



BUILDING YOUR TEAM

A MEETING ICEBREAKER GUIDE

FACILITATOR'S GUIDE

DESK ITEM “SHOW AND TELL”

A 90-Second Icebreaker for Virtual and In-Person Teams

Turn whatever's already within arm's reach on someone's desk into a story that builds real connection.

Building Your Team
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Icebreaker That's Already Sitting on Your Desk

Participants pick a meaningful desk item within arm's reach and share its story in 60 to 90 seconds.

This paper walks a facilitator through running the activity, offers desk item ideas to jump-start participants who freeze up, and shares a real example of how a small, quirky object can turn into a genuine story. The activity fosters personal connections, encourages storytelling about hobbies and milestones, and breaks the monotony of virtual or in-person meetings.

60–90 sec

per person to share their item's story

6

desk item categories to prompt ideas

\$0

cost — uses only what's already on hand

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How to Run the Icebreaker



Three simple moves take this from an idea to a full round of team storytelling.

1 Set the stage

Ask everyone to find one item on their desk, drawer, or nearby workspace within arm's reach. Participants should select items representing hobbies, memories, or fun facts about themselves.

2 Take turns

Establish an order and allow 1 to 2 minutes per person to display and explain why their item is special. For remote or hybrid teams, participants should turn cameras on so everyone can see the item clearly.

3 Open it up for discussion

Encourage follow-up questions by going down the line sequentially, ensuring everyone participates and builds camaraderie without singling out individuals.

Desk Item Ideas for Inspiration



Give participants who freeze up a nudge with a few categories to look for.

- **A souvenir** — shells, rocks, or other vacation items.
- **A personal achievement** — trophies, certificates, or notebooks.
- **A hobby or passion** — books, instruments, sketches, or plants.
- **A sentimental item** — family photos, pets, or childhood toys.
- **Something functional or quirky** — a unique mug, a fidget toy, or an odd piece of office supply.
- **A remote/virtual twist** — something smaller than a fingernail, or older than the participants themselves.

Featured Example: The Rubber Duck



One of the best desk item stories on record involves a rubber duck stuck to a Jeep.

REAL EXAMPLE

A team member shared how finding a rubber duck left on their Jeep — a nod to the [Jeep Ducking](#) trend — reminded them that every little bit of effort counts.

Trading stories and asking questions encourages learning, creative thinking, and positive communication.

It closes gaps between coworkers and helps build stronger, more productive teams.

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ABOUT



Building Your Team is a division of The Leaders Institute®, the company that pioneered the Build-A-Bike® charity team-building activity in 2005. Building Your Team publishes practical, field-tested team-building activities and facilitation guides for corporate meeting planners, HR leaders, and event professionals.

Want more icebreakers like this one?

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