

Conference icebreaker questions

Thirty prompts grouped by moment. Pick one per interaction format. Time-box every answer. Print, edit, hand to your facilitators.

Event: _____

Session: _____

Facilitator: _____

ARRIVAL & FIRST HOUR

60-90 seconds per answer

1. What's the one thing you're hoping to figure out by the end of this conference?
2. What made you pick this conference this year over the others on your list?
3. What's the most useful thing you've read this month about your work?
4. Who are you hoping to meet at this event - by role or type, not name?
5. What's one thing you want to stop doing at work in the next six months?
6. What's a problem you've made zero progress on so far this year?

MATCHED PAIR INTRODUCTIONS

60 seconds per answer

7. Tell me about something you worked on last month that didn't go the way you planned.
8. What are you measured on this year, and where is it going well?
9. If you could only solve one thing for your team in the next quarter, what would it be?
10. What's one decision on your plate right now that you'd like a second opinion on?
11. What's the most useful conversation you've had at a conference in the last five years?
12. What's changed most about your work in the last twelve months?

TRIADS & SMALL GROUPS

30 seconds per answer, 4-6 minutes total

13. What's changed most in your role in the last year?
14. What's a tool or habit you've adopted this year that you'd recommend?
15. What are you saying no to more often now than you did a year ago?
16. What's a view you've changed your mind about recently at work?
17. What's a counter-example to today's conference theme you've actually seen work?
18. What's the one question you wish someone would ask you about your role right now?

SESSION OPENINGS & ROUNDTABLES

90 seconds per answer

19. In one sentence, what's the question you hope this session answers?
20. What's the single biggest constraint on doing your role well right now?
21. If we walked out of this session with one action, what should it be?
22. What's a false consensus in our industry that we should be pushing back on?
23. What's a number your team is watching closely this year, and why that one?
24. What's one thing about this topic that you think most people get wrong?

CLOSING & POST-EVENT FOLLOW-UP

60 seconds per answer

25. Who did you meet today who surprised you, and what did they say?
26. What's the one thing you're taking back to your team tomorrow?
27. If you were running this conference next year, what's the first thing you'd change?
28. What do you now know that you didn't at nine o'clock this morning?
29. Which conversation today would you most like to continue in the next month?
30. What's a specific thing I said that you'd like to follow up on? Who else should we both be in touch with?

FIVE RULES FOR FACILITATORS

Operational guardrails

1. Pick one prompt per moment, not one for the whole day. Rotate across the bank.
2. Time-box every answer. Tell people exactly how long: 30/60/90 seconds.
3. Put the prompt where it's being used - slide, table card, rotation sheet.
4. Hand this sheet to every session chair and volunteer host at briefing.
5. On multi-day events, never reuse an opening prompt across days.