



Module 4: Creating engaging energisers and warm-up exercises suitable for online environment and remote learning

T4T - Tools4Teaching in Digital Education Settings

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About the project

T4T - Tools4Teaching in Digital Education Settings project focuses on supporting adult educators and formal, non-formal and informal training providers to effectively shift towards digital education and to provide the same level of learners' interaction and 'human-like' experience, as in the physical environment. The overall project objective is to strengthen the capacity of adult educators and training professionals to build and sustain effective group dynamics in digital education settings, so as to better engage their online learners.

Development of Guidelines how to better set up effective group dynamics in an online learning environment will help adult educators and training professionals improve their competences about the specifics of building and sustaining effective online group dynamics and ensuring a high level of learners' experience in digital classrooms.

The 6 modules provide general methodological guidelines to adult educators how to be more effective in building and sustaining group dynamics in online learning environment:

- what digital tools and software can use
- what behaviour to adopt
- how to engage learners in small group online activities
- how to use artistic exercises to boost creativity, etc.

Module objectives

Meetings and workshops are most effective when participants are engaged and have the energy to contribute and fully commit to the session. The purpose of an online energizer is to increase energy levels, help your team be present and focused on the meeting.

In an online workshop, keeping your remote participants up and energized can be critical to making the session an enjoyable and productive experience.

Especially for individuals who are new to participating in online video meetings, helping them have fun and engage with each other in a virtual space can be a huge benefit. Zoom team building or online meetings can be made instantly more accessible with a simple virtual activity that breaks the ice and creates a connection.

In this module, e-educators will learn how to adjust short warmers, icebreakers and energizers adequate for online teaching and training in order to support interaction and learning, and add variety and life to a digital teaching and learning environment.

Learning objectives

- to use techniques to improve and facilitate learning;
- to create a positive learning environment;

- to use these techniques to encourage active learning, interaction and engagement;
- to use these techniques to encourage the sharing of ideas, opinions and questions;
- to support group work;
- to recognize attention spans.

Pre-requisites

- Have access to a computer, laptop, or tablet with Internet access.
- Be able to share the screen.
- Know how to use a webcam and microphone.
- Be familiar with the use of the Internet.
- Be willing to build frequent breaks during the training.

Expected learning outcomes (skills and competences)

After going through this module, it is expected adult educators to improve their skills and competences in the following directions:

- Be able to enhance everyone's productivity, learning capacity and quality of contribution and outputs.
- Create social bonds between them and the participants/learners.
- Disrupt the status quo and create an energy shift.
- Exercise their judgement when deciding which energizer – if any – to use with their group.
- Be able to plan in energizers when they know that energy levels will be naturally low.

Topic 1: Online energizers. Short introduction

Online energizers are one of the secrets to defeat virtual fatigue. Spending long periods of time in a virtual environment looking at a screen all day is exhausting!

It's a challenge to keep participants engaged in online settings, but with games and activities, we can improve engagement and results.

In live settings, facilitators often use activities to increase the group's energy and focus. These energizers can include physical activities, promote creative thinking, or simply be fun and encourage laughter.

Here's a tip: The same goes for online workshops and remote meetings!

What is the purpose of online energizers?

Online courses and workshops are most effective when participants are engaged and have the energy to contribute and fully engage in the session. The purpose of an online energizer is to increase energy levels and help your team be present and focused on the session.

In an online workshop, it can be critical to keep participants happy and energized to make the session an enjoyable and productive experience.

Especially for people who're attending online video meetings for the first time, having fun and engaging with each other in a virtual space can be a huge benefit. Zoom team building or online meetings can be made instantly more accessible with a simple virtual activity that breaks the ice and creates a connection.

Let's take a look at the various benefits of these activities before we begin our collection of energizers!

Advantages of online energizers

Online energizers have a number of benefits for participants and presenters alike. Allowing space in your agenda for energizers not only increases energy and engagement, but they can also improve team cohesion. When your group is more focused and energized, it can also have a big impact on the outcomes of your session.

- Engagement
- Create variety in your agenda
- Make it fun
- Reduce awkwardness
- Create connections

It's important to maintain team engagement in an online meeting to ensure your team finds it valuable and productive. Meetings with lots of unfocused discussion, difficult tasks without enough variety, or many information-heavy sessions can be exhausting for any team - even more so when everyone logs on to their computers and chats via webcam.

In remote environments, it's much easier for participants to become distracted or disconnected. Whether it's because they are not physically present or because they have dozens of other tabs open in their

browser! Also, it can be difficult for a presenter to gauge the energy level of the room without physical signs and body language.

Using energizers to activate different skills and provide movement can invigorate a group and refocus their engagement. They are also useful in helping the facilitator understand group dynamics and change the agenda as needed.

Create variety in your agenda

Some of the best workshops and online courses benefit from varying the methods or exercises used. This can mean alternating between creative and critical skills-based activities, or encouraging small group discussions after leading a training session. In an online environment, opportunities for meaningful variety are limited because participants are likely all sitting at their desks looking at their screens.

A virtual energizer that encourages participants to get up from their desks, engage in a game, or practice skills that are not practiced in the main workshop can really help keep things fresh and create a dynamic workshop.

Energizers are often a great way to prepare for specific tasks: If you need a refresher after a difficult group discussion, do a fun energizer. If you know the next task will require full engagement from participants, choose a quieter activity. For example, an online energizer can create space for students to reflect after an extensive theory section.

Make it fun

Online courses are notorious for often dragging on. Especially in difficult situations, such as self-isolation, it can be very helpful to incorporate some fun and create space for teams to get to know each other to promote cohesion and motivation.

Good energizers are great not only for raising energy levels, but also for improving the tone of the overall meeting and increasing the overall perception of remote meetings in your organization. If you are facing difficult organizational challenges and have corresponding workshop tasks, it can be good to create a counterpoint and balance to your agenda. Fun online games like the ones below can be the perfect solution for this!

Remember, virtual meetings in remote environments are often the only time your team sees each other and speaks directly to each other, without text. Take this opportunity to bring your team together with a fun energizer that can foster collaboration not only in the immediate workshop, but throughout their remote career.

Eliminate awkwardness

If the participants in your online workshop do not know each other well, working in a remote environment can be challenging and stressful. For introverted or anxious members of your team, speaking in front of the entire organization in an online session can be daunting. Quick energizers are great for encouraging participants to speak up and engage, and can often help lay the groundwork for more difficult conversations later.

Some online energizers may make you look a little silly, but doing this with everyone else on your team can be a balancing force that helps everyone get on the same page. This can be especially useful if you have people of different leadership levels in the same meeting. Seeing your leadership team being silly or playing a simple game together with your CEO can help make later conversations go more smoothly.

Create connection

Creating connections in virtual teams is challenging. Creating memorable moments and opportunities for conversations and connections in your agenda can also help with team building.

Think about a company meeting with hundreds of employees. A dry presentation could leave many employees cold. Using energizers and games during conference calls can enhance the event and bring people together who may not even work together directly.

When should I use an online energizer?

We have all felt the effects of zoom fatigue during an online meeting. Even in virtual teams that have become accustomed to online collaboration, you may find yourself out of breath or losing focus during a long video call.

We recommend adding energizer games to the agenda of all lengthy meetings and workshops. In our own online sessions, we try to schedule an energizer at least once for every session that lasts longer than an hour. Along with appropriate breaks, this can help each team member feel present and engaged.

Energizers can also be used whenever the energy in your virtual session is flagging. Loosening up a packed virtual schedule with a game can also stimulate creativity and bridge awkward breaks!

When you notice energy waning, ask your team members if they need a break and give them an energizer when they return. In just a few minutes, your group will be refreshed and ready for the next challenge!

Topic 2: Tips for running online energizers

Choosing the right energizer is a good start, but good facilitators know that proper execution and approach are critical to the success of a method. While each energizer has some unique elements you should consider, there are some general tips and approaches you can use to make your virtual energizer a success. Here are our tips for conducting online energizers.

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Online meeting etiquette

- Set microphones to mute when not speaking.
- Webcams on where possible - it's nice to see your face!
- Call in from a quiet, well-lit location.
- Read the agenda beforehand and come prepared.
- Use nonverbal means to indicate you would like to speak.
- Use the hand-up feature, icons or raise your hand!
- Arrive on time if not a little early.

Establish good online meeting etiquette

Many facilitators set the expectations they have for participants before the meeting and right at the beginning to ensure things run smoothly and that everyone is happy and productive. Online meetings are no different. Make the etiquette for online meetings clear to your participants by creating a list and distributing it with your invitations. Repeat this at the beginning of the meeting, and if possible, make it available in your virtual whiteboard or collaboration tool.

Below are some of the points that should be included in your online etiquette.

- Mute microphones when you are not speaking.
- Webcams should be turned on whenever possible - it's nice to see your face! However, remember that in low-bandwidth environments, turning the camera off can improve call quality!
- Call from a quiet, well-lit location: Everyone should be able to see and hear you clearly.
- Read the agenda in advance and come to the meeting well prepared.
- Use nonverbal means to show that you want to speak. Use the show of hands feature, symbols, or raise your hand in your video conferencing software.
- Be there on time, if not a little early, so you can resolve any audio/video issues before the meeting begins. Test your audio so you can be heard as soon as you log on.
- Be engaged. Listen to the speakers, communicate in the chat channels, and use the online collaboration tools. You get out of it what you put into it!
- Close extra tabs if you do not need to, and remove distractions. You may need Google Docs, Mural, or another tool to work in session, but you probably do not need to open Facebook!
- Turn off other devices that take up bandwidth if possible to ensure a stable connection.
- Use a headset or headphones whenever possible to minimize echoes and background noise.
- Speak slowly and clearly. Be mindful of time - keep it as brief as possible.
- During presentations or lengthy discussions, try to introduce questions or thoughts into the chat channel and avoid interruptions. The moderator will respond to your questions and answer them as appropriate.
- Try not to repeat questions in the chat channel. Read what is already there and add a "like" or an "upvote" if you have the same question.
- Smile and nod. Show the speaker that you are listening!

Topic 3: Online energizers for workshops and meetings

When choosing an online energizer, it pays to take a look at your agenda and figure out which style will be most effective. If you're hosting a very discussion-heavy workshop, your virtual energizer might benefit from a non-verbal or physical style.

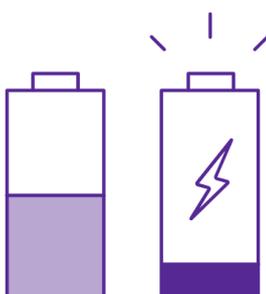
If your team is made up of a lot of visual thinkers, you might want to try an energizer that includes drawings. Maybe your team needs a little change of pace to have fun and recharge their batteries!

Remember, energizers are meant to lift spirits and provide a counterpoint to your agenda. While these energizers are appropriate for any remote meeting, it's worth tailoring them to your group if possible.

Warming up online energizers

These energizers are great for warming up a group or introducing new team members to the larger organization. Although these online warm-up exercises can be done at any point in your virtual workshop, they're especially useful for warming up your group and getting them motivated for the upcoming online workshop.

Shake it off



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Some of the best energizers for online meetings and workshops are very simple and are used primarily to get participants moving and to break up the palette between more complex tasks.

Shake down is a proven energizer for live settings and also works well with a webcam! Ask participants to stand up first if they've room, but tell them they can stay seated. It's also worth checking with participants to make sure they're in a suitable seat! As a group, do 8 right arm shakes, 8 left arm shakes, 8 right leg shakes, and 8 left leg shakes. Count from one to eight each time as a group.

After a sequence of four shakes, two shakes, and one shake of each limb, end the exercise with a big round of applause and ask everyone to perform a movement of their own - whatever feels right to them! It's worth checking with all participants to see if they're comfortable with a short activity that requires physical movement while standing/sitting in front of a screen. Have a Plan B in your pocket in case participants can't do this activity or don't feel comfortable - energizers work best when everyone participates!

In this short and very physical energizer, the group shakes out their body parts one at a time. They start by shaking their right arm eight times, then shaking their left arm eight times, shaking their right leg eight times, then shaking their left leg eight times. It continues with a round of four shakes of each limb, then two, then one, ending with a big cheer. A good energizer when time is short and the main goal is to get people moving.

How is it played?

Goal: Get people moving in a limited time.

Instructions

Step 1:

The group stands in a circle. Everyone should have an arm's length of space on either side of them.

Facilitator notes: This energizer is short and efficient. For it to be effective, the person leading it needs to role model a high level of energy.

Step 2:

The group performs the "shake down" all together, counting loudly together as they go.

First, 8 shakes of the right arm, 8 shakes of the left arm, 8 shakes of the right leg, and 8 shakes of the left leg. Each time, counting "1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5 - 6 - 7 - 8!"

Next, 4 shakes of each limb. Then 2 shakes of each. Then 1 shake of each.

The shake down ends with a loud cheer and a big ninja kick in the air.

Tips for running this activity online

- A simple activity to run online - so long as you have everyone on webcam and present in your video conferencing tool, this one is run in very much the same way as a live workshop!
- Ensure everyone has room to do this exercise beforehand and communicate this to your participants.
- Participants may stand or sit depending on their location and whether they're comfortable!
- If planning this activity, we recommend having a plan B, just in case some of your participants aren't comfortable with this exercise.

Background

Source: [Hyper Island toolbox](#)

Who's the artist?



This is a great creative online energizer that remote teams can prepare in advance or during the online meeting. Ask each participant to draw a picture that tells a unique story or fact about their life. You can use pen and paper and draw the picture digitally or directly into your online whiteboard tool.

If you want to make the assignment more challenging, give participants only thirty seconds to draw their picture, or have them use a desktop drawing app and don't allow erasing or editing. Drawings that are drawn quickly and contain mistakes can provide extra laughs during this exercise.

If you use an online whiteboard tool, have all participants post their pictures and compile them into a gallery. The result is a beautiful reminder of what you accomplished that day! If you're just using video conferencing software, you can also ask participants to hold their pictures up to the camera.

How is it played?

Goal: Encourage creativity, get to know your team better and have fun!

Materials

- Pencil / pen and paper, if drawing manually
- Camera / camera phone to take picture of drawing and to share it

Instructions

Ask each learner to draw an image which tells a unique story or fact about their lives. The catch? No words allowed - drawing only!

For example, this could be a drawing of themselves and their family, or of a hobby they partake in. It could be a drawing of their favourite item of clothing, or of what they did at the weekend.

The important factors are that:

- The item is drawn; therefore, the team must deduce who the artist is
- The subject of the drawing will tell the team members something that they didn't know already

If you are running this activity live / in-person:

After giving the audience identical size / plain paper and pens, ask them to complete their drawing and return it to the facilitator who will shuffle them and display each in turn to the participants to guess who it was drawn by.

If you are running this activity remotely:

Ask participants to create their drawing using the computer. They could then upload their work to a shared folder (if the name of the uploader can remain anonymous) or post it on a shared online board so others can guess the artist. Perhaps there is software that your team is already familiar with and would feel comfortable using to submit their drawing.

The team is shown drawing after drawing to guess who the artist is. When the correct guess is made, the person in question must share their story with the group.

Debrief

After the last person explains their drawing, the facilitator should encourage the audience to think about their colleagues' stories and emphasise that the artistic aspect was a creative way for the team to express themselves.

After a person has explained their drawing, the facilitator can deepen the exchange and ask the person why they chose that story/item and what it means to them.

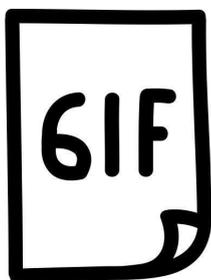
Variation option

Ask all participants to draw their sketch in a desktop application (e.g., MS Paint) without using the eraser tool. This will lead to some pretty "creative" drawings!

Fun online energizers

Virtual meeting games should be fun! The main purpose of these online energizers is to have fun, generate laughter and energy, and create space between more complex tasks. Fun energizers can be an essential element of meetings for any virtual team, and a mix of more complex energizers and ones that are just for laughs can be a good way to go. Let's take a look!

GIF Challenge



GIFs are the lifeblood of the internet, and when working with virtual teams, they can be a great way to bring humour and creativity to an online meeting. If you're wondering how to make virtual meetings fun, activities like the GIF challenge are a great place to start!

For this online game, set up an online whiteboard or shared Google Doc and type in a sentence or statement that participants then have to find a matching GIF.

This can be something as simple as "The feeling on Monday morning" or "Good management looks like this." You can ask a few questions just for fun and then include some that ask each team member to respond creatively to organizational challenges and prepare them for the next exercises.

After each round, you can ask participants to comment or vote on their favourites, and if you like, you can hold more rounds to pick a winner. A good way to use this energiser is to spread several rounds of questions throughout the workshop to keep energy levels high and provide some moments of fun and creativity as a counterpoint to other exercises.

How is it played?

Goal: Bring your team together with a fun energiser that encourages out of the box thinking and generates laughter alongside a bit of gentle competition.

Instructions

Step 1:

For this online energiser, set-up an online whiteboard or shared Google Doc where people can post their responses to the challenge.

Step 2:

Post a phrase or statement into the online whiteboard and invite your participants to find a GIF (giphy.com is great) and post it into the collaborative space. Your phrase might be something as simple as, "That Monday morning feeling," or "Good management looks like this." You can have a couple of questions just for fun, then include some that invite people to creatively respond to organizational challenges and prepare them for your next exercises.

Step 3:

Have your team vote on each round of responses. Use a system such as Mural's voting session or comments and choose a winner. Run multiple rounds if you have time in your agenda and make it into a tournament! Fancy something a little different? Try using memes instead of GIFs or add songs to a shared Spotify playlist.

Touch blue

Touch blue is an energizer that's been around for decades, and it works just as well in an online environment!

Start by having the facilitator call out something to touch, such as "touch blue" or "touch something warm." Each participant must then move around and touch something that's blue or warm. This could be something on their desk, an item of clothing, or something they need to find on their bookshelf. The last person to find an object must then choose the next attribute.

If you want to make it a little more competitive, give everyone fifteen seconds to find something and exclude the players who don't find something in time. Keep playing and make it more complicated or shorten the time until only one player remains. It can also be effective to play several rounds of this energizer during a workshop to keep participants on their toes!

How is it played?

Goal: Motivate teams with a quick and easy challenge that also gives them a chance to share something from their lives!

Instructions

Step 1:

Begin by having the facilitator call out something that each participant should touch and show on the screen. An example might be, "touch blue" or "touch something warm" or "touch something soft."

This could be something on their desk, an item of clothing, or something they need to find on their bookshelf. The last person to find an object must then choose the next attribute.

Step 2:

Continue playing until each participant has had a chance to select an attribute. If you want to raise the stakes, introduce a second attribute. "Touch something blue and old" or "touch something red that you can eat."

Step 3:

Debrief by identifying some of the group's favourite answers and items and asking the owner to talk a little about why they chose them.

Variations

If you want to make this energizer a little competitive, give participants only fifteen seconds to find an object and eliminate those players who don't find one in time! The last remaining player wins!

If you want to keep participants on their toes, try playing individual rounds of this energizer during your meeting or workshop when the energy wears off!

Topic 4: Skills-based online energizers

These virtual energizer games and exercises are great for challenging your team and encouraging the use of specific skills such as active listening, memory, or critical thinking. They tend to be more in-depth and a bit more complicated, but can yield good results in longer remote workshops or even as one-off exercises to keep a remote team engaged.

Remote pencil pitching

Many of us have seen a movie where one salesman asks another to sell him a pencil. How about we take that idea, add some comedy potential to it, and put it online?

For online pencil sales, we suggest creating a slide deck of weird and wonderful objects and then asking participants to take turns telling the rest of the group what's on the next slide. Time it so that participants have thirty seconds to introduce their topic, and keep things moving. This is a great virtual energizer that encourages improvisation.

If you're looking for a change of pace, you can also introduce fictional characters and have each participant explain to the group why they should be president. If you want to incorporate this exercise into a targeted workshop, have your team introduce new features or solutions for your product or company. Depending on your needs, this exercise can be easily adapted to different purposes.

How is it played?

Goal: Sharpen your team's presentation and pitching skills while also encouraging improvisation and creative thinking.

Instructions

Step 1:

Set up a slide deck of weird and wonderful objects prior to the meeting and ensure no one has seen them beforehand. You'll want at least ten slides, though we recommend more, particularly for large groups. Share this on-screen with your participants.

Step 2:

Find a volunteer or nominate a person to begin. Invite your participants to pitch whatever comes up on the next slide to the rest of the group. Their aim is to sell the object to the group and talk about its features and benefits.

Time it so participants have thirty seconds to pitch and keep things moving by switching slides and nominating the next person to take over pitching when you deem fit. This keeps everyone on their toes and builds the energy!

Step 3:

Once everyone has had a turn improvising, give everyone a round of applause and select the best pitcher. Give them an extra clap!

Variations

This exercise can be tailored to your needs easily.

- If you're wanting to be more product-focused, have the slides be of possible future features of ideas you've worked on earlier in the session.
- If you want to make it more fun, create a slide deck of fictional characters and have each participant tell the group why this character should be the next president!

PowerPoint Karaoke

PowerPoint Karaoke is a great way to not only motivate a group, but also improve team cohesion and communication skills. For this virtual meeting energizer, create one or more slide files that none of the participants have seen before. You can use any slides that have nothing to do with each other, are just for fun or are a real corporate presentation, depending on your group's needs.

Once your team is ready, find a volunteer who is willing to present and start the first random slide printout. The volunteer must then present to the group using these slides. You can give each participant an entire set of slides or have them pass it on to other participants after a few slides. We recommend keeping the text information on the slides to a minimum or using only pictures. The most important thing is that the participants improvise, have fun and practice their communication skills even under pressure!

How is it played?

Goal: Build communication skills and team bonding.

Materials

- Presentation software
- Slide decks (that haven't been seen before)

Instructions

Find some volunteers willing to present. Then get several slide decks, each with 8-10 random slides (you can build your own slide decks or find examples online).

Have each volunteer give a presentation, having never seen the slides before. When all have presented, a winner can be chosen by panel or popular vote.

Tips for running this activity online

A simple activity to run online - so long as you have everyone on webcam and present in your video conferencing tool, this one is run in very much the same way as a live workshop!

Pre-create one or more slide decks and present them to your group via screen share. It's good to keep control of the slides yourself so you can move things along when needs be.

Tips for further reading (bibliography and links)

Warming up energizers:

- Count up: <https://www.sessionlab.com/methods/count-up>
- Three wishes: <https://www.sessionlab.com/methods/three-wishes>
- The Time Machine: <https://www.sessionlab.com/methods/the-time-machine>

Fun online energizers:

- Dance, Dance, Dance: <https://www.sessionlab.com/methods/dance-dance-dance>
- Hello Kitty: <https://www.sessionlab.com/methods/hello-kitty>

Skills-based online energizers:

- Empires: <https://www.sessionlab.com/methods/empires>

Check also our **T4T Library**. Here are some useful resources:

- <https://www.nytimes.com/games/wordle/index.html>



T4T - Tools4Teaching in Digital Education Settings

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