

**A sample activity from the  
Fenman trainer's resource:**

# **The Trainer's Treasure Trove**

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Thank you for downloading this sample activity. You are welcome to use this material in your courses.

This sample is just one of 50 tools contained in the trainer's activity pack '*The Trainer's Treasure Trove*', published by Fenman. Details of the other activities are given at the end of this document.

# The Trainer's Treasure Trove

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- Introduction
- Activity 6: The tried and tested icebreaker
- Full contents listing: 50 tools

## Introduction:

*The Trainer's Treasure Trove* is a remarkable collection of ideas, tactics, tools and techniques that new trainers need and which more experienced trainers will really value.

This valuable new resource is the brainchild of Beverley Williams, one of Fenman's most successful authors. She's picked out a collection of 50 units from her own 'bag of trainer's tricks' to help you. Buy *The Trainer's Treasure Trove*, and it'll start to save you time immediately (and there's a high chance it will even help save your day!). It might help you revive a session next month. It'll definitely help you increase the effectiveness of your training for years.

There's great variety here, with ideas that will suit all kinds of audiences and situations. Units vary from excellent energisers that take a few minutes, to brainteasers that'll neatly fill twenty minutes; or role plays that need half an hour. From templates for pre-session preparations and post-course evaluation, to ideas for brilliant quizzes that could save you hours, days, even weeks!

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# 6 THE TRIED AND TESTED ICE-BREAKER

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# 6 THE TRIED AND TESTED ICE-BREAKER

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## Uses and benefits of this resource

- A tried and tested ice-breaker.

## Overview

The participants work in pairs and try to find out a little about their partners. The trainer gives direction on what they need to discuss. Each person then introduces their partner to the rest of the group. One key information point to be discussed is what they hope to gain from attending the course. This allows the trainer to write up the objectives as each introduction is made.

## Time

Approximately 30–45 minutes with 6–8 participants.

## Number of participants

Excellent for up to ten, it may be too time-consuming if you have more.

## Materials and resources

- Flipchart and stand or whiteboard
- Marker pens for trainer
- Flipchart paper and marker pens for participants
- Paper and pens for participants
- Walls, screens or whiteboard for displaying flipchart pages
- Tape, Blu-Tack® or pins

## In preparation

You can write up the three discussion topics you select on a sheet of flipchart paper beforehand if you want to, headed *Let's find out more about ...* However, it also works well to write one up at the time, say a little about what you want, write up the second, and so on.

### Step one

Tell the participants that they are going to spend some time finding out a bit more about each other. Specify the pairs you want them to work in, as they will feel a little shy if they have to find their own partner at this stage. If you have an odd number, you may be able to ask all the participants to work in threes, or you can ask one set of people to work as a threesome. If you do this, remember to ask different people to work in threes throughout the course. This results in greater interaction between the participants and also avoids the situation where one particular participant feels like the spare person.

### Step two

Either show your prepared flipchart or head a sheet of flipchart paper or a whiteboard, *Let's find out more about ...* and write up the first point that you would like them to ask each other about, followed by an example from you, and so on for the next two points.

A selection of possible discussion points is shown below. As a rule, use something factual, like the department/branch you work in and what you do; something personal, a little bit about yourself; and a question that allows you to elicit their objectives, such as what you hope to gain from today.

### Possible discussion topics

- **Factual**
  - Where you normally work and what you do
  - How long you've been with the organisation
  - What you most enjoy/find interesting about your work.
  
- **Personal**
  - A little bit about yourself. This is nice and safe for shy people, they can say as little as *'I've got two cats called Mork and Mindy'*.
  - Something about you that we probably don't know, because this allows people to mention the things that are important to them; for example, they may go rock climbing or collect unusual teapots

- The first thing you'd buy if you won the lottery. This helps people to relax and gives the message that you want people to enjoy themselves while they are learning.

- **Objectives**

- What you hope to gain from today
- What you would specifically like to address during this course
- Why you decided to come on this particular course.

### Step three

Tell the participants that they have 5–10 minutes to find out about each other and encourage them to make some notes, as they will then introduce their partner to the rest of the group, telling the others what they have learned.

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### Step four

Ask each pair to introduce their partner to the rest of the group. Don't go directly round the room, select pairs at random. It's probably best to cover both members of a pair before moving on, since it would be easy to leave someone out if you're hopping between pairs (disaster!).

### Step five

Head up a sheet of flipchart paper *Objectives* and write up each person's name and their objective(s) as their partner introduces them. Be very careful to pay attention to, and to comment on, their other points, as it will give a negative impression if you appear only to be interested in the objectives.

### Step six

Thank everyone for their contributions. Let them know that you think that this is obviously a talented group and that it should be an interesting course.

## Step seven

Stick the flipchart sheets showing the objectives up on the wall, and explain that they will revisit them at appropriate points throughout the day and at the end of the course to check on their progress. You will need to point out now if the objective definitely cannot be met during this course, and give some very brief guidance on how it could be met by other means. You could tell them you will have a chat with them during the coffee break about the time-management training that is available.

## Step eight

Use the objectives throughout the course to emphasise points. For example, you can say *'We only have to look around the room at your objectives to see how important the issue of confidence is'*. Revisit the objectives at the close of training to show how each one has been addressed.

## Variations

- Ask each pair to discuss and then write up their objectives on a sheet of flipchart paper and stick it to the wall. When all the pairs have finished, ask each pair to read out their objectives and to enlarge on what they have written.
- It's tempting to ask people to introduce themselves, as this saves a great deal of time. There are points for and against this that should be considered before you make your decision.
  - Shy, very young or inexperienced people will welcome the opportunity to talk on a one-to-one basis and then feed back as part of a pair, rather than addressing the whole training group in the early stages.
  - The pair discussions result in a comfortable 'buzz' of conversation around the room which may have been largely silent apart from the trainer's voice until that point. This helps people to feel more comfortable.
  - More senior people may be accustomed to round-the-table personal introductions and feel at ease with them.

- If you have a large group you will need to think about the time implications versus the settling down benefits.
- If you are presenting rather than training, it will probably be more appropriate not to facilitate introductions. If you break down into workshop groups at some point, this ice-breaker can be used at this time.

# The Trainer's Treasure Trove

**Complete list of activities:**

## **SECTION ONE: JOINING INSTRUCTIONS, PRE-COURSE QUESTIONNAIRES AND ESSENTIAL INSTRUCTIONS**

### **1: Course invitation and joining instructions - traditional style**

A straightforward set of joining instructions containing all the details participants need to know, such as venue, times, dates and details of pre-course work. The joining instructions template can be photocopied and specific dates and other information added by hand, or, ideally, kept on your computer and completed as appropriate.

### **2: Course invitation and joining instructions - why not make it more interesting?**

Sending invitation cards instead of a letter means that the participants still receive all the necessary information, but also allows you to give a little advance flavour of the course, enables the participants to keep the card on their desk as a visual reminder and raises the profile of the training course by acting as a conversation trigger. This resource provides the joining instructions template which will appear inside each card, plus six sets of artwork, appropriate for a range of courses, that can be photocopied for you invitation cards.

### **3: The pre-course questionnaire**

An effective pre-course questionnaire makes the difference between running a training course and delivering the right course for the particular set of participants attending. It also alerts you to potential problem issues in advance of the course. This resource provides you with a pre-course questionnaire suitable for a customer care workshop, plus ideas on adapting the questionnaire for other types of training.

### **4: Essential domestic details**

A standard opener for the trainer, covering essential domestic details and emergency instructions, in which you fill in the local details, such as assembly area if the fire alarm goes off. To be used prior to normal ice-breakers.

## **SECTION TWO: OPENERS AND ICE-BREAKERS**

### **5: The comfort zone**

Introduce the comfort zone in the early stages of any training session to show people how you believe learning is most effectively achieved.

### **6: The tried and tested ice-breaker**

Don't throw the baby out with the bath water in your quest for things new and exciting. This ice-breaker asks participants to work in pairs to find out more about each other before introducing their partner to the rest of the group. It gets everyone talking immediately, and makes life much easier for shy participants.

## **7: Pictorial introductions**

Each participant has one sheet of flipchart paper and some pens to tell everyone else about themselves without using words. The other participants then try to introduce that participant by using the drawings on the flipchart paper. This is often hilarious and the participant being analysed must be given the right to reply!

## **8: Relaxation technique**

You move away from getting everyone fired up and instead you help the participants to prepare for effective learning by helping them to clear their minds and bodies of all the everyday tensions we all carry with us. A quick and easy physical relaxation technique.

## **9: Character from literature, history or television**

Participants decide who they would like to be from one of the above categories, explain why, and tell how they would tackle a current issue in this role. For example, think about queuing times managed by Basil Fawlty, financial management tackled by Mr Micawber or communication problems left to Henry VIII to solve! This resource is meant to be a light-hearted ice-breaker. It also works well in any development where the aim is to develop confidence, particularly in addressing others.

## **10: An appropriate gift**

A spaceship awaits to take your participants on a trip to magical mystery worlds. However, the aliens are strict on etiquette and their entry price is an appropriate gift. Participants have to work out what an acceptable gift would be.

## **SECTION THREE: BRAINTEASERS AND ENERGISERS**

### **11: The tale of the crab and the fishes**

Participants work out the hidden meaning of the riddles.

### **12: Water torture**

Participants work in groups to solve a water torture brainteaser. This can also be done as a practical outdoor exercise.

### **13: What do these numbers mean to you?**

Participants work out the hidden meaning of the number riddle.

### **14: Number crunching**

The participants work in pairs or small groups to solve a series of brainteasers involving numbers and related words.

### **15: The dog, the rabbit and the carrots**

The classic river crossing problem, one boat, one sailor and room for only one item at a time. Participants work out how to get them all across safely.

## **16: Thirty-second sound bites**

Participants write down the topics that they would feel able to speak about for 30 seconds, they also separately write down their names. You collect all the pieces of paper. At random points throughout the day you give a signal, such as ringing a bell, and a name is picked out, followed by a topic (not the one that they originally selected!). Other variations on the theme are also suggested.

## **17: The power nap**

One to surprise your participants! Instead of trying to get everyone going again immediately after lunch, you go with the natural flow and ask everyone to have a 5-minute power nap, which is followed by some shaking about to music or with instruments. You can make this as tame as 5 minutes eyes shut in seats, followed by some shaking of hands and feet, or as dramatic as 5 minutes flat out on the floor, followed by playing instruments and dancing.

## **SECTION FOUR: EXERCISES**

### **18: Thinking outside the box**

A seemingly straightforward task but the participants will need to think outside the box in order to complete it successfully.

### **19: The in-tray exercise**

A comprehensive fun in-tray exercise is provided, together with instructions for use. Participants will work individually. This exercise is extremely valuable for making learning points on planning, organising and prioritising.

## **20: Structure of straws**

Teams work to build the highest possible structure using only straws, cotton and a needle. Excellent resource for use in sessions on teamwork. Observation and feedback instructions are included.

## **21: Design a logo**

Teams work to plan and design a logo for their company, which incorporates its values and/or key themes.

## **22: Painless technical testing**

Participants devise technical tests on company products, regulations or other information. These are a more interesting way of getting important information across and also extremely useful, as the actual tests are then used with other members of staff.

## **23: Find the word**

Participants use closed and open questions to discover the work on another's piece of paper. The resource is designed to demonstrate the value of using open questions.

## **24: Escape from Room 101**

Participants must work out the missing numbers in order to escape from Room 101. There are no second chances!

## **25: The Captain of the ship**

A listening exercise, where the participants can take notes but you will not repeat anything. They have to answer an essential question at the end.

## **26: Chinese whispers**

The first person in a group is given a picture and then describes it in whispers to the next person, and so on; the last person attempts to draw the picture on a flipchart. The learning points focus on accuracy of information and the importance of ensuring that everyone has the same information.

## **27: It's all in the emphasis**

The trainer writes a sentence on the flipchart and asks each person to say it aloud, giving emphasis to a different word in turn. It is extremely useful for making the learning point about the importance of tone of voice when covering verbal communication. A range of sample phrases/sentences is supplied.

## **SECTION FIVE: INSPIRATIONAL OVERHEADS**

### **28: Inspirational overheads**

Five generic overheads, plus lots of ideas on how to use them to emphasise learning points and/or to provoke thought and discussion.

## **SECTION SIX: THE QUIZZES**

### **29: Selecting the team name**

Participants get in the mood by selecting a team name to reflect their combined personalities, purpose, or levels of intelligence!

### **30: The company quiz**

This is great for induction courses. A series of questions on your organisation are supplied, such as 'What is the Mission Statement?'. You will need to make sure that you know the answers beforehand.

### **31: The pub quiz**

Lots of questions and answers on a number of categories, plus ideas for a current affairs section, if you wish to add one before each quiz.

### **32: The e-mail quiz**

This is a great idea for a monthly or quarterly event, and of particular value for staff who are based at remote locations. It can be a mix of general knowledge and company questions. Lots of ideas for question sources for you or, even better, the winner of each quiz gets to compile the next one!

### **33: The all-action quiz!**

Great as a physical as well as mental energiser. The questions appear on pieces of flipchart paper all around the room, while the participants are outside or in another room. Teams are given the answers on individual Post-it Notes. Each team sends in one member at a time armed with one response only. The fastest team to get them all right wins.

### **34: Achievement certificates**

Templates for four certificates which can be given as fun awards for quizzes, or framed and formally presented if you want to add importance to any occasion.

### **35: Suggestions for prizes**

A range of ideas for suitable prizes. Some that cost nothing; some that trainers might want to buy themselves or can buy from the training budget. For some longer running competitions, such as the e-mail quiz, prizes that the company or the social fund may wish to donate.

## **SECTION SEVEN: ROLE-PLAYS**

### **36: Running a role-play**

Guidance notes on running role-plays and facilitating feedback. This resource uses the example of a problem with telephone answering technique to illustrate the principles.

### **37: The meeting role-play**

A comprehensive group role-play of a meeting. Use this role-play to fit into training on: meetings preparation/meetings behaviour/communications skills/assertive behaviour.

### **38: Punctuality problems**

A role-play which asks a manager to deal with the problem of late arrival by a member of staff. To be used in conjunction with the full role-play guidelines in Resource 36 Running a role-play.

### **39: Appearance problems**

A role-play that deals with the sensitive issue of unsuitable appearance at work. To be used in conjunction with the full role-play guidelines in Resource 36 Running a role-play.

### **40: Objectives review**

A collection of role-plays that tackle the issue of objectives review, some of which are veering off course. If there are any difficulties, the manager's task is to find out what the problems are and to work with the team member to get things back on track. To be used in conjunction with the full role-play guidelines in Resource 36 Running a role-play.

## **SECTION EIGHT: BRAINSTORMING**

### **41: How to run a brainstorm**

A useful trainer's guide on running successful brainstorms.

### **42: Light-hearted short brainstorms**

Lots of ideas you can use to run short brainstorms to illustrate the technique.

### **43: Brainstorm topics**

A range of topics suitable for brainstorm activities in different training and development situations.

## **SECTION NINE: EVALUATION SHEETS - ESSENTIAL AND INSPIRATIONAL ENDINGS**

### **44: Action planning**

An action planning handout, plus suggestions on how to get the best from this resource.

### **45: Key learning points**

Suggestions on how to run this essential section of your training session.

### **46: Ending on a positive note**

This is a way for participants to give each other some positive points from the training session to take away, and can be done openly or privately.

## **47: The wise old manager**

A tale to remind managers why they put so much effort into developing others.

## **48: Inspirational poem - If you painted your life**

A truly inspirational piece to help people take stock of where they are in life. It is particularly good for people you may be helping to overcome problems, possibly with assertive behaviour.

## **49: Evaluation sheet: Style 1**

A selection of straightforward evaluation sheets which ask the participants to comment on various aspects of the course. Areas addressed include facilities and catering, as well as the topics covered and their trainer's style, knowledge of the subject and ability to communicate.

## **50: Evaluation sheet: Style 2**

Evaluation sheets which can be customised to ask for more detailed opinions from the participants, breaking the training event down into categories and including questions on, for example, the amount of time allocated to each topic addressed.

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