# ONLINE OPENING RITUALS AND ICEBREAKERS

## ESTABLISHING THE SPACE

Establishing a dynamic online space where you can facilitate your program can be particularly challenging. Starting with a consistent opening for your sessions will help participants feel like they are entering a common space.

**Group Contract.** Setting intentions is an important part of group dynamics and establishing trust among participants. Ask participants what they will commit to in order to create a respectful space. After the group is in agreement on what should be included, this contract can be read at the start of each meeting as a reminder of the group's commitment to one-another.

**Games and Icebreakers.** Using games and icebreakers is a great way to get started. By incorporating these tools, you can link to material in your session, engage the group, and get them warmed up to interact in your online space.

**Framing the Day.** Don't let it be a mystery! It is always helpful to know what to expect in a meeting, material you will cover and the aims of the day. By sharing an agenda or overall goals, you are setting your participants up for success to take a journey with you.

**Review Instructions.** Don't assume that everyone has used this technology before. Make sure to share where buttons and settings are and any best practices for using the platform.
- Invite people to rename themselves. Noting that sometimes when logging in your name appears as the device you log in as.
- Invite people to include their preferred pronouns, to make your online space inclusive.

**Move Around!** Just because you are in front of a screen doesn't mean you have to remain stationary for the time you are together. Start your meeting with a stretch or breathing exercise to help get the blood flowing to the brain. This will help attention span throughout your meeting. Consider incorporating stretches or breathing exercises throughout the session to break things up and keep the group engaged.

**Accessibility.** Make sure to consider accessibility needs. Meeting online presents different challenges for those who are visually or hearing impaired. Survey the participants in your group to find out the best way you can support their needs.

# THE WHY AND THE HOW

**Why Games?** Icebreakers and games help the group get to know one another and build group dynamics.  Playing games and using icebreakers can be a fun way to:

- Learn names.
- Break tension.
- Change the mood.
- Intro a lesson or topic.
- Transition to another topic, section of the lesson, or to segue to, or from, a break.

## How Can You Effectively Facilitate Games?

- Make sure to be enthusiastic. Don't forget meeting online limits what people can see and react to. Make sure to be mindful of your facial expressions and show enthusiasm in your voice. Body language may be more limited online, but you are still on camera!
- Explain the rules clearly and slowly.
- Don't assume that everyone knows the rules.
- Do a demo round so everyone gets a clear picture of how the game works.
- Work together with other group leaders and facilitators. Just because you are meeting online doesn't mean that you won't sometimes need "back-up". Depending on the size of your group you may need multiple facilitators in the online room. In addition, having multiple voices keeps the session dynamic.

## But, we're meeting online, how can that be interactive?

**Partner Up.** Split the group into partners. At Honeycomb we use Zoom*. Use the breakout feature and ask the group a question. Convene back together and have each partner introduce one another and share their partner's answer.

**Hands Up!** Conversation in an online space doesn't flow as freely when in person. Use the digital hand up button or ask people to raise their hands.  This can help guide the flow of the conversation or can also be used for temperature check when doing consensus building.

**Send Prompts in Advance.** Certain icebreakers and games may require sending prompts and information prior to your meeting.

**Alphabetical Circle.**  Since you are unable to physically stand in a circle in a room, you can instead "circle-up" by having each person answering a prompt in alphabetical order.  This introduces more flow into your activity and will reduce the need to call on people.

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* Zoom is one of many different online meeting platforms.  Several of our suggestions for games throughout this document are based on the functionality Zoom has to offer.  In addition, we use a paid version of the platform. We invite you to consider what platform would work best for you and your program needs.

# ICEBREAKERS AND GAME EXAMPLES

## SHOW AND TELL GAMES

**Create Something!** Prior to your meeting share a prompt asking participants to create something. Based on that question participants can share a poem, collage, piece of artwork or photo they've taken that captures that idea or theme. Using the share screen option participants can share the image of what they created and the story behind it.

**Old Fashioned Show and Tell.** Choose a prompt for participants and ask each individual to hold up an item from their home sharing the significance of that item.  (For example: Find something in your home that you can tell a giving story about.) You may want to ask participants to come prepared with an item in advance of your meeting OR use this as an opportunity to get people up and moving and ask them to find something on the spot.

**Meme Challenge.** Based on a prompt, each participant creates their own meme to share using a meme-generator website.

**Photo Share.** Submit a photo from your phone or computer that has no people in it. What is the story from that photo? Have participants share their screen.

**Image Scavenger Hunt.** Using a prompt question or Jewish text ask participants to look up and gather images online that represent that idea or text.  Have them upload onto Padlet and then share your screen. (Padlet is a platform that offers users the ability to upload images, search for images or gifs through google and post directly unto a shared photo gallery board.)  Note: You can create up to 3 boards with a free account.

## INTERACTIVE GAMES

**Popcorn Method.** Ask a question. The first person to go gets to call on the next person to answer and so on.

**3-Word Stories.** Tell a story as a group with each person only getting to say 3 words each. You may want to use the "alphabetical circle" to make this flow better.  Set parameters about words the group can or cannot use or what the last line of the story has to be.

**Guessing Game.** Use the breakout room to send one person away. (*Note in order to send out only one person in zoom, you will have to do this manually, rather than using the automatic breakout room function). Have the rest of the group choose a Justice Issue, Jewish value, *Mitzvah*, Jewish holiday**,** famous Jewish thinker, celebrity, etc. When the single person returns to the main room they can ask "yes" and "no" questions to try to figure out who or what the group is.

**6 Word Memoires.** Tell a story in 6 words. Use any of the following prompts:
- Describe yourself.
- A Jewish value.
- How you are feeling at this moment.
- How you describe yourself as a philanthropist.

**Trivia.**  Using sites like Mentimeter, Poll Everywhere, or Kahoot. You can create interactive quizzes for the group. In addition, Zoom itself also has a polling feature.

# PROMPTS!

## HOW CAN YOU INCORPORATE A MEANINGFUL PROMPT?

- Choose a Jewish value or Jewish text for participants to capture in their creation, item, photo or meme.
- Choose an article for participants to read and react to through their items and creations.
- Use a prompt question (see below) to help guide your activity. Or create your own!
- Connect your prompt to the content of your session.

## SAMPLE PROMPT QUESTIONS

- What is your first giving memory?
- What are some myths surrounding philanthropy?
- Where are you giving right now?
- When I say _____, what word comes to mind for you?
- Share a time when you anticipated someone else's needs, or helped without being asked.

*Note: There are literally endless possibilities of what you can ask.  Get creative and make your conversation starters connect to the rest of your session!