## Icebreakers and Activities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Group Size</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Risk Level</th>
<th>Purpose</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pictionary Telephone</td>
<td>12 or less</td>
<td>10 min</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Fun, get to know you</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small Groups in Common</td>
<td>Flexible</td>
<td>3-5 min</td>
<td>Low-Moderate</td>
<td>Fun, get to know you</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 Circles (Discovering Cultural Diversity)</td>
<td>Any size</td>
<td>10-15 min</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>Get to know you, exploring cultural identity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication Struggle</td>
<td>Any size</td>
<td>15 min</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>Exploring cultural identity, team-building</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M&amp;M Candy Cultural Knowledge Game</td>
<td>Any size</td>
<td>15 Min</td>
<td>Low-Moderate</td>
<td>Get to know you, cultural knowledge, country specific</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Corners</td>
<td>Larger group</td>
<td>15-20 min</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>Team building</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pack Your Suitcase</td>
<td>12 or less</td>
<td>20 min.</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Get to know you, for fun</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health and Safety Concerns</td>
<td>Flexible</td>
<td>30 minutes</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>Covering specific issue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Geography Lesson</td>
<td>Flexible (Space allowing)</td>
<td>20 min</td>
<td>Low-Moderate</td>
<td>Getting to know you, for multiple destinations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group Bubbles</td>
<td>Larger group</td>
<td>20-30 min</td>
<td>Low-Moderate</td>
<td>Getting to know you, cultural identity</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Pictionary Telephone

- **Procedures:** Give students a stack of scrap paper with one page for each participant. (12 students = 12 stacks of paper with 12 sheets in each stack), Ask them to write an adjective to describe themselves, Students then pass their stack of paper clockwise, The next student must draw a representation of the written word, Students pass again (after about 30 seconds) and next student must write a word to name what is drawn without looking at any previous sheets, Continue passing until stacks go all the way around the group
- **Debrief:** students share the adjective that they wrote originally, and then discuss the final drawing or word when it got back to them, depending on time maybe sharing one of the funnier drawings or words from the chain
- **Modification:** You can have students write anything as their first word: a city they love, a city they would like to visit, a hobby, favorite movie, etc. This allows you to control the level of depth and/or risk of the activity.
Small Group Things in Common

- Procedures: Break into groups of 3-10, (depending on group size), and as a group come up with as many things you as a group have in common that you cannot see (e.g. clothes, hair etc.). Give each group two minutes to come up with as many things as they can. At the end of two minutes, have each group share their lists. You can do this for two or three rounds with a different group paring each time.
- Debrief/Reflection: Ask individuals “What was one thing you had in common with someone in the group that surprised you?” Ask the groups to share what they think is their most unique or interesting commonality.
- Modification: If it is a smaller group that is more familiar with each other you might increase the depth of the activity by having them talk about less visible things in common.

Adapted from Warren Wilson College

7 Circles

- Procedures: Write your name in the center circle and draw seven smaller circles connected to the larger circle. In the smaller circles, write the names of seven groups with which you identify (examples: gender, nationality/ethnicity, religious affiliation, political stance, geographic ties, family role, etc).
- Debrief: Ask individuals to get in small groups and answer the following questions:
  a. Talk about a time when you felt proud to be a member of a certain group.
  b. When did it feel painful to be a member of a certain group?
  c. What groups might be an asset or a challenge when you study abroad?
- Modification: You can change the questions to be more or less challenging based on the level of the group.

Adapted from Madison Area Technical College

Communication Struggle

- Procedures: Hand students a card when they come in that breaks them into small groups (2-5 depending on size of group). On each card, write the name of a fictional civilization and a mannerism that culture uses for saying hello (giggling, looking down a lot, scratching your elbow, snorting, etc.) Then tell students to find the members of their own culture using only the mannerism described on their card.
- Debrief: Ask students to discuss in their groups the difficulties that they faced in interacting with other cultures. Did they find them strange? Were they uncomfortable.
Help students think about how this relates to interacting in a different culture as study abroad students

- Modification: You can take this farther by saying that certain types of gestures are seen as rude to other cultures (ex. the giggling culture is offended if you scratch your elbow) as an example of how different cultures express themselves so differently

### M&M Candy Cultural Knowledge Game

- Procedures: Everyone is given about 10 M&Ms, ideally at least one of every color. The Coordinator/Program Assistant will assign a category to each color, and each student must answer the same number of facts as M&Ms of that color. Examples: Yellow: Pop culture figures; Orange: Cities in your host-country; Green: Verbs from the language you are studying; Red: Generalizations about your host-culture Everyone sits in a circle and shares their facts, after which they may eat that color of M&M. This activity is meant to exercise students’ cultural familiarity with their future host-culture and home while abroad.
- Debrief: Use this as a way to encourage students to investigate about their host culture and ask
- Modification: M&M Candy Culture can also be used as a personal introduction activity or relating to students’ reflections about their identity as it relates to studying abroad.

### 4 Corners

- Procedures: The corners of the room are assigned different levels of agreement, ranging from “strongly agree” to “strongly disagree”. Students are then asked series of questions by the facilitator. Based on their reaction to the question, the students will go to their respective opinion corner. Everyone is given an opportunity to explain why they chose their corner, which ideally will lead to discussion within the group. The questions focus on the expectations students may have of their future study abroad experience, including the following:
  - I expect to become fluent in my host language by the end of my time abroad
  - I will have an easy time connecting with my host culture
  - It will be difficult for me to make foreign friends
  - It will be easy for me to live far away from campus and use public transportation
  - I expect to have few difficulties doing well in my host university classes
  - It will be easy to keep myself busy while studying abroad
  - All Americans represent themselves the same when they abroad
  - My study abroad experience is about having the opportunity to travel and visit multiple countries
My study abroad experience is about immersing myself in my host culture and language

- Debrief: Hopefully discussion is facilitated by students selecting corners and explaining themselves but facilitators should be sure to point out that these things don’t just happen, and that students must set tangible goals and make a real effort in order to immerse themselves.
- Modification: Questions can be changed to address almost anything

Pack Your Suitcase

- Procedures: Each student receives two index cards. On one they should write something they have packed for a trip and on the other they should write something weird they would never pack. Everyone puts their cards in a hat and picks out two new cards. Then students go around the circle, introduce themselves, say what is on their cards and are able to trade with other people. They should explain why they are making a trade.
- Debrief: This does not require a lot of debriefing but it is a relevant and fun get to know you exercise.
- Modification: N/A

Health and Safety Concerns

- Procedures: Participants brainstorm all of the health and safety fears they have and make one group list on a flipchart or the board. Facilitator should solicit a wide range (common cold - death). Facilitator asks which ones students are most afraid of (and marks them in one color on the list). (these will usually be the big ones - death, kidnapping, terrorism, etc.) Facilitator then asks which ones students think are most likely to happen (and marks them in another color on the list). (usually things like colds, fatigue, infection, travelers' diarrhea, etc.) Facilitator can use this as an example to show that while there are a lot of scary risks out there, the most common ones are very manageable and often preventable. This is a good lead-in to talking about prevention and general health and safety tips.
- Modification Another segue is to break students into small groups to come up with tips for various categories (alcohol/drugs, dating/relationships/sex, general health, gender issues, general safety, etc.)

Adapted from Claremont McKenna College

Geography Lesson

- Procedures: have students stand up and silently arrange themselves into the shape of the world map according to the country they are going to. I say that one side of the
room is North. Then once they are placed, the students go around and introduce themselves and where they are going.

- **Debrief:** Have students see how accurate their placement is. Discuss importance of non-verbal communication in international settings as well as knowledge of geography!
  
  *Adapted from University of South Carolina*

**Group Bubbles**

- **Procedures:** Students are asked to form groups of 3 - 4 people. If possible, they shouldn’t know each other. They have to design a poster, first by writing their names into bubbles. Then they should get to know each other and discuss the question "With which groups would I align myself?"/"Which groups do I feel like I belong to?". These should be written down and circled, so that more and more bubbles appear on the paper and are linked to the name they belong to. If the people in the group have something in common, they can draw a line to the different names. The results can vary a lot - from family to sports groups, fans of activities, university, the town they live in, the country etc.

- **Debrief:** As each group presents its poster, it becomes apparent that categories with a connection to country, region or town are important, but there are also a whole number of other groups that you feel connected to. The same thing applies to culture: it is ONE factor that shapes you (and the people you meet), but there are also a lot of other things. Other discussion topics are "Was it hard to find something you have in common?", "How can this activity help you to make first encounters with people from other cultures work?"
  
  *Adapted from TU Dortmund University*

**Additional Resources:**

- Ted Talks Video Clips: [http://www.ted.com/talks](http://www.ted.com/talks)
- [http://www.nafsa.org/resourcelibrary/default.aspx?catId=405748](http://www.nafsa.org/resourcelibrary/default.aspx?catId=405748)