (but certain letters of the alphabet can be repeated if the group is larger).
- ◆ **Materials Required:** One Post-It Note with a letter of the alphabet on it for every participant, prepared in advance by the trainer.
- ◆ **The Exercise in Action:** Rhonda Gordon, human resources training manager for the Bureau of National Affairs, Washington, D.C., conceived of the following opener when preparing a training course for 26 people. The number 26 sparked an idea, and the “Alphabet Opener” was born, but she says it can be used for smaller or larger classes if the instructor prepares properly. Here are the instructions for the exercise:

Give all participants a Post-It Note with a large letter printed on it, and ask them to place the letter on their shirt fronts. Avoid letters like Q, X, or Z, and offer about twice as many consonants as vowels. Gordon recommends making the vowels a different color from the consonants so that they're easily recognizable.

Tell participants they have five minutes to form any word with at least three other people, but explain that longer words are fine. Gordon says participants are rarely left out, and if they are, other groups often break their words and make a new one to include the additional person. She keeps extra Post-It Notes with letters handy, and if a straggler is spotted, she steps in to ask another group to break their word and make a new one. Extra vowels and the letter “S” for making plurals work best, she says.

After five minutes, give each group a sheet of flipchart paper to post and ask them to form a sentence or phrase using the word to describe their expectations of the course.

GAME #68: Going Behind Their Backs

- Game Opener Team-building
Categories: Energizer Review
 Communication Topical

◆ **Purpose:** To help participants feel great about themselves and each other, and perhaps improve interdepartmental relationships.

◆ **Time Required:** 10 to 20 minutes.

◆ **Size of Group:** Unlimited.

◆ **Materials Required:** Small slips of paper and writing utensils for everyone.

◆ **The Exercise in Action:** Gary Ellis, in information systems training and support with Lennox Industries, Urbandale, IA, has participants tape sheets of paper to each other's backs, then gives them time to mingle and write compliments about each other on those sheets.

Ellis compares the exercise to the tradition of signing high school yearbooks. He sometimes uses this energizer as a transition from one section of a training session to another or as a way to build camaraderie in a group. In those situations, the exercise takes about 10 minutes. When the training content is related to improving communication or increasing cooperation within teams, he sometimes devotes up to 20 minutes for this activity.

GAME #74: Team Drawings

- Game Opener Team-building
Categories: Energizer Review
 Communication Topical

◆ **Purpose:** To set a tone of openness and fun for a team-building session.

◆ **Time Required:** 30 minutes.

◆ **Size of Group:** Unlimited.

◆ **Materials Required:** Lots of colored markers; flipchart paper.

◆ **The Exercise in Action:** At the outset of team-building courses, Marty Jordan, a senior consultant with Amoco Oil, Chicago, IL, provides lots of colored markers and gives each participant a sheet of flipchart paper. He asks participants to divide the sheet into quarters and label the quadrants:

- **Upper left:** Strengths I bring to the team
- **Upper right:** Ways I might hinder the team
- **Lower left:** What I need from others to do my best
- **Lower right:** Hobbies, interests, outside activities

Participants are asked to use drawings (no words are allowed) in each quadrant. He gives them 20 to 30 minutes to complete their drawings.

Jordan completes a flipchart sheet, too, and “models” the introduction. He then has each person come up and share his or her chart and tape it up on a classroom wall.

Using drawings instead of words taps participants’ creative juices and allows people to share much about themselves in a way that doesn’t make them feel as self-conscious as they might if they verbally described the same attributes, Jordan says. He leaves the drawings up throughout the session as conversation-starters during breaks and lunch.

GAME #75: New Employee Egg Hunt

- Game Opener Team-building
Categories: Energizer Review
 Communication Topical: Orientation

- ◆ **Purpose:** To put a colorful spin on orientation training.
- ◆ **Time Required:** 20 minutes.
- ◆ **Size of Group:** Unlimited.
- ◆ **Materials Required:** A multitude of colored, plastic Easter eggs; slips of paper with questions on them to slip inside the eggs, prepared in advance by the trainer.
- ◆ **The Exercise in Action:** Before orientation sessions, Donna Loughridge, a systems trainer with MCI Telecommunications in Colorado Springs, CO, writes questions on small pieces of paper, then slips them inside eggs. Loughridge then hides the eggs in a common area, such as the cafeteria, and asks participants to hunt for them.

When a participant finds an egg, the mission is to answer the question inside. This often requires the finder to locate a particular person or department within the company. For example, if the question is, "How many employees work in the packaging area?" the seeker will have to speak to someone working in that area, possibly the supervisor. This, Loughridge says, creates a familiarity with where various people and functions are located in the company, while helping the new associate learn some names and faces from various areas.

After finding an answer, the participant returns to the egg-hunt area to find another egg. After all the eggs have been found and the corresponding questions answered, Loughridge asks participants to share their new-found knowledge with the group. The participant with the most questions correctly answered wins a small prize.

GAME #76: Magnificent Flying Machines

- Game Opener Team-building
Categories: Energizer Review
 Communication Topical

- ◆ **Purpose:** To challenge participants' ability to think creatively.
- ◆ **Time Required:** 15 minutes.
- ◆ **Size of Group:** Unlimited.
- ◆ **Materials Required:** Scrap paper for everyone.
- ◆ **The Exercise in Action:** The next time you want to put a different spin on a tired exercise and challenge participants creatively, consider the approach of trainer Tony Manning.

Give each participant a single sheet of paper and ask them to make a plane that flies. Each person will more than likely be successful and also be able to demonstrate for others having problems. Next ask that they use a fresh sheet of paper to create a new flying machine. Allow them the same amount of time to look for an entirely new design—a revolutionary new airborne machine that must fly.

In all likelihood, very few will succeed. Most will build upon or slightly alter the conventional design. When all have finished, take a piece of paper, crush it into a ball, and throw it across the room. Explain that the problem was to create a new flying machine, not to repeat more of the same. A ball of paper will fly. It doesn't matter whether something fits our concept; what is critical is whether or not that something fits the parameters of the individual problem—or the valid requirements of the participant's customer or client.

GAME #78: Flash Cube Illusion

- Game Opener Team-building
Categories: Energizer Review
 Communication Topical

- ◆ **Purpose:** To energize and build teamwork within a group.
- ◆ **Time Required:** 5 minutes.
- ◆ **Size of Group:** 5 to 20.
- ◆ **Materials Required:** Flash cubes (the type that flash four times; the taller bar type will not work) and a pencil eraser.
- ◆ **The Exercise in Action:** On the bottom of each flash cube are four curved slots. Across the middle of each slot, inside the flash cube, is a very thin piece of wire. That wire is the trigger that ignites the flash. Anything that presses against the wire will cause one of the four flashes to ignite.
Use a pair of scissors to cut a wedge off the end of a pencil eraser. This makes an excellent “button” for setting off a flash. Insert the wedge into one of the slots, but don’t press it until you have positioned the exercise, which creates an effective (if illusionary) illustration of the power of teamwork:
Ask participants to stand in a circle and hold hands. Stand in the center, making it clear you must be careful not to touch anyone, and instruct them to shuffle their feet rapidly. Hold the flash cube between your finger and thumb. After about a minute, reach out and make contact with someone in the circle. At the same time, press the “button.” The lesson of this trick, of course, is that working together we can accomplish things that seem (and, in fact are) impossible to achieve alone.
The cube trick also works as a “magic volunteer finder.” Simply move among participants, holding out the cube like a divining tool of some sort. Ignite the flash, choosing—seemingly randomly—the next volunteer. A single cube can be used four times for either trick.

GAME #82: Funny Pages

- Game Opener Team-building
Categories: Energizer Review
 Communication Topical

- ◆ **Purpose:** To encourage interaction between participants and build different small groups for exercises.
- ◆ **Time Required:** 15 minutes.
- ◆ **Size of Group:** Can vary, according to trainer's need.
- ◆ **Materials Required:** Selected comic strips, cut into individual panels in advance by the trainer.
- ◆ **The Exercise in Action:** Using comic strips can make dividing large groups into several smaller ones fast and enjoyable, says MaryAnn Dana, an associate project manager with Craft and Miertschin in Houston. She separates the panels of several comics, shuffles them, and hands one to each participant. Their job is to find the other panels to complete their strips.

There are several ways to apply the technique, depending on whether your primary objective is to form groups, or whether you're using the exercise as a mixer, too.

For maximum interaction of participants, use different issues of the same comic strip. For example, to divide a class of 20 into five groups of four, distribute squares from five *Dilbert* cartoons, each having four separate panels. The difficulty of the exercise forces greater interaction. If creating groups is your primary interest, make it easy. One set of people gets *Peanuts* pictures, another gets *Doonesbury*, and so on.

The method is flexible enough to fit many small group sizes. For larger subsets, look to the Sunday paper, which often features comics with 10 or more panels. Three or four panels is typical of a weekday feature.

GAME #85: Sound and Motion

- Game Opener Team-building
Categories: Energizer Review
 Communication Topical

◆ **Purpose:** To help participants introduce themselves to one another... and to *remember* those names.

◆ **Time Required:** 15 minutes.

◆ **Size of Group:** 8 to 20.

◆ **Materials Required:** None.

◆ **The Exercise in Action:** With groups of 20 or less, Bryan Cooper uses an introduction that energizes while aiding participants' recall of their class members' names.

Cooper, a claims trainer at Nationwide, Inc., Columbus, OH, asks participants to stand in a circle and introduce themselves by first name and one adjective that begins with the same letter as their name—for example, "I'm brilliant Bryan." He asks each person to add a simple movement or gesture, such as a bow, a two-handed wave, or a dance step.

Participants are asked to repeat the names, adjectives, and actions of all preceding group members before adding their own. This makes people uncomfortable at first, but they tend to loosen up as introductions progress. In the end, participants are laughing and having fun. And, on a more practical note, they've received two aids (an alliterative word and a silly action) to help them link names with faces.

GAME #88: A Chance to Win Millions

- Game Opener Team-building
Categories: Energizer Review
 Communication Topical

- ◆ **Purpose:** To encourage rapt attention by ratcheting up the typical reward for doing so.
- ◆ **Time Required:** 10 minutes.
- ◆ **Size of Group:** 15 to 20.
- ◆ **Materials Required:** A lottery ticket for every participant, purchased in advance by the trainer.
- ◆ **The Exercise in Action:** Miniature candy bars hold a time-honored place as a motivating reward for participants. So imagine the payoff if you raise the stakes....

Todd Richardson, national sales and product trainer at Philips Consumer Electronics, Knoxville, TN, buys enough lottery tickets to provide one for each participant. At the beginning of a session, he announces there will be a quiz later, and anyone who scores 100 percent will have the opportunity to win millions. On occasion he gives the “quiz” to participants right after the announcement and invites them to record answers as they hear them during class discussion—a great way to fight “doze-off syndrome.” Successful participants receive a lottery ticket, along with congratulations and a good-luck wish.

The method can be varied a number of ways, including using scratch-off instant lotteries. The prizes are smaller, but the odds of winning much greater—in a class of 15 or more, chances are quite high that one or more people will instantly win a small amount.

GAME #100: Pig Personality Profile

- Game Opener Team-building
Categories: Energizer Review
 Communication Topical

◆ **Purpose:** To get people talking, and give participants an unusual and interesting topic of conversation for their first course break.

◆ **Time Required:** 15 minutes.

◆ **Size of Group:** Unlimited.

◆ **Materials Required:** Drawing utensils and paper for all participants.

◆ **The Exercise in Action:** If the Myers-Briggs Personality Indicator leaves you cold, try a substitute: the Pig Personality Profile. It might not be sound science, he says, but it's good for a lot of laughs and effectively breaks the ice, says Gordon Cotton.

Cotton, a trainer at Marine Atlantic, Inc., Monchton, New Brunswick, gives participants the following instructions: "On a blank piece of paper, draw a pig. Don't look at your neighbor's pigs. Don't even glance." He provides no further guidance and does not explain the purpose of the exercise. (Note: You may find it interesting to follow the above instructions before reading the rest of this exercise.)

When participants are finished, he shares his tongue-in-cheek explanation that the pig serves as a useful test of the personality traits of the artist. He tells the class if the pig is drawn:

- Toward the top of the paper, you are a positive, optimistic person.
- Toward the middle of the page (top to bottom), you are a realist.
- Toward the bottom of the page, you are pessimistic and have a tendency to behave negatively.
- Facing left, you believe in tradition, are friendly, and remember dates, including birthdays.
- Facing forward (looking toward you), you are direct, enjoy playing devil's advocate, and neither fear nor avoid discussions.
- Facing right, you are innovative and active, but don't have a strong sense of family, nor do you remember dates.
- With many details, you are analytical, cautious, and distrustful.