STRATEGIC PAUSE WEEK

ICEBREAKERS

EMOJI CHECK-IN □ (OR, ALSO CALLED MOOD BAROMETER)

A simple round table team check-in but this time instead of a one-word or something, you pick an emoji that best describes how you are feeling right now.

You can even modify this to be how they feel the project went or meeting, etc.
A VARIATION OF THE EMOJI CHECK-IN: HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE...?

You can also use word clouds to pick up your team’s thoughts and feelings. Open your meeting with a question such as: “In one word, how would you describe the past week/month?”

This icebreaker is great for taking a pulse check of the overall atmosphere in the team and detecting possible downturns.

Or, you can even try something different like: “If you were to describe our team (or department or university) in one word, what would it be?”

TOUR GUIDE

Yes, that’s right, time to become your team's very own tour guide...of where you are sitting.

Each person takes turns to give everyone a quick tour of their immediate surroundings — i.e. walk everyone through the room you are in, what’s on your desk, etc.

This is a fun way to get to know each other a bit deeper and to feel more physically connected even though you’re remote.

Being able to see each other’s space a bit more before starting is a great way to feel more connected and like you are sitting in the room with them, even though you may be halfway across the world form one another.

Set a time limit if you need to — 60 seconds per person — pro-tip if you are doing this with a large group a timer and time limit is a must to keep things short and sharp.
PICTURE CHARADES

Like Charades but with a remote twist where you can only use images to explain whatever famous movie, book, etc they pick. Similar rules, no talking, and the images cannot be directly from the movie or book. Normally there is a limit of 5 images.

ZOOM BACKGROUND CHALLENGE

Share some laughs with your teammates on Zoom. Before your next all-hands or town hall meeting, set a theme and ask your colleagues to pick a virtual background image that, for them, represents it best.

Get creative, there are infinite possibilities: Favorite movie scenes, 80’s disco, memes, dream vacation places, you name it.

Tip: You can also let your colleagues vote for the best background

HOME TREASURE HUNT

Get your colleagues out of their chairs for a bit – they’ll appreciate a little physical activity.

Give them a little task such as: “You have 25 seconds to fetch something yellow,” or “Get the weirdest thing in your apartment, then bring it back to show us”.

This activity is fun and can reveal some fun facts about your colleagues!

HOME FASHION POLICE

Another fun live poll to help you lighten the mood. Check up on your teammates’ work-from-home attire.

It’s popular folklore that people love wearing PJs all day long during a home office. How does your team stand on this fashion statement?
Another similarly popular activity is “Take a picture of your shoes” that is equally hilarious.

Starting a meeting with some laughs will help your teammates feel more connected.

PERSONAL BASEBALL

*Take me out to the ball game.* Get ready to score a homerun with this team-bonding icebreaker. Start by dividing the group into two teams. Each player will take turns writing lesser-known facts about themselves. When the first team is up to bat, a player will be read a fact and asked to guess who it belongs to. If they get it wrong, they strike out. Three strikes and you’re out; you know the drill. Whichever team has the most points at the end of the game wins!

ROSE, THORN, BUD

This icebreaker is the perfect way to express gratitude will also allowing your team to express challenges they may be facing.

At the beginning of your meeting have everyone go around and share their rose, something that they are thankful for right now, a thorn, an issue their dealing with, and a bud, something they’re currently looking forward to. By the end of this exercise everyone will be feeling energized and ready for a day full of hard work!

HAVE YOU EVER?

Prior to the workshop the facilitator prepares a list of questions which can only be answered with yes or no. These questions should begin with “Have you ever…?” or “Stand up if…”. The facilitator reads out the questions or statements one by one.

For each statement the participants stand up (or raise their hand) if they could answer the statement with yes. The questions should be designed to not be discriminatory, intimidating or insulting. Possible topics can be countries visited, dishes, games or sports tried, movies seen etc.
NEVER HAVE I EVER

"Never Have I Ever" or "Five Strikes," is for larger groups that don't know each other super well.

Here's how it works:

1. The host prepares a list of five prompts that indicate some specific life experience. For example, "Never have I ever… mixed two types of breakfast cereal."
2. Each player starts with five fingers up, which works well on video conference calls because there's a clear visual and an easy way for everyone to participate.
3. If a person has the prompted life experience, they put a finger down.

You can say the winner is the first person to put all fingers down, or whoever has the most fingers remaining; it doesn't really matter. The mechanic that makes Five Strikes work for remote team building is that you can quickly scan and see with each prompt who has or does not have each experience. This process highlights shared experiences, which can help form bonds.

ONE WORD SUMMARY

Have each team member summarize their week so far in one word. The person whose word has the highest Scrabble score gets to pick the icebreaker for the next meeting!

SKETCH SESH

Ask your remote team a prompt question that can be answered visually, have team members draw their answers, and have the other team members guess what they drew. Questions like “Who is your favorite fictional character?” or “What is your spirit animal?” are perfect for this icebreaker. The less artistically talented your team is, the better!
THE TIME MACHINE

Ask the following question, to one participant at a time: "If you were able to travel through time, either forward or backward..”

- Where would you go?
- If backward, to which time period? Why?
- If there was a person you could go back in time and meet, who would it be, and why?
- Would you just want to visit and come back, or would you stay?"

PASSION PRESENTATIONS ♂♀

Each week, an employee will talk about something they are passionate about. Passion presentations are a fun way to learn more about coworkers and what they like to do outside of work. They also open the door for further conversation and relationship-building, especially if there are any shared interests among the group.

LINK

- Have someone start out with sharing a random fact about themselves. While it doesn’t have to be something too generic like hair color, make sure it’s broad enough to allow for similarities. For instance, you might mention that your favorite TV show is Friends or that you’re an only child.
- If someone also has that in common, they’ll say “link” and tell a new fact about themselves.
- If more than one person says “link” it goes to the first person.
- This continues until everyone has been “linked.”
TEAM BUILDING

TEN THINGS IN COMMON

This activity is a great warm-up for an ideation session and requires zero equipment. As a group, you need to come up with a list of 10 things that everyone has in common — we are all wearing shoes, own a MacBook, etc.

Another variation, if you have everyone working from home, is to find 10 items that everyone has in their immediate area — we all sitting on a chair, we all have a notepad, etc.

SHARE AN EMBARRASING PHOTO

This is a great team-building activity to get to know each other on a more personal level. It’s as simple as the title suggests — go through your phone and find a funny or embarrassing photo from your past and share it with the team.

It doesn’t necessarily need to be from your phone, you may even want to share that terrible family photo framed on your bookshelf.

You’ll be sure to get plenty of laughs out of this one, learn a thing or two about each other, and become closer as a team.

HIGHLIGHT OF THE MONTH

Here is a way to lift people’s spirits. Crowdsourcing your colleagues’ personal or professional highlights of the last week or month.

As you kick off your meeting, ask your teammates to post their top moments in an open text poll. Then, display the highlights on the screen, and give a shout out to each one.

It’s good to remind people of all the remarkable work that they’ve done.
CHALLENGE OF THE MONTH

Sharing is caring – and that should apply for both the good and the bad. Besides highlights, share also some of the failures of the last month. It makes for a great team-bonding experience.

Using an open text poll, encourage your team to share a thing that didn’t go that well for them in the last month. You can then open a discussion about all your anti-highlights and what you learned from them.

As a leader, don’t forget to contribute as well. Showing vulnerability is also a form of strength.

FAVORITE COLOR

This team-building activity is a virtual take on the classic M&M icebreaker. Instead of taking a handful of M&Ms everyone will write down their favorite color on a piece of paper. Each color will have a specific question assigned to it. For instance, green may be “What’s your biggest fear” and blue “What’s your favorite memory?” Everyone will take turns answering the question that corresponds with their color; the paper ensures they can’t opt for an easier question.

USER MANUAL

When working with new people one of the most important things is learning their work styles. Are they the type to pick up the phone and call or do they prefer communicating through email? Do they want weekly brainstorming sessions, or do they work better isolating themselves at a coffee shop? Learning everyone’s styles will help to drastically cut back on any future problems. At your next meeting go over everyone’s preferences; this can be verbally or through an online poll.

VIRTUAL TEAM BUILDING BINGO (FREE TEMPLATE)

Virtual Team Building Bingo, sometimes called Online Team Building Bingo or Remote Work Bingo, is a great team building activity for conference calls.

Here is a template for your first game:
Instructions:

1. Distribute cards to your team members.
2. If you have more than 10 people then use breakout rooms to encourage small group dynamics.
3. Award prizes to whoever finishes a row or “x” first.
4. Here are rules and additional templates for [Online Team Building Bingo](https://teambuilding.com)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Celebrating birthday this month!</th>
<th>Has worked here for 3+ years</th>
<th>Eats spinach by choice</th>
<th>Has a YouTube channel</th>
<th>Knows all words to a Queen song</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Has visited China</td>
<td>Has a family cookie recipe</td>
<td>More than 1 pet</td>
<td>Can code in HTML</td>
<td>Woke up before 6am today</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shared their middle name</td>
<td>Can speak a second language</td>
<td>Born in same region as you</td>
<td>Prefers tea over coffee</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Has published a book</td>
<td>Prefers pancakes over waffles</td>
<td>Knows the moves for the Macarena</td>
<td>More than two siblings</td>
<td>Has visited at least 3 museums</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liked GoT season 8</td>
<td>Has visited Europe</td>
<td>Shared a work from home tip</td>
<td>Typing speed is 80+ wpm</td>
<td>Born in same month as you</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Made with ❤️ by teambuilding.com*
ABC HUNT

To play, the host chooses three random letters of the alphabet. The rest of the team races to bring one item beginning with each letter for the host to verify. The items should come from the team members’ surroundings.

The fastest team member to assemble all three items wins one point. The team member with the most points at the end of the game wins. ABC Hunt is a fun way to get your team members out of their seats and involved with their environment while fostering a healthy sense of competition.

AMBASSADORS

Ambassadors is a virtual game for teams where each person acts as a country’s ambassador. You can assign countries to team members.

During each round, a team member must describe their country without saying the country’s name. The other team members guess which country the person is describing to earn points. At the end of the game, the player with the most correct guesses wins!

MY NEXT MEAL

When working from home, one of the last things you want to think about is meal prep. However, what if you had your team’s help?

1. Each week have a different member of your team submit a picture of the inside of their refrigerator.
2. After showing your team the photo, ask the other team members to create recipes for a dish that can be made from the ingredients in the refrigerator.
3. Then, have your team vote on which recipe sounds the tastiest. If the original team member makes that recipe then they get double points.

The recipe with the most votes wins! Through this virtual game, you will quickly compile a collection of new, delectable recipes to try.
WHAT WOULD YOU DO?

What Would You Do? is one of several scenario-based virtual team building exercises you can do.

How to play:

1. Split employees into teams or discuss as one big group.
2. Pose hypothetical questions.
3. Let employees talk through a plan of action.

Not only does What Would You Do? foster fun and engagement, but this activity allows remote teams to learn each other’s problem-solving processes in real time.

THE ALIENS HAVE LANDED

This game can help teams with language and cultural differences strengthen the company culture. Tell the group to imagine aliens have landed on Earth and want to learn about your company. But since they don’t speak English or understand what you do, it needs to be explained with five symbols or pictures.

Ask each participant to draw five simple images that best describe and communicate your department’s products and culture to a shared document/folder. Take a few minutes and look at all the images and talk through common themes. This is a great trivia game that really lights a fire to the group chat during a virtual meeting.

BLIND ORIGAMI

The purpose of this activity is to highlight the importance of listening and asking for feedback.

People and Materials

Any number of people, in virtual pairs.

Phone (without video) or messaging app.
A sheet of letter paper for each person.

**Time**

Around 25 to 30 minutes.

**Instructions**

Email one person from each pair a set of origami instructions. You can get these from many hobby websites. Try [origame.me](http://origame.me), for example.

The person with the instructions should guide their partner (the receiver) through the steps to create an origami structure, via messaging or videoconferencing software (but with the camera turned off).

The receiver can ask questions, request clarification, and offer feedback during the call.

When each group has finished, participants can turn their cameras back on to see whether the receiver got the origami structure right.

**SCRABBLE SCRAMBLE**

This fun activity is designed to trigger creative thinking, encourage collaboration, and develop communication. It works best when you use a virtual meeting package like Zoom, which enables teams to split off into virtual breakout rooms.

**People and Materials**

This exercise is suitable for groups of approximately 12 or more. You'll need a bag of Scrabble tiles, and participants will need pens and paper.

**Time**

Allow 20 minutes for completion.

**Instructions**

Assign two or three letters chosen at random to each person.
Then split the group randomly into teams. The exercise will work best with six to nine people per team.

Ask each group to create as many words as they can in 10 minutes using their letters. Before starting, outline the rules below to the group:

- Each letter tile can be used only once in each word.
- Words must be three or more letters.
- Plurals of an already used word are not allowed. For example, you can have "tree" or "trees" but you can't have both.
- Proper names are not allowed, e.g. place names or forenames.

Each team can swap up to two of their letters before they start if they wish.

Teams get two points for three-letter words, three points for four-letter words, and so on. The longest word earns a bonus of five points.

**DIY CRAFT CHALLENGE**

Objective: To get everyone working as a team and getting creative

Participants: 2 to 20

Duration: 30 to 45 minutes

Materials: DIY materials

This team building activity gets everyone involved and feeling competitive. The aim isn’t to create something museum worthy, it is to spark creativity and get everyone interacting with each other.

Instructions
Get everyone into a virtual call at a time that suits you and your team (make sure they are at home and not in a coffee shop)
Tell everyone they have 30 minutes to build something from the materials they have around them (e.g., a pillow fort, a pen holder or some shelves)
After 30 minutes, get everyone back onto the call to demonstrate what they have made. We suggest awarding a prize for the best invention!
THE USELESS TALENT SHOW

- Need an excuse to show off how you can twitch your ears up in down or rap every word of your favorite Kanye West song? We got you! This useless talent show is the perfect way to get to know your coworkers better and get a good laugh.
- It’s like the nephew’s talent show you're forced to attend every year except completely talentless, well at least the talent is debatable.
- During their time everyone will have a chance to show off a completely random and useless talent, like balancing a book on their head.
- Decide who deserves the Useless Talent Show certificate with an anonymous poll.
- While the talent level may be debatable, one thing is for sure, you’ll know your coworkers a lot better by the end of it!

MORNING MEDITATION

- Looking to find your inner Zen?
- The morning meditation works best if you designate a specific person to lead it, even if you opt to follow a YouTube video.
- You can choose to use the meditation as an opener for your morning meeting, or as the whole meeting itself, whichever works best for the flow of your company.

SCATTEGORIES

- Scattegories is the perfect game to get your team thinking, and you can play it virtually!
- The goal of the game is to name objects within a category, letter, and time limit. Players with unique answers score points.
- Whoever has the most points at the end of the game wins; you can also play to a point limit.
EXAMPLE OF QUESTIONS WE CAN USE FOR SOME OF THE ACTIVITIES MENTIONED ABOVE:

Virtual Ice Breaker Questions

Funny

1. What is your funniest memory with your best friend?
2. What is the craziest dare you have ever taken?
3. What were your teenage anthems?
4. If you could be eating any food in the world right now, what would it be?
5. If you were a store at the mall, which would you be?
6. What is your worst date story?
7. Which of your past Halloween costumes is your favorite?
8. Do you have any guilty pleasure shows that you watch?
9. Tell the team a knock-knock joke.
10. What is the strangest item near you?
11. What commercial jingles or theme songs get stuck in your head?
12. If you could choose your own nickname, what would it be and why?
13. If you had a ridiculous amount of money, what unnecessary thing or experience would you indulge in?
14. If you could eliminate one food from the world, what would it be?
15. Share a good or bad impression!
16. If you could only listen to one song for the rest of your life, what would the song be and why?
17. If you were sponsored by a brand, which one would you want it to be?
18. What topic do you know a lot of random trivia about?
19. If your life became an action movie, which fictional character would you want to be?
20. What is a common thing that you have never done? Fly, change a tire, etc.
21. If you could live in any sitcom universe, which would it be?
22. What is the scariest thing you have done for fun?
23. If you had to wear a shirt with one word on it for an entire year, which word would you choose?
24. If you were in the wrestling ring, who would be your opponent?
25. How did your parents embarrass you as a kid?
Perfect for meetings

1. What is the most unique thing on your bucket list?
2. You have two minutes to give a speech on anything! What would your topic be?
3. What is your favorite website or blog to visit in your free time?
4. Pick up something nearby and tell a story about its significance or how you got it.
5. If you could live the life of any historical figure, who would you choose?
6. If you were an article of clothing, which would you be?
7. If you could learn any one skill right now, what would it be?
8. What is your favorite movie and how many times have you seen it?
9. What mundane superpower do you have? Can you curate the perfect playlist for any occasion? Do you always select the perfect produce while shopping?
10. What was your favorite thing about your last job?
11. What is something that you feel proud of this week?
12. What do you feel is something that everyone is missing out on because they simply do not know about it?
13. When someone finds out what you do for a living or where you are from, what questions do they always ask?
14. What is your go-to self-improvement activity that you think would help others?
15. Who is the most interesting person you have met and had a conversation with?
16. What does your favorite breakfast look like?
17. What is your morning routine like?
18. How do you take your coffee, tea, juice, etc.?
19. How would you make your week the most productive it can be?
20. How do you like to relax and de-stress?
21. Who in your life inspires you the most?
22. What is something you want to focus on this week?
23. Give a toast to someone for doing a good job whether it be for something mundane, work related, exciting or personal!
24. How do you like to brainstorm? What methods are most effective?
25. What motivates you?

More personal

1. What weird thing do you feel nostalgic for?
2. If you were a vegetable, which one would you be and why?
3. What is the scariest movie you have ever seen?
4. If you were featured on the news, what would the reason most likely be?
5. What is your favorite international food?
6. What is your favorite physical activity?
7. What animal are you amazed by?
8. What smell do you hate that others seem to like?
9. What would you want to do if you retired?
10. What is a trait that you have picked up from your parents?
11. What food do you love that others typically do not?
12. What are some of your favorite games to play?
13. Share a funny meme with the group via Zoom or Slack.
14. What is something that takes a lot of time, but is definitely worth it?
15. What do you wish someone taught you a long time ago?
16. How was your experience taking your driver’s test?
17. What popular song drives you crazy?
18. What do you find yourself recommending to people you first meet?
19. Tell the group about something funny you witnessed this week?
20. Do you have any exciting plans coming up?
21. What book had the most significance on you?
22. What is your favorite obscure belonging?
23. What is in your junk drawer?
24. Describe your setup for the perfect nap.
25. What is your favorite food combination?