**Unified Champion Schools**

**If you are looking for group activities to introduce UCS programming to educators, here are some ideas that could be useful and complement your session plan.**

**Overview**

In this document, you will find a collection of activities and games to work with groups. Every activity comes with an overview, goals, and instructions for successful implementation, along with tips on how to make the most of it. We welcome your feedback and invite you to use our contact form to suggest additional activities.

**Whom are these activities intended for?**

For all staff members of Special Olympics Programs collaborating with schools.

**How to use these activities?**

Are you planning to introduce the UCS programming at a new school and looking for ideas to structure your session? Or are you searching for practical activities to promote educators' engagement within UCS programming? We've got you covered! We have some recommended examples that can help you achieve your goal. Each activity includes instructions and other important details, like materials needed and recommended time. Please note that these optional tools can be tailored to meet your needs. Also, be aware that even though these exercises are simple, they can significantly impact the group.

**An opportunity to allow the athletes to take the lead!**

Yes! These activities are a chance to encourage athlete leaders to participate in your school's initiatives. With their team's backing and adequate preparation, they can co-facilitate or even lead these games #UnifiedLeadership

**Examples of activities that you will find.**

* Icebreakers
* Personal introductions
* Presenting Special Olympics creatively

# Icebreakers activities

* What is an icebreaker? In this scenario, it is an activity or game used to welcome and warm up the conversation among participants in a UCS workshop/session.
* Why is it important? Because icebreakers are an effective way to start a session as they help participants get to know each other and buy into the event’s purpose.

## 1) The Human Knot

**1. Overview**

This activity is about undoing a moderately complicated human knot.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Duration: | 10- 15 minutes |
| Place: | Ample space, for example, a gymnasium |
| Rhythm: | Active |
| Materials needed: | None |
| Type: | In-person activity |

**2. Goals**

This game aims to foster a more trusting environment among participants. Physically connecting through the knot reduces initial defenses and feelings of insecurity during a course workshop or group activity.

**3. Development**

The activity involves forming a circle by holding hands. A few participants step out of the circle and stand apart, facing away from the group. The remaining participants twist and turn, without breaking their handhold, until they form a complex knot. The challenge is for the participants who stepped out to rejoin the circle by undoing the knot while staying connected. The goal is to form a circle again, just like at the beginning.

**4. Evaluation**

There is no need to assess this game.

**5. Tips**

Initially, it's best to let those outside the circle take charge. But as time passes, suggest that the entire group work together to create solutions to untangle the knot. Collaboration is key! Once the knot is resolved, acknowledge each person's contribution, and emphasize how their ideas were and will be essential in achieving the UCS session goals.

## 2) Greetings in many ways! (For large groups)

**1. Overview**

This activity consists of greeting many people in the group in different ways.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Duration: | 15 minutes |
| Place: | Space without obstacles |
| Rhythm: | Active |
| Materials needed: | None |
| Type: | In-person activity |



**2. Goals**

To initiate the introduction of the participants, here's a quick and easy activity to break the ice.

**3. Development**

As the group starts walking through the room, the facilitator encourages them to greet each other in diverse ways, such as clapping, using knees, ankles, hands, soles of the feet, foreheads, backs, hips, and more. The facilitator keeps introducing new greeting ideas throughout the activity, while the participants are also welcome to suggest their own unique ways of saying hello.

**4. Evaluation**

There is no need to assess this game.

**5. Tips**

This game is ideal for large groups (over a hundred people) and works well during event openings.

## 3) Follow the story (an activity to create subgroups in a fun way)

**1. Overview**

In this activity, the entire group will follow the instructions of an entertaining story and form subgroups.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Duration: | 10 minutes |
| Place: | Interior space |
| Rhythm: | Active |
| Materials needed: | None |
| Type: | In-person activity |

**2. Goals**

Spend a pleasant moment forming teams or workgroups.

**3. Development**

The participants are asked to gather in a circle. The facilitator informs them that they must perform certain activities based on a story they will hear while rotating slowly. As the circle turns, the facilitator narrates the tale, allowing time for the participants to carry out the tasks. The final activity involves forming subgroups to participate in another activity. An example of a story could be:

*This is a school where everybody walks squatting and jumping.*

*Then one day, they got back on their feet again, and because they are a very inclusive team, they decided to walk holding everyone’s hand.*

*The educators in this school are very cheerful and creative, so they like to dance while holding hands.*

*They are eager to learn more about Special Olympics Unified Champion Schools and share their ideas on making schools more inclusive for everyone.*

*They like to learn from each other, so they will form groups of 5 and give each other much applause.*

**4. Evaluation**

There is no need to assess this game.

**5. Tips**

Programs can create a story to fit their specific goals. They can also modify details, for example, the number of people in each subgroup.

# Activities for personal introductions

* What are activities for introductions? Exercises that will enable every participant to introduce themselves.
* Why is it important? Because when people come together and get to know each other, an atmosphere of trust and collaboration can be created, allowing a meaningful and productive Unified Champion School session experience.

## 1) Name initials

**1. Overview**

It consists of remembering some names and characteristics of people in the group.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Duration: | 15 minutes |
| Place: | Interior  |
| Rhythm: | Calm |
| Materials needed: | None |
| Type | In-person and virtual |



**2. Goals**

Learn the names and characteristics of people in the group and create an atmosphere of fun and acceptance.

**3. Development**

As a group activity, we formed a circle and introduced ourselves by stating our name and a descriptive adjective that begins with the same letter. For example, *"My name is Haylie, and I'm hardworking."* The next person in the circle repeats the previous name and adjective, adding their own introduction: *“She is Haylie, she is hardworking. I am Nathan, and I am noble”.*  This pattern continues until everyone has had a turn.

**4. Evaluation**

Do you know all the names of the group participants? Would you like to add some positive adjectives about someone?

**5. Tips**

To keep the game moving smoothly, deciding on a maximum number of adjectives to repeat is helpful. For instance, we might repeat all the names but only the adjectives of the last three people.

It is a game that is better played in small groups.

## 2) The Special Olympics ball game

**1. Overview**

The activity consists of passing a ball that contains questions to introduce every participant.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Duration: | 15 minutes |
| Place: | Interior or exterior. Preferably with no obstacles |
| Rhythm: | Active |
| Materials needed: | A ball, preferably one with Special Olympics logo |
| Type | In-person |



**2. Goals**

Learn more about the people in the group and create an atmosphere of fun and acceptance.

**3. Development**

Here's a fun game for introductions that only requires a ball and a marker. Write questions on the ball and have participants pass them to one another while answering them. Examples: What is your name? Where were you born? What’s your favorite hobby? What’s your favorite sport? Have you ever heard of Special Olympics before? Do you know someone with an intellectual disability?

**4. Evaluation**

Do you know all the names of the group participants? Have you learned something new and interesting today?

**5. Tips**

If you prefer not to write the questions on the ball, you can use paper to list questions. Then ask the person holding the ball.

## 3) The written names (an ideal activity for adults that are afraid to play)

**1. Overview**

This activity is about looking for the owner of the badge that I got.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Duration: | 20 minutes |
| Place: | Interior or exterior. Preferably with no obstacles |
| Rhythm: | Active |
| Materials needed: | Name tags, pens, or pilots |
| Type | In-person |



**2. Goals**

Here's a gentle icebreaker that can help ease any anxiety around feeling embarrassed or playing games. It encourages everyone to connect and learn more about each other.

**3. Development**

Each participant will receive a name tag and pen to initiate the activity. They will write their preferred name (such as Brendan or Bren) and wear the badge on their chest. After some time, the badges will be gathered and placed in the center of the group. Someone will then stir them up on the ground. Participants will pick up a badge and seek its rightful owner. Once they do, they will ask them a question like "Where are you from?" or What is your favorite Sport? to establish a connection. This process will be repeated several times, with the group being more attentive to names each time.

**4. Evaluation**

How many new people have you met today?

**5. Tips**

This game is perfect for adult groups who may have inhibitions about playing games and for groups where the participants may not know each other.

# Activities to present information about Special Olympics creatively.

* What are activities to present SO creatively? These are games to explain to external audiences more about the Special Olympics movement and all our great work.
* Why are these activities important? Research has indicated that playing games can boost one's overall motivation. We aim for educators to enjoy themselves while learning about the Special Olympics Unified Champion School program.

## Complete the Special Olympics Unified Champion School photos!

**1. Overview**

This activity is about exchanging parts of photos until each subgroup completes a figure.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Duration: | 25 minutes |
| Place: | Ample space |
| Rhythm: | Active |
| Materials needed: | Special Olympics photos cutouts, envelopes |

**2. Goals**

Break the ice with a simple task that involves interacting with several people. Use Special Olympics images to present important information about the organization. For example, an image of Eunice Kennedy, an image of the most recent World Games, a Unified Sport activity, and an image of our UCS work.

**3. Development**

Before the game, photos from the Special Olympics - each the size of a sheet - are split into four sections and randomly placed in four separate envelopes.

During the activity, participants are divided into four subgroups, and each subgroup receives one envelope. The goal is for each subgroup to complete their assigned image by exchanging the sections with the other subgroups. Once finished, the images are displayed for all to see. The facilitator then briefly describes each image, providing relevant information about Special Olympics

**4. Evaluation**

There is no need to assess this game.

**5. Tips**

The number of photos, envelopes, and subgroups during the activity can change according to the number of participants in the session.

## Unified Champion Schools Jeopardy

**1. Overview**

This activity is a great review game covering many important facts about a topic. In our case, Unified Champion Schools.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Duration: | At least 30 minutes |
| Place: | Interior |
| Rhythm: | Active |
| Materials needed: | Your own UCS jeopardy template. |

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**2. Goals**

Jeopardy makes the UCS learning process fun and engaging. This game can help people learn information about UCS in a fun way.

**3. Development**

* Make your own [UCS Jeopardy PPT.](https://www.ispringsolutions.com/blog/how-to-make-a-jeopardy-game-in-powerpoint)
* Divide the group into four or five teams.
* Teams take turns choosing a topic category and a question in that category associated with a specific dollar amount ($100, $200, $300, etc.), e.g., 'We want Unified Sports for $300… We want Young Athletes for $200, etc.
* Give teams one minute to answer each selected question correctly.
* If the team is correct, they are awarded the question’s point value.
* Continue until all questions have been answered. The team with the most points wins.

**4. Evaluation**

There is no need to assess this game.

**5. Tips**

At the end of the game, you can thank everyone for their contributions.

## SO UCS call and response!

**1. Overview**

This activity involves sharing details about UCS through methods such as a PowerPoint presentation but with an added element of surprise. Throughout the presentation, the facilitator will repeat a specific phrase to which the participants must respond.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Duration: | 30 minutes |
| Place: | Interior |
| Rhythm: | Calm |
| Materials needed: | SO UCS PPT deck |

**2. Goals**

Keep the audience focused while the facilitator is presenting.

**3. Development**

Before starting, agree on what action should be taken every time the chosen phrase is called out. Participants can dance, clap, or stand and sit back down when the facilitator announces the word or phrase.

**4. Evaluation**

At the end of the Presentation, the facilitator can ask the group questions about SO UCS: What do you know about Special Olympics? What do you think about the Unified Champion School programming? Have you ever participated in a Unified Sport? Do you have Youth Leadership initiatives at your school? etc.

**5. Tips**

Find a phrase that is meaningful to repeat during the presentation. For example, our athletes’ oat: ***Let me win. But if I cannot win, let me be brave in the attempt.*** Or: ***Schools that welcome all people!***

# Intellectual Disability Awareness Games

* What are ID awareness games? These are sensitization activities to understand intellectual disabilities.
* Why are these activities important? Because it builds empathy and motivates people to think about how others live their lives and the barriers they may experience. People don't always see other people’s challenges unless they're talked about!

## Busting common myths about intellectual disabilities

**1. Overview**

This activity consists of breaking myths and stereotypes about people with intellectual disabilities. It is highly recommended that a trained athlete lead or co-facilitate this activity.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Duration: | 20 minutes |
| Place: | Indoor |
| Rhythm: | Calm |
| Materials needed: | A PPT deck with the common myths about ID. Reference: [Special Olympics webpage](https://www.specialolympics.org/stories/athletes/common-myths-about-intellectual-disability#:~:text=Physical%20Abilities,Olympics%20athletes%20around%20the%20world!) |
| Type | In-person or virtual |

**2. Goals**

Promote better knowledge and comprehension of intellectual disabilities.

**3. Development**

To conduct this activity effectively, the facilitator should create a PowerPoint presentation with statements covering [myths and facts regarding intellectual disabilities](https://www.specialolympics.org/stories/athletes/common-myths-about-intellectual-disability#:~:text=Myth%3A%20People%20with%20intellectual%20disabilities%20cannot%20get%20married%20or%20have,stereotypes%2C%20and%20contribute%20to%20society.). During the session, the facilitator will present these statements and ask the group to determine if they are true or false. The facilitator will then provide the correct answer and offer additional information. For example:

* *Statement # 1: “People with intellectual disabilities cannot play sports.”*
* *Facilitator: Is it true or false?*
* *Group: It is false!*
* *Facilitator: Bravo! You are correct! Having an intellectual disability does not impact your ability to play sports. In fact, there are more than 5 million Special Olympics athletes around the world!*

**4. Evaluation**

What do you think about intellectual disabilities after this activity? Do you know someone with an intellectual disability?

**5. Tips**

Let the athletes lead!

## Get to know Special Olympics athletes!

**1. Overview**

A person with an intellectual disability is mostly just like other people. This activity is about having the opportunity to talk directly with Special Olympics athletes.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Duration: | 20 minutes |
| Place: | Indoor |
| Rhythm: | Calm |
| Materials needed: | None |
| Type | In-person or virtual |

**2. Goals**

Promote better knowledge and comprehension of intellectual disabilities. Tear down misconceptions and stereotypes.

**3. Development**

You can set aside a few minutes for a Special Olympics athlete to talk to the group. From presenting some slides from the PPT, you have prepared, talking a bit about your life story and achievements with Special Olympics to a conversation that promotes dialogue.

**4. Evaluation**

After the athlete presentation, you can ask the group what they think and how they feel.

**5. Tips**

Let the athletes lead! Remember always to highlight their capabilities and keep a positive tone 😊

**References**

Icebreakers

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Activities for introductions

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