



Bowman Coaching KarmaFriends



Icebreakers, games &
listening exercises

engage

involve

evolve

What do we want to achieve from using icebreakers or exercises?

Training exercises and games are designed to help your delegates learn through activities. Not only does an activity help those delegates who are activity focused but allows you to repeat learning through a different method and embed the knowledge.

In addition, Icebreakers, activities used at the start of training, are done so for the following three reasons:

- 1) The group needs to get to know each other and start to form
- 2) The energy levels in the group will be different so the ice break will try and get them all to the same level
- 3) You need to assess their knowledge from the outcome of the activity.

Energisers are additionally used through the day for similar reasons but often to help raise the energy levels of a group who might be flagging towards the end of a session.



However, they are also used to help bring down energy levels of over excitable delegates.

What else do we want from activities?

The one other thing that we want from activities is to help our delegates go back to a place in their lives where learning was fun.

For many adult learners this may be

fresh in their minds, if they have been attending training. But for many it may be as far back as when they were in school.

Types of activities

When you need activities quickly then it's easy to just go out and buy a book or a pre-made game from a training supplier and there are many on the market. But if you find that you seem to need to do the same activity training session after training session it may well be worth investing in bespoke made games.

Jigsaws

We often use specially made jigsaws of things we want to train. For example, when training on European Legislative labelling, we have specially made A3 magnetic jigsaws of the labels made up which we pass out to the delegates to work with. Having made the labels up we discuss what the icons and information on the label mean.

Ours are wipe clean because we liked the idea of being able to clean them after use. However, these days you have lots of options from printing and laminating then cutting with a craft knife (idea for one offs but won't last the distance) to ink jet printable magnetic

paper from your local stationery store (only this won't be washable) which is ideal where you want to use the jigsaws more than once but it doesn't warrant buying bespoke made.



Drawing

But for different ways to do the activity - getting the group to draw something is good, especially if you are willing to do the same things with them or afterwards so that you show them that your drawing isn't as good as theirs (I draw the world's only stick chicken but it always gets a laugh).

One of my favourite icebreakers is to get the group to draw the main thing that we are talking about and I ask them to put on the things that make it work and that their customers talk about as being important. We look at this as a group then redraw it in pairs with the elements that are important shown, following the discussion.

The Shield

In the past I've often given the group sheets of flip chart paper and asked them to draw a shield (you know King Arthur type shield) and divide it into 3 or 4 sections. You then ask them to draw different things in the elements of the shield. With three sections then you can go for with skills, past, present and future, or family, interests and work.

We've put a basic shield at the back of this KarmaFriends booklet to help you get started.



Coloured pencils or felt tips?

Our tip is if you are going for felt tips then get washable ones – you may just love using them but a delegate in a suit going home with purple felt tip on their white shirt is not a good sight.



Workbooks or single sheets of paper?

Delegates like to look back over their notes, once training has finished, why not put your activities and information you think would be of interest to them into a workbook?

These days it's easy to produce high quality laser printed workbooks for little cost. Check out your local stationery store to see how much they charge for printing.



Workbook binding options

Comb binders are a great binding option because they allow you to lie the pages flat when working on them.

Thermal binders give a clean look to your booklet but may need to be pre stapled to give extra strength to the spine.

Staples are a quick and dirty solution for a low cost option

Cut and Paste

If you think drawing isn't their thing and you have longer, gather together glossy magazines (and not just women's) and give them glue and scissors so they can cut out pictures and put them into the shield - you could have this pre printed on A3 if flip chart is too big for cut and paste. Everyone loves doing this because it takes them back to being at school and an activity they liked doing as kids. It isn't childish, but it takes them back to childhood.



Another powerful way to use cut and paste is where you want delegates to make plans for the future.

An ideal coaching tool, asking delegates to use pictures from magazines to make up a picture board delivers a very powerful result. Delegates are more likely to pin up a collage that they have made rather than a picture they have drawn as collages with pictures taken from magazines normally have better aspirational pictures.

This is why it is important to collect magazines from different disciplines.

Using Cards

Cards are also a great resource or game that can be prepared in advance, laminated and used again. If you take the thing that you are training and the knowledge that you are testing make a list of key concepts, skills, steps etc and divide them up. You then either give sets to pairs to put in order or together or get the group to order themselves.

So, to give an example - to embed a new recipe with a group, or to 'taunt' the group before we make a recipe then I might give cards out to the groups with a step of the recipe on it. However, the cards will be mixed up and so, the group will need to either sort the cards out on the table or stand in a line and order themselves with each person holding one card.

For pairs, then I might take a statement or comment about something divide it into two and muddle them up - 7 or 8 concepts for 5 minutes. Or if you are teaching a practical or activity then you could give the things needed to do something and the task name then they need to match the elements to the task.

When teaching presentation skills the cards might say;

- 1) what do you need for presenting to a small group of 6 people,
- 2) for a group of 30 in a very large venue and the choice of materials could be; flipchart, pens, projector, computer, screen, ipad, handouts the choice is endless and add in some strange ones if you think the group can take it such as 'smoked kipper'.

Print the cards with the activity in one colour and the resources in another and laminate

Quizzes

Quizzes are an excellent way of assessing a group's knowledge at the start of training but handing out a pre-printed sheet and a pen to fill in 50 questions is not the friendliest way to start a training session.

So, an excellent way to have a quiz is simply play 'noughts and crosses'.

Divide the group into two and get a volunteer from each group to act as question master. Give the question masters two quiz sheets (questions should be different).

The first group nominate the square that they want to go for. Then question master from group 2 asks group 1 a question from their sheet. If they get it right they draw a nought / cross on the grid (or with a magnetic board you could use an icon / picture relevant to your course) then the questions master from group 2 asks a question, and so on until the game is over.



Paper and Pencil Games

If you are producing workbooks, why not print the grids and activities into the workbooks. It means less paper, keeps everything in one place and often, it's easier to lean on the workbook when moving around your venue for the games.

Bingo and treasure hunts

Give out a sheet with things to find either in the venue or general questions about each delegate; for bingo put the elements in a grid and the first to a row then a column then full house wins - wrapped sweets or corporate gifts are good prizes.



Flip charts v pens and paper

For large boisterous groups dividing them into pairs will bring the energy down. For very quiet groups then working in pairs will allow them the opportunity to talk and reflect on the learning.

This is where games and activities can be done using A4 or workbooks.

For working with the whole group then using a flip chart to play games is easier. But why stand there and be the scribe; use one person from each team to write and one to ask the questions.

Don't force people to be scribes – some people love doing it and others hate writing on the board. But if you feel that there is a particular delegate who would be good at writing up on the flip chart but they don't get the chance to volunteer, why not ask them at coffee break if they would help by being scribe. Once they have agreed, you then just announce that they are going to do the writing.



Points or Prizes

Choose either to give out spot prizes or to award points.

Spot prizes encourage individual playing, points encourage team work.

Brown Paper Exercises

Brown paper exercises are a great way to get people awake and alert.

Put flip charts up around the room or sheets of flip chart paper on different desks, with key topics on each sheet. Give each member of the group a number of post-it notes and a pen. The group members either individually, or in pairs or groups brainstorm the elements of the topics then go and put the post-its onto the relevant flip charts.

It's often worth giving out different colour post-its to the groups so that you can quickly see which elements are remembered the most or important to the groups because they come up time and time again. This gives a discussion point for then or later. Also you can take it further and get the groups to then go and work on one sheet each and order the post-its into chronological order or importance then to present back what they have done and why they have made those decisions. They can then discuss their learning with the other groups.



Communication games

Two truths and a lie

A great quick and dirty exercise that can be added in with absolutely not

preparation is the 'Truth and Lie' game. You ask the delegates, either in pairs or to the room in general, to state three facts, two are true and one is a lie. The others have to guess which fact is the lie. The delegates can either talk about themselves (here are three great things I did on holiday) or about a product, skill, service ... the list is endless.

The point of this game is to teach the delegates how much information is needed to convince people of the facts. Too much and it's obviously a story, too little and they can't decide.

Active explaining (the house game)

Using the right language to explain things is the first part of communication.

The House Game is a great way to demonstrate that limited language will limit communication.

Get the group to make two rows of chairs, back to back. Put a little space between each pair of chairs so that the delegates are primarily listening to their partner.

Sit the delegates down. One of each pair has pen and paper. The other has a prepared picture that they have to describe with not questions from their partner. They cannot use any nouns to describe the picture (no words like, square, circle, triangle) and may only use words like line or curve.

Give them 5 or 10 minutes depending on how much time you have then get the describers to show the picture to the drawers. The results will be very varied but few will look like a house.

Swap the roles over and this time the drawer will describe. Give them a picture of three shapes, a square, circle, triangle and they may use nouns to describe.

The pictures drawn will more like the one being described. Discuss with the delegates the experience of not using nouns. How much information would they have liked etc.

To help we've added in the two pictures for you to copy and use.

Active questioning

In pairs, one person will talk for 2 minutes on the subject of your choice. The other person may not speak during that time.

Ask the people doing the talking how they felt; areas to explore are things like the person listening doesn't seem to be listening (remember we expect both nodding and 'ems' and 'yeps' from our listeners to check they understand what we are saying. The listeners may bring up feeling detached from the conversation and in fact may even feel isolated and on occasions, emotional.

Swap the roles. This time the listener will describe something they both know about for two minutes but can ask questions of the listener to check understanding and gain further information.

When time is up, ask the delegates to discuss how it felt different. They will talk about being involved and having a greater understanding of the topic when they pool their combined knowledge.

Make or buy?

Off the shelf games are good but by using the principles here you can with a little effort, create your own games. In the end, most trainers will make their own materials up as it is a quick and cost effective way to train. If you are producing bespoke training then the game or exercise is going to cost little for a one off and it doesn't matter if it gets a little trashed as you won't be using it again.

However, if you are planning on using the games again and again, then it's worth laminating the sheets or game cards. But in taking back the elements of the game do you remove an opportunity for the delegate to reflect on the learning? The answer is yes. Where possible, I would always try to



Your best resources

Your best resources for designing games are your delegates. Watching how they interact with your training will tell you where you need to do exercises to pass the learning on in a different form or where you need to repeat the information in order to embed it.



What if a game or exercise doesn't work?

Don't bin it, recycle it.

Just because an exercise doesn't seem to work with one group doesn't mean that it won't work with another group.

If we remember that everyone is an individual then we have to understand that training for a group may not work at every level for every delegate.

If a single delegate does not connect with the exercise can be shrugged off but if a group cannot connect then either the exercise or game was set at the wrong level (as often too low as too high) or it didn't connect with the main training message.

If either case happens then just tweak the level or message of the training until it works. Get your colleagues to play the game or activity and feedback to you their experience.



If you can't, say for the brown paper exercise or the card matching, I would put either a summary of the learning points later in the workbook or a form or grid for the delegates to capture the information when the group feeds it back. They don't have to, remember that delegates are voluntary learners, but it allows them to if they want.

When it doesn't work

When choosing or designing games and exercises, always have a very clear idea as to what you want to get from it. What are the learning targets? What are the one or two messages that you need to get over? Who is the audience?

If you have these in mind and check the exercise or game at each stage to see that it still fits your needs then you should have a great experience for your delegates.

How often have you gone to an event and they have said; "Turn to the person next to you and introduce yourself then present them back to the group" arhhhhh!!! And I still get clients who think this is a great icebreaker. It doesn't work on many levels but mainly because it isn't new, it's doesn't offer any learning about the subject and it isn't creative.

Using powerful games and exercises really does make all the difference to the delegates' ability to learn. Don't ruin an excellent session with bad games, life is too short.

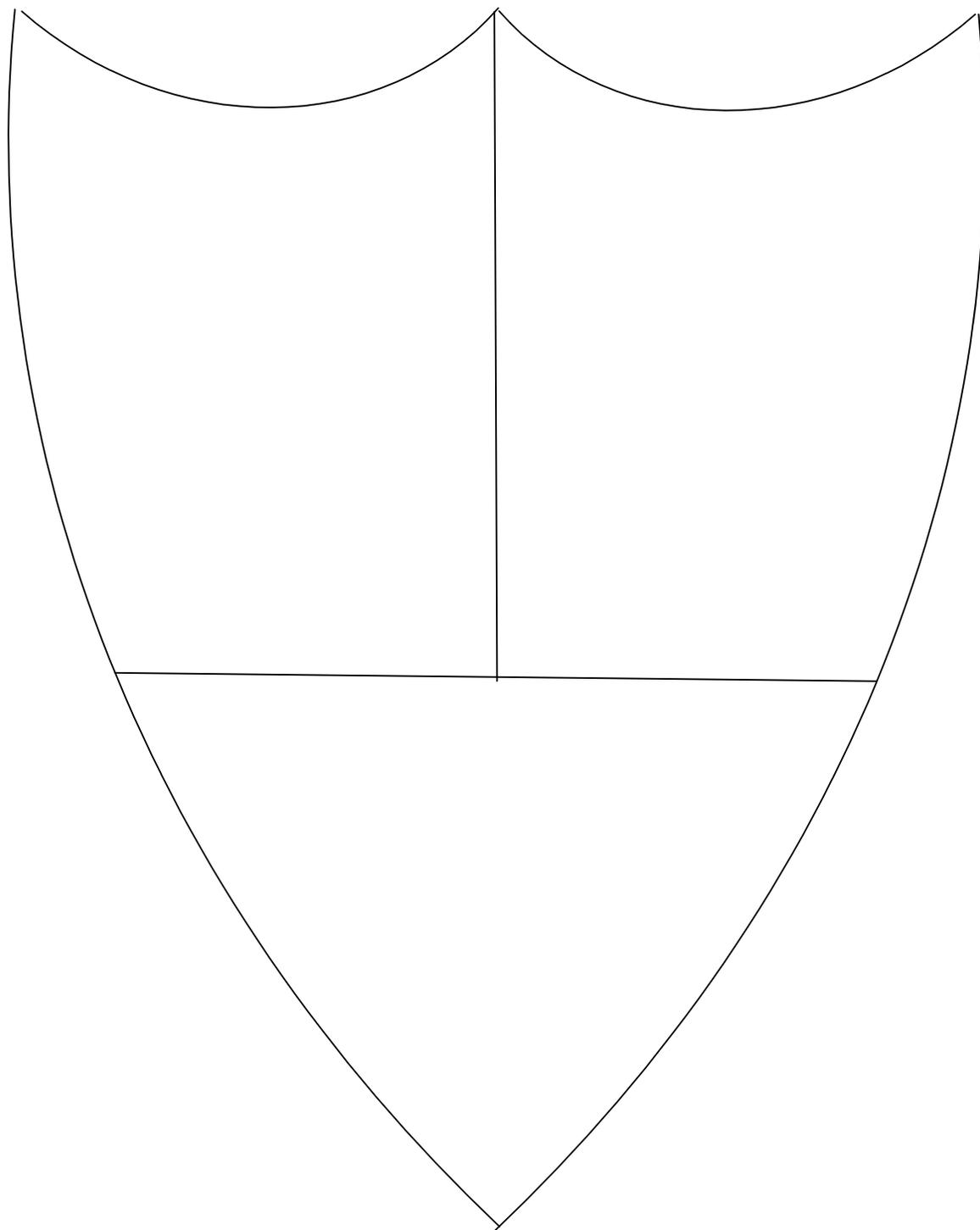
Next Steps

Try and find a way to collate all of your games that works for you. Lots of people will use index cards to write up their games and then file them by names. We started to do this but after about 40 games you can't remember what you called the game and have to go through them one by one. After 600 games, we started to put coloured dots on the corner of the cards to say what type of game there were but even this was too little, too late.

For games where you have cards or jigsaws or just simply bits that go with them then store them in zip lock bags (you can even get ones that are hole punched for a file) or box files.

If you are you are interested in further games and exercises that work then why not join KarmaFriends and get receive our training emails with activities that we know work because we use them everyday.

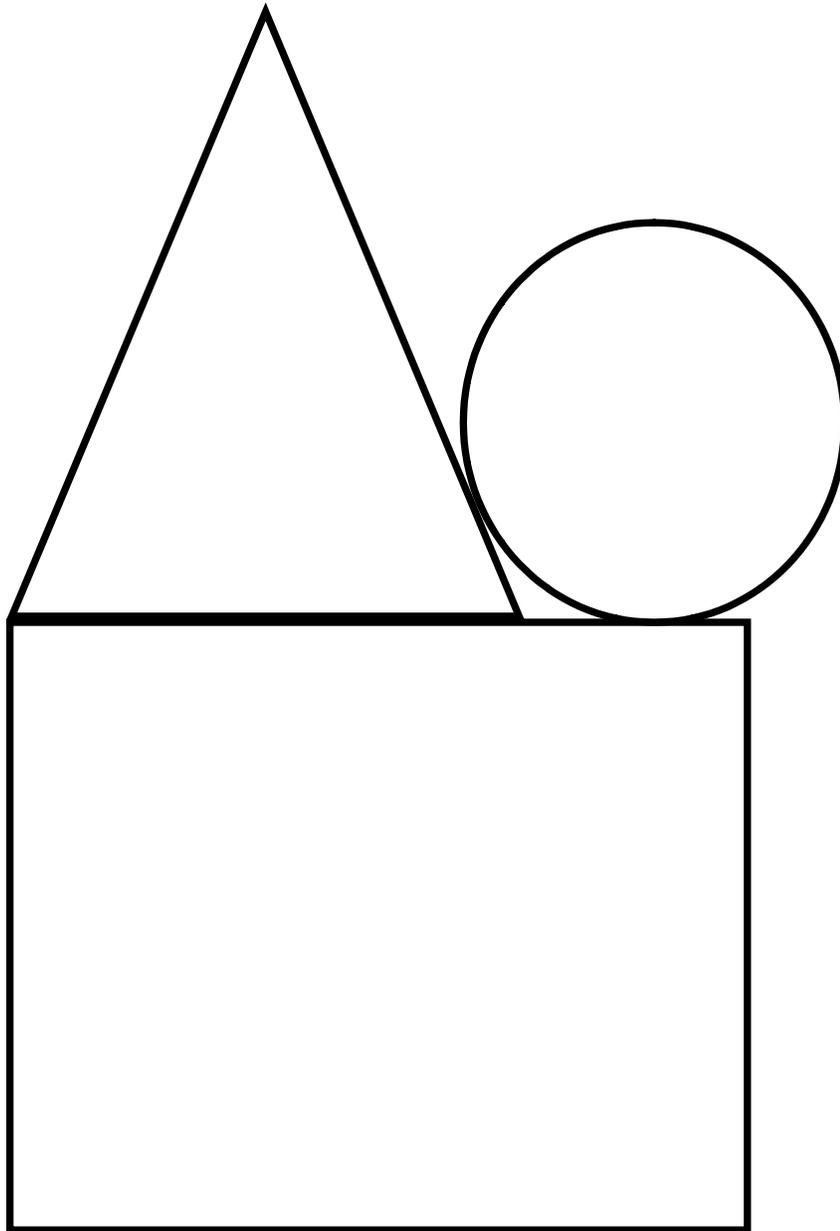
We also have a blog at www.bowmancoaching.co.uk/blog.html



Describe this picture to your partner without using any nouns. You may not use words such as house, window, door, square or triangle



Describe the shapes below to your partner. You may use nouns such as square, triangle, circle, line etc.



If you are interested in joining KarmaFriends
then email karmafriends@btinternet.com

This is a sample of the work we do for Karma
Friends.

You can learn more about our coaching at:

www.bowmancoaching.co.uk

