

Developing the Brief Icebreaker/Course Introduction Sequence

Icebreaker activities are essential supports for student success and help jump start your course.

Most importantly, icebreaker activities ensure students are familiar with course tools and technologies to minimize the distraction of troubleshooting during important activities and assessments throughout the course.

They provide an opportunity for students to get to know each other and foster a sense of class cohesion or community.

They can also launch students into some reflection on course related ideas.

It is recommended that you plan your Icebreaker activities in a sequence that follows the same structure and format as your learning sequences, whether content folder layout or learning module layout, with an Overview and a link to the Ask-a-Question forum as this helps to establish familiarity with the flow and layout of the course.

A substantive icebreaker should include the following:

- An activity that requires students to engage with the syllabus and essential course information such as a syllabus quiz.
- Tutorials and resources to support student success online such as how to manage time, self-regulate, seek assistance (accessibility, tutoring, etc.), use the library databases effectively, and interact with electronic media proficiently as required for the course.
- Tutorial videos and supporting reference documents for course materials, technologies, and unfamiliar teaching methods.
- Low stakes activities that require students to use *each* tool and technology device they will need to use throughout the course (discussion, assignment, blog, quiz, etc...).
- An introductions activity that prompts students to not only introduce themselves, but also to share something that is connected to the course goals in some way, thereby activating their relevant background experience and prior understandings, while also giving you an opportunity to assess their level of entry knowledge and identify potential misconceptions.

Examine the Icebreaker sample plan below. Notice how this instructor brings together course concepts, technologies, and expectations while developing a sense of class cohesion or community. She does so by incorporating all of the elements of a substantive icebreaker.

In the **Overview Document** for the Icebreaker Activities, the instructor plans to include the following requirements:

- Read the syllabus provided in the **Content – Readings and Videos folder**, then complete the syllabus quiz as many times as needed to earn 100%.
- Explore resources provided in the **Content – Readings and Videos folder** on how to be successful online, then complete related activities in the **Activities folder** similar to those students will find in the learning sequences.
- Read and view tutorials provided in the **Content – Readings and Videos folder** on how to download a web technology needed for the course, then complete practice activities in the **Activities folder**, then submit a brief essay on their technology set-up experience much like they will submit their **Module Essay Exam** in each of the course learning sequences.
- Participate in an introductions discussion forum in the **Activities folder** in which students will share one positive and one negative experience involving literacy from their childhood, explain how it influenced them, and posit why think it comes to mind as an important experience. Students must reply to at least two peers on the same schedule required in the course learning sequences.

The overall layout of the Icebreaker Activities is consistent with Learning Sequence 1, except for the Syllabus Quiz.

Note: *There are many ways you can organize the materials and activities within your learning sequences. This instructor chose a folder for materials and a folder for activities followed by a major assessment(s). You will plan this in a way that makes sense for your course and your students.*