

## **“Tried and True Impromptu Speech” Ice Breakers for the First Day of Class**

*(These are not listed in any particular order. The teacher should also “play” with the students and can go first to model how the game should go. I usually will not call names but will let the students volunteer when they choose to go. Some students prefer to go first and get it over with while others like to wait and see how other students respond before they respond. I call these impromptu speeches ZAPs and I always give a grade for ZAPs. They will make a 100 for participating and a 0 for not participating. Students are usually eager to participate because they want the 100 and they are not being evaluated for this speech like they are for the formal speech projects that are delivered throughout the semester. ZAPs also help the students to get accustomed to speaking to a group of people without worrying about a pass/fail grade. These activities can also be used as participation scores in the event that your college does not record attendance.)*

- ❑ **Iceberg Ice Breaker:** Show the picture of the Iceberg and explain how we are a lot like an Iceberg. When people see us, they only see a small representation of who and what we really are. They see only what we want them to see. Invite the students (one at a time) to come to the front of the classroom (or stand at their seat if you prefer) and introduce themselves by sharing their name, major in college, what is obvious that other people see, and just one other thing that is not obvious. After all students have introduced themselves (if you have time left in the class period) you can let them break up into their speech groups to get to know each other better.
- ❑ **Snowball Fight:** Give each student a blank piece of paper. Ask them to write one thing about themselves that others may not know and to NOT put their name on the paper. Then scrunch the paper up into a pretend snowball. Get all the students to stand in a circle around the room – spread out to make it more fun. Let them know that you are going to start a timer and for three minutes, they will throw their snowball, pick up another and throw it, and keep picking up snowballs and throwing them at each other until the timer goes off. (Be prepared for lots of laughter and movement in the classroom.) Then ask all students to find one snowball in the room, pick it up, and return to the circle. Take turns having a student open the snowball, read what is written on the snowball, and try to figure out who “owns” the snowball. If no one figures it out after a few tries, then the “owner” of the snowball will step forward, and say it is their snowball. Then, they can introduce themselves to the class and tell a short story about the event that is written on the paper. After the student tells his story, he or she opens the snowball they are holding and will read it, which prompts the next student to tell his story.
- ❑ **Guess My Name:** This activity is fun to do on the first day of class. The purpose of the activity is to provide clues to their name. Ask the student to come to the front of the classroom or to stand by their seat (if you prefer). The student will say, “So, you want to know my name? Here is a clue: they will then offer short phrases of clues until someone in the class can guess the correct name.” If no-one guesses the name after four or five clues, the student can then introduce themselves by saying, “My name is.....” This is a fun way to learn each other’s name.
- ❑ **Table Topics:** This is a card game that can be purchased, or you can create one of your own. The students are asked to come to the front of the classroom and draw one card from the box. Each card has a question. The student should state their name, read the question on the card to the class, answer the question using the PREP model, then leave their card on the table turned upside down so that the question is not used again. Questions are basic, but thoughtful. An example might be: What is your favorite family tradition and why? I will usually review all questions from the purchased game prior to using it in order to remove any that are

political or controversial questions. The purpose of the game is to get to know each other better and to give students the chance to try speaking by using the PREP model. Here it is:

**P = Point – restate the question into your answer and focus on one point from the question.**

**R = Relevance – explain why the question is relevant to your audience.**

**E = Example – answer the question and provide a personal example.**

**P = Point – summarize the response by restating the question as a final statement.**

Here is an example of how this works: “Good Morning! My name is Penny Waddell. My favorite family tradition is celebrating Christmas. There are more than 20 different holidays during the Winter months, but my favorite tradition would be something that everyone would enjoy. For example, my family has always shown our love through food. During Christmas, my family will cook lots of fun goodies such as smoked meats and baked goods. Then, we divide them up into colorful baskets and deliver the baskets to those that we love and to the shut-ins that live in our neighborhood. We’ve always felt like the best gifts are gifts you make and share. So, that’s why my favorite family tradition is celebrating Christmas.”

- ❑ **You be the Judge:** Provide each student a blank page of paper and ask them to anonymously list a time when they either did something or were tempted to do something that was not a good idea. (For example: Taking a shortcut on a homework assignment by looking up the answers on the internet instead of reading the textbook assignment.) Have students fold their paper and place the folded papers in a hat, shuffle them and then allow each student to choose one piece of paper. Ask the student NOT to open the paper until it is their turn to speak. The student should stand in front of the class, introduce themselves by saying their first and last name, then open the paper to read the sentence to the class. Using the PREP model, the student should offer advice regarding how the temptation should have been handled. The purpose of the game is to get to know each other better and to give students the chance to try speaking by using the PREP model. Here it is:

**P = Point – restate the question into your answer and focus on one point from the question.**

**R = Relevance – explain why the question is relevant to your audience.**

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**P = Point – summarize the response by restating the question as a final statement.**

- ❑ **Let’s Play Ball:** Using a Soccer Ball and a permanent marker, write a different question on each section of the ball. Have the students stand in a circle around the classroom. Ask one student to throw the ball to another student. The student who catches the ball will need to introduce himself by saying his full name and then answer the question where their thumb is placed during the catch. The PREP model should again be used to answer the question. The purpose of the game is to get to know each other better and to give students the chance to try speaking by using the PREP model. Here it is:

**P = Point – restate the question into your answer and focus on one point from the question.**

**R = Relevance – explain why the question is relevant to your audience.**

**E = Example – answer the question and provide a personal example.**

**P = Point – summarize the response by restating the question as a final statement.**

- ❑ **A Backward Introduction:** Challenge your students to introduce themselves to the class by writing their name backwards or jumbled up on a blank piece of paper. Fold the paper and put the paper into a hat, shuffle the papers, then let each student choose a paper one-at-a-time. Each student will then introduce themselves and will have ten seconds to try to guess the correct name. If the name is correctly guessed in ten seconds, the student who wrote the name will share a fun fact about themselves that classmates may not know.

- ❑ **Would You Rather?** Write a series of “Would you rather...” questions and place all the questions in a colorful gift bag. (Examples: Would you rather be handcuffed to one person for an entire month or handcuffed to ten people for one day? Would you rather be without your phone for a month or without your car?) Ask students to come to the front of the classroom one-at-a-time, introduce themselves using their first and last name, then choose a question and answer it using the PREP model. The purpose of the game is to get to know each other better and to give students the chance to try speaking by using the PREP model. Here it is:
- P = Point – restate the question into your answer and focus on one point from the question.**  
**R = Relevance – explain why the question is relevant to your audience.**  
**E = Example – answer the question and provide a personal example.**  
**P = Point – summarize the response by restating the question as a final statement.**
- ❑ **How Would You Answer This?** Listed below are random questions that can be used for impromptu speech topics:
1. What would you put in a time capsule, and why?
  2. If you could change anything about your college, what would it be and why?
  3. If you could have any animal attribute, what would it be and why?
  4. If you have been present at any historical event, which one and why?
  5. What are your pet peeves and how do you choose to react when they are presented?
  6. What one thing do you want to accomplish in your lifetime and what steps are you taking toward that goal?
  7. What is your favorite car, and why?
  8. What is your favorite TV show, and why?
  9. If you could have one superpower, which one would it be, and why?
  10. What will you remember most from this class?
  11. Who is the most annoying celebrity, and why?
  12. If your friends could describe you in three words, what would they be, and why?
  13. What is our most useful invention, and why?
  14. If you could have dinner with any person, past or present, who would it be, and why?
  15. How would you spend a great day?
  16. Whom do you admire the most, and why?
  17. What was the worst fashion trend ever?
  18. What color best describes you, and why?
  19. What charity would you support and why?
  20. What pet peeves do you have about the opposite sex?
  21. What has been the biggest challenge of your life so far and how has it affected you?
  22. If you won the lottery, what would you do with the money?
  23. Where in the world have you not been yet but most want to visit?
  24. What is your favorite movie, and why?
  25. If you could be any TV show character, who would it be, and why?
  26. Would you want to have advance notice of the day of your death?
  27. What is your favorite book, and why?
  28. If you could talk to the president, what topic would you talk about?
  29. Where is your favorite vacation place, and why?
  30. What important life lessons do you want to pass along to the next generation?
  31. What is your favorite sports team or athlete, and why?
  32. Who is the most influential celebrity?
  33. What song or lyric means the most to you, and why?
  34. Who is your favorite teacher from Kindergarten through High School and why?
  35. What college course have you taken that you are sure you will use during your career?
  36. What one speech topic would you choose for the persuasion speech and why?