

Shuffleswap

A very simple but highly effective warm-up game that gets the whole group arguing in an animated way instantly from a cold start. Named by guinea-pigs in Year 5 at Lawn Primary, Northfleet.

Get the class to stand in two lines facing each other. You stand at the end so both lines can see you. You can get them to shake hands to ensure everyone is paired up with a person opposite.

Ask a two-sided question, for example, "Does the universe go on forever?". Allocate one half to argue one way, and one half to argue the other.

Before that argument runs out of steam, the player at your end of the line on your right moves to the far end, and everyone in that line shuffles along so as to swap partners. Pose a new question and repeat.

Two quick low stakes questions and one more solid and serious question are good for a quick warm-up. (Examples below). But you can keep the game running for several swaps. With a small group of 12 or 14, it's nice to go all the way round so that the line ends up back where it started.

Low stakes questions:

Sharks or crocodiles?
Spots or stripes? Triangles or squares?
Christmas or birthdays?
UK or Australia?

Juicy questions:

Is it better for a lamb to live a short life and then be eaten, or not to live in the first place?
Is human life getting worse or better?
If companies can't advertise cigarettes on TV, should they be allowed to advertise alcohol?
Can something be popular and rubbish at the same time?

Notes:

You can vary the game by getting people to swap sides half way through. If there is an odd number, joining in yourself gives you a good chance to practice facilitation skills quite intensively, and also helps you gauge how long each round should run.

It helps to intensify the energy of the game if you "sportify" it. Pose the question, then hold them back, "Ready... Ding ding!"