Icebreakers for virtual meetings

Targeted icebreakers can help you kickstart creative thinking, surface learning goals and needs, and increase comfort with digital platform features. Here are some we've found useful in our remote sessions recently.

1. Finding common ground

When to use: To help participants get to know each other, get comfortable talking and being on camera.

Use Zoom breakout rooms* to divide participants into groups. Challenge them to find 3 things everyone in the group has in common (likes, dislikes, skills, interests, etc.) in 3 minutes. Call them back to the main session and ask one group member to share back.

2. Collective lines

When to use: To introduce a platform tool, kickstart ideation, practice collaborative making.

In MURAL, provide a selection of blank drawing templates with prompts such as CAMPSITE, CAR, KITCHEN, HOUSE, etc., each with a checklist of elements to be drawn to create a scene (tent, campfire, picnic table, canoe, bear, etc.). Ask participants to draw one element, check it off, move to the next sheet to the right, draw an item in that scene, and so on until they return to the original sheet.

3. What's your superpower?

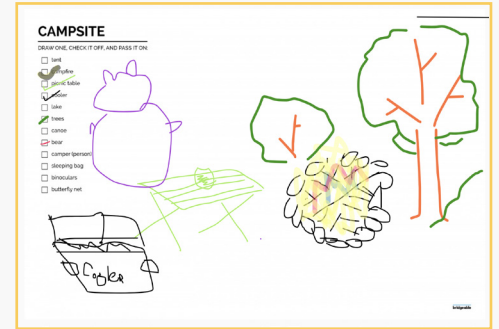*When to use:* To help participants get to know each other, get comfortable talking and being on camera.
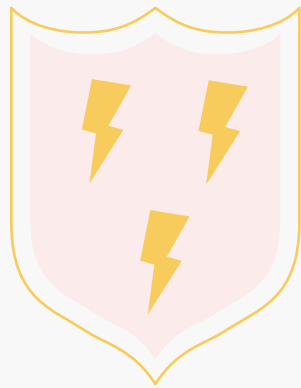
In Zoom, share a screen featuring enough blank superpower badges for each participant. Ask each participant to select one and use Zoom's annotation tools to draw and write on it to describe their standout strength or talent (e.g., "lightning speed," "shapeshifting," "empathy," etc.). Give each participant one minute to tell the group about their superpower. Works best in small groups or breakout groups.

4. One word at a time

When to use: To practice listening, storytelling, building on each other's contributions.

Ask participants to tell a story in which each person adds one word at a time. Share a screen assigning each participant a number so they know when to take their turn. Start with "Once - upon - a - time." Go around three times. Works best in small groups or in breakout groups.

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*Zoom breakout room tips

- Assign a facilitator to each breakout room to work alongside participants, help navigate any tech problems, and make sure they stay focused on the task.
- You can pre-assign participants to breakout rooms if you schedule the meeting in advance; this is helpful in enabling specific workshop teams to get acquainted during an icebreaker.