



Grade: 4th+

Jump Start Class

Activity

Similarities and Differences

Duration: ~20-25 minutes
Class/Group Size: 6+

Materials: Pen or pencil and a sheet of paper

Goals/Objectives

After completing the activity, the student will be able to recognize similarities and differences between them. The student will feel more comfortable with his or her classmates, fostering a more connected and positive classroom environment.

Description

You're about to start the day, the week, or even the year. The atmosphere in the classroom is a little low or tense. Some students may know one another, others not so much, and there is a shy, almost awkward sensation lingering in the classroom. This is a perfect opportunity to jump right in with a fresh activity that integrates every student and engages them on an academic and emotional level.

This activity is presented in a familiar format for students, but its open quality and post-reflection component are what really establish the beginning of a welcoming and amicable classroom atmosphere. Whether used as an initial introduction between students, as a transition activity between subjects, or at the onset of a group project, this activity has been tested and proven to encourage communication, participation, and most important, good vibes between students.



Directions

Part I

1. Make three columns on a sheet of paper. Label the columns: Name, Similar, Different.
2. Students then mingle around the classroom and discuss with their classmates at least one thing they have in common and one way they are different, until they find a similarity and a difference with every student.
3. On the sheet of paper, they write these similarities and differences in the respective columns. [This is only to gather the data, a quick list. The Circle Discussion follows.]

Part II

1. After students record similarities and differences, ask them to answer the reflection questions in circles of 5-10 students in a **Circle Discussion** (If the setting doesn't enable circles, you can pair them up or put them in smaller groups).
2. The discussion should be held according to the Rules of the Roundtable, which will turn any discussion into an emotionally and socially intelligent one.

Reflection Questions

1. What was it like to try to connect with someone you don't know? (or learn something new about someone you do know?)
2. What surprised you most, either about something you have in common with a classmate or a way in which you are different?
3. How can we use both our similarities and differences to build relationships with others?
4. Each student gives a compliment to the person sitting on their right.



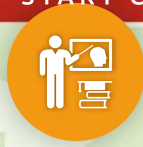
Supplementary materials

Clips to play before/during/after the activity:

- Rules of the RoundTable
- The Power of Compliments

Quotes:

- *Strength lies in differences, not in similarities.*
- Stephen Covey
- *Share our similarities, celebrate our differences.*
- M. Scott Peck



The Science Behind it

- “Interaction and student cognitive engagement are critical for constructing new understanding and knowledge.”

Zhu, E. (2006). Interaction and cognitive engagement: An analysis of four asynchronous online discussions. Instructional Science, 34(6), 451-480.

- “Discussions do improve students’ perceived learning.”

Wu, D., & Hiltz, S. R. (2004). Predicting learning from asynchronous online discussions. Journal of Asynchronous Learning Networks, 8(2), 139-152.

- “The average student cooperating performed about 2/3 of a SD above the average person within a competitive or individualistic setting.”

Johnson, D. W., & Johnson, R. T. (1989). Cooperation and competition: Theory and research. Interaction Book Company.