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# Introductory Challenge Activities

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## Introductory Challenge Activities (Warm-Ups)

~ ~ ~ Arrangements ~ ~ ~

**Materials:** A Group of People Numbering 5 to 15

**Goal:** To get the group to arrange themselves according to a prescribed arrangement.

**Procedure:** Explain to the group that you want them to arrange themselves according to a specified manner. Emphasize that they will need to listen carefully to the instructions and follow exactly the directions that were given. When the group is finished arranging themselves, they should let the instructor know.

When they state that they have accomplished the requested arrangement, let them check their results and briefly debrief: How did you solve the problem? Who took leadership? What helped you be successful? Could you have succeeded if all group members had not participated? Etc., etc.

Challenge 1 - Arrange yourselves by height from shortest to tallest with everyone having their eyes closed.

Challenge 2 - Arrange yourselves by birth, month, then by day. Eyes may be open, but the group may not talk.

Challenge 3 - Arrange yourselves by the first letter of your middle name without talking.

Challenge 4 - Arrange yourselves by age, without talking.

Challenge 5 - Arrange yourselves according to importance; the group may keep their eyes open and may talk. (Hint - A circle has no defined beginning or end and shows equality of all group members.)

**Variation:** Arrange the group according to any of the challenges above but requiring the group to perform this feat standing on a log provided in the Introductory Activities area.

Debrief:

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## Introductory Challenge Activities (Warm-Ups)

~ ~ ~ Blind Polygon ~ ~ ~

**Resources:** A Group of People Numbering More Than Six  
Blindfolds For The Group  
Could Use Buddy Cords  
Could Use a Length of Rope

**Goal:** To arrange the group into a specified polygon without looking.

**Procedure:** This is a more in-depth arrangement. Hand out blind folds or have the group close their eyes. With their eyes closed, tell the group to arrange themselves into a polygon (have them make a triangle, square, or pentagon).

**Variation:** Instruct the group that they may not use their hands.

**Additional Variation:** Have the group hold on to a rope. Have the group arrange the rope so that it is in a polygon shape, or the shape of a letter or number. No person may let go of the rope for more than 5 seconds at a time. Only one person may let go of the rope at a time.

**Debrief:**

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## Introductory Challenge Activities (Warm-Ups)

~ ~ ~ Figure Eight ~ ~ ~

**Resources:** Group of People of Any Number  
Two Cones, Trees, Or Other Objects Approximately 6-8 Feet Apart (distance will depend on the size of the group)

**Goal:** Have the group go around the cones (objects) in the figure eight pattern and return to their original position without letting go of each other's hands.

**Procedure:** Have the group form a figure eight pattern around the cones (objects) holding hands so that everyone is joined together. Instruct the group that they need to go around the cones, returning to their original position by keeping hold of their hands.

**Variation:** Time the event, challenging the group to accomplish the task in the shortest amount of time possible. If the group breaks hands in the process, a time penalty can be assessed or you can have the group begin again.

**Debrief:**

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## Introductory Chalnge Activities (Warm-Ups)

~ ~ ~ The Gauntlet ~ ~ ~

**Resources:** A Group of People Where Number is Not Important

**Goal:** Have a person go through two rows of people falling to the side.

**Procedure:** The "faller" walks between two lines of "catchers" who are facing each other. "Catchers" should be in the "spotters" position. The "faller" moves up and down the line and can surprise the "catchers" by falling in any direction at any time.

The activity forces the group to be ready at all times, stimulating what it is like to spot someone on the challenge elements.

Debrief:

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## Introductory Challenge Activities (Warm-Ups)

~ ~ ~ Hula Hoop Pass ~ ~ ~

**Resources:** A Group of 10 - 15 People  
One or Two Plastic Hoola Hoops

**Goal:** To get the hoola hoops back to their original position by passing them to each other without letting go of each others' hands.

**Procedure:** Ask the group to form a circle and hold hands. Place a hoola hoop between two people in the circle (resting on their clasped hands). See how quickly the participants in the circle can cause the hoop to travel around the circle (over people) and back to the starting point.

**Variation:** (1) Use two hoops. Start both at the same point, but travelling in opposite directions around the circle, through each other (hoop through hoop), and back to the starting point. Then ask "Who won?". It takes some thought to realize the whole group has worked together as a team. There are no winners or losers.

(2) Using two hoops, have them start at different points on the circle. Challenge the group to pass the hoops around 2-3 times, without one catching up with the other.

**Debrief:**

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## Introductory Challenge Activities (Warm-Ups)

~ ~ ~ Knots ~ ~ ~

**Resources:** A "Flexible" Group of People

**Goal:** To untangle the group from the human knot.

**Procedure:** If there is a large group, you may want to divide the group into two smaller groups of 8 people. Have each group stand in a tight circle facing in toward the center. Each person then puts their right hand into the circle and holds the left hand of someone else—do not grab the hand of the person on either side if you can help it.

Each person then places their left hand into the circle and grabs a right hand—do not hold the right hand of the same person whose left hand you are holding and, if at all possible, do not cross your arms, and do not grab the hand of the person on either side.

The group must now try to untangle this incredible knot they have just created in an effort to end up standing in a circle with everyone hand in hand, no kinks allowed. There is one very important rule to remember in the untangling process—at no point is anyone to break hands, you are committed to hold the hands of the persons whose hand you are holding.

You may end up with more than one circle, which may or may not be intertwined, with people facing in different directions. This is a great cooperative puzzle. Debrief briefly.

Debrief:

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### Introductory Challenge Activities (Warm-Ups)

~ ~ ~ Levitation ~ ~ ~
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**Resources:** A Group of At Least Nine People

**Goal:** Have the group successfully lift a group member, who is in a horizontal position, and then gently lower the person back to the ground.

**Procedure:** Have each person lie on the ground with the rest of the group kneeling around them. On a signal, the horizontal person is gently lifted a couple of feet up, moved laterally back and forth and eventually levitated to a height not to exceed 6 feet. Then, slowly lower the person back to the ground. It is important that the liftee keep his/her body stiff and that the lifters work together.

**Debrief:**



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## Introductory Challenge Activities (Warm-Ups)

~ ~ ~ Mirroring ~ ~ ~

**Resources:** A Group of People Divided Into Pairs

**Goal:** Each person is to "mirror" or imitate as precisely as possible the movements of his/her partner.

**Procedure:** Have partners face one another, standing almost toe-to-toe. One person acts as the initiator and the other becomes his/her mirror image. Switch so that both partners get to try both roles. This activity isn't meant to be cooperative. The idea is for the movements to be interesting and slow enough that they can be mimicked. When you present this activity it is important that you do it in a low key way and encourage the participants to use zany actions, but in slow motion. Rules—not touching and one foot must remain on the ground at all times.

**Variation:** "Anti-mirroring"—the follower tries to do the exact opposite of the initiator.

**Debrief:**

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## Introductory Challenge Activities (Warm-Ups)

~ ~ ~ Sardines ~ ~ ~

**Resources:** A Group of People  
A Piece of Rope Long Enough to Encircle the Entire Group Loosely, At Least  
Once Or Narrow Flex Wrap to Encircle the Group 4 or 5 Times  
Open Area with Obstacles

**Goal:** The sardine group are to achieve the obstacle while remaining in the ropes.

**Procedures:** Have the group member line up next to each other, holding hands. Use spiraling technique to "roll the group up into a tight ball." Tie the rope loosely around the outside of the group and have them move together over a set area, negotiating around designated obstacles along the way.

**Debrief:**

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## Introductory Challenge Activities (Warm-Ups)

### ~ ~ ~ Two-Person Trust Falls ~ ~ ~

**Resources:** A Group of Participants Split Into Pairs (approximately the same height).

**Goal:** To establish trust, and to give the sense of spotting and catching people.

**Procedure:** It is best to first demonstrate the correct spotting procedure with a volunteer before allowing participants to engage in the "Trust Fall" element in the challenge activities. Have partners stand so that one partner is behind the other, looking at his/her back. The partner in front will be the "faller," the partner behind is the "spotter."

"Faller" position and responsibility: the faller should secure his/her arms across their chest to insure that they won't fly out and hit the spotter. The faller needs to keep his/her feet firmly planted, tilting back onto the heels when falling, keeping the body perfectly stiff. The faller should initiate the sequence of communication as outlined below.

"Spotter" position and responsibility: the spotter should begin by standing fairly close behind the faller, hands up at shoulder height, elbows slightly bent. The spotter should have his/her knees bent slightly for flexibility. The one foot should be placed in front of the other. The spotter must always be in position and ready. His/her major responsibility is to protect the head, neck, and upper body region of the faller. It is important that the participants follow the call sequence as outlined below.

Call Sequence:

- Faller: "Faller ready!"
- Spotter: "Catcher ready!"
- Faller: "Falling!"
- Spotter: "Fall away!"

Have sets of partners spread out so that they can have adequate room to do their falls. Have each "faller" fall back three times, with the "spotter" moving a little further back for each progressive fall. At no point should the spotter move so far back, that he/she is unable to catch the "faller" properly. Have partners take turns so that each is the "faller" and the "spotter." During the trust falls, walk around to encourage people in their trust fall, also give pointers if they are not doing things properly.

**Note:** It is important that this activity be done before the group actually participates in a trust fall activity. This will provide important preparation and will begin developing the trust needed.

Debrief:

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## Introductory Challenge Activities (Warm-Ups)

~ ~ ~ Willow in the Wind ~ ~ ~

**Resources:** A Group of People

**Goal:** A participant is to be passed gently from one person to another establishing trust.

**Procedure:** If this is a large group, split into smaller groups of about 8 people. Everyone should stand in a tight circle, shoulder to shoulder, facing in toward the center with hands up and palms facing out. Each person should have their knees slightly bent with one foot slightly ahead of the other for better balance. The circle will be the "wind."

Now have a brave volunteer stand in the center of the circle to act as the "willow." This person will stand with feet together, body stiff, eyes closed and arms crossed over the chest with hands resting on shoulders. Keeping his/her feet in place, the "willow" falls in any direction—side to side, backward, and forward—those in the circle support the "willow" with gentle pushes of their palms. At least two people should be supporting the "willow" at all times. Remember—this is a gentle wind, not a tornado!

Each member of the group should get an opportunity to be in the center. This is a great way to build trust within the group and to practice good spotting techniques.

**Debrief:**

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## Introductory Challenge Activities (Warm-Ups)

~ ~ ~ Yurt Circle ~ ~ ~

**Note:** A "yurt" is a Mongolian nomad's tent in which the roof pushes against the walls in perfect equilibrium.

**Resources:** An Even-Numbered Group of 8-16 People.

**Goal:** To have the group balance the circle while leaning in or out of the circle.

**Procedure:** Ask the group members to join hands and stand in a circle. Have the group expand their circle outward until everyone feels some pull on their arms from the person on either side of them. Feet should be shoulder width apart. Go around the circle, having the first person say "In," the second "Out," the third "In," and so on all the way around. Each "In" should be between two "Outs" and vice versa.

On the count of three all of the "Ins" slowly lean into the circle, while all of the "Outs" slowly lean out. Everyone keeps their feet stationary, supporting themselves with their held hands. If everyone cooperates, group members can lean amazingly far forward or backward without falling.

**Variation:** Have the "Ins" and "Outs" try to reverse positions on the command of the instructor. This is difficult but fun to try.

**Debrief:**