**Grouping Strategies: Ways to Divide the Class into Smaller Groups**

[**http://www.youthwork.com/activitiesdivide.html**](http://www.youthwork.com/activitiesdivide.html)

*Try some of these ideas when you want to add some fun and challenge to the process of dividing into smaller groups.*

**Dividing Into Pairs**

**Opposites Attract-** Ask each person to pair up with someone who is different from them in some way, examples: male/female; tall/short; blond/brunette; blue eyes/brown eyes; etc.

**Commonalities-** Quickly make a series of statements and ask participants to raise their hand if this is true of them. The first two people to raise their hands are partners and do not respond to any more statements. In the case of ties, move on to the next question. Sample statements: my favorite color is red; I am a Pisces; I am a basketball fan; I have blue eyes; etc.

**First Names-** Have everyone count the number of letters in their first name. Now ask them to find someone who has the same number of letters. Those two are now partners. If a person can't find someone let him/her use another name s/he is called by (i.e., a student named Matthew may use the name Matt and then look for someone with 4 letters instead of 7.) If they still can't find someone pair up with a person who has the closest number of letters.

**Line Ups-** Group lines up according to any variable you can think of to use. Examples are: oldest to youngest; tallest to shortest; alphabetically by first or last name; chronologically by month and date of birthday. If you want to add challenge to the process, do not allow people to talk. The two people at the ends of the line become partners, the next two become partners, etc.

**Finding "Twins-"** Decide ahead of time on a category such as animals, famous people, occupations, emotions, sports, etc. and prepare slips of paper with specific examples of the category you have chosen. Make two slips for each example (one set of three for an odd number). After distributing the slips, each person makes a noise associated with the example and/or performs a movement. The group circulates until partners have been found.

**Name That Partner-** Divide the group in half based solely on seating. Ask each group to name an example of a category (same as the above categories) that starts with A and name one person as that example. Continue through the alphabet until everyone has a name. Don't skip any letters. The A's, B's, C's, etc. become partners.

**Picture Puzzles-** Cut pictures from a magazine so that there are half as many pictures as members of the group. If you have a theme try to find pictures related to the theme. Cut each picture in half and mix them up in a hat. Each person takes one piece and partners are those whose pieces form a complete picture.

**Pick a Number-** Ask everyone to pick a number between 1 and (choose the upper number depending on the size of your group). Those who have picked the same number become partners. If only one person chooses a particular number, as them to choose another number.

\* \* \*
**Dividing Into Groups**

**Cries of Animals-** This game is filled with laughter and fun with the intention of forming the participants into groups of 4 - 10. Before one could conduct this game, he or she needs to write the names of animals (cow, cat, pig, etc.). Once the group is ready to play, distribute these written slips of paper to all. Let the participants not show their slip to another person as this needs be top most secrete. Then tell the group to make the sound of the animal that they have on the slip and form a family of the same animal (in one corner of the hall) carefully listening to the similar sounds from the others. In this way, it would be easy to form the participants into groups.
Contributed by Madhu Sagili

**Values Clarification-** Present the group with a value statement related to the theme of the event. Ask them to arrange themselves in a line from Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree. Encourage discussion so each person is in the right place in line. Count off my 2's for diverse groups or divide in half for more homogeneous groups.

**Shake, Rattle and Roll-**Take as many film canisters as you have people. In each film canister, put an object. The objects you pick can be like the following: cotton balls, pennies, paperclips, jelly beans, M&M's, etc. If you have 30 people and you want to divide them into three groups of 10 each, you would place a cotton ball in 10 of the canisters, a paperclip in 10 of the canisters, and a penny in 10 of the canisters. Each individual then picks a canister from a bag, basket or some other container. They cannot look or smell in the canister. They can only shake the canister to distinguish the different sounds of the objects. The object is for the individual to find persons in the group with a like sounding object and stay with that group. There are many variations on this game. I call it, "Shake, rattle, and roll". Enjoy!

**Form A Band-** Each band must have a drummer, guitar player, keyboard player and singer. Then they mime out their band, complete with air instrumentation. Then all of the drummers are in one group, all singers in another, etc. You can create as many band members as you need groups. (above example gets you four groups). Similarly, you can do the same with a baseball (any sports) team. I've done it with pitchers, catchers, hitters, outfielders and hot dog salespeople. This gets five groups. These are good for kids, and also kind of fun for adults, lets them play.

**Blue Sky-** Have people, on the count of "Blue Sky," hold up anywhere from one to ten fingers. "Green fields, red earth, blue sky. Go!" All the people holding up an even number of fingers on one side, odd fingers on the other

**Pictures-** Give each student a card with a different kind of ball or sporting equipment picture on it. Students are to find the person(s) with the equipment that matches theirs. Of course you can use any category for this (i.e., dogs, cars, birds).

**Playing Cards-** Decide how many groups you want and what size. For example, if you would like to have 5 groups of 5 and you wanted to randomly put them into groups then get 5 Kings, 5 Aces, 5 2's, 5 Jacks, and 5 Queens (of course you will need more than one deck of cards) and shuffle them up. Pass them out and match up the five who get the Kings, Queens, etc.

**Arm/Finger Cross-** 1) Have everyone cross their arms across their chest. Amazingly (at least I was amazed) it almost always works out to about 50% cross right over left, and the other 50% cross left over right. 2) Have students close their eyes and then put their hands together so their fingers are interlocking and their palms are touching each other. Have them open their eyes and look down at their hands. If their right thumb is on top then they are one team and if their left thumb is on top then they go to the other team.

**Barnyard-** Students are each given one tongue depressor marked with the name of an animal (i.e., cow, pig, chicken, horse, etc.). (The number of different animals used depends on how many groups you want to form.) On signal and staying within a marked boundary, students begin to move around general space using a leader determined locomotor movement (slow movements work best). While students are moving around they are to make the sound of the animal on their tongue depressor. Students "look" (listen) for anyone of the same animal category and hook up with them. Continue moving through space until all of your animal buddies have been found and are all together. Students should keep their tongue depressors in their hand but they shouldn't show it to anyone. Do not allow "human" communication for this activity.

**Finding "Clones-"** Similar to Finding "Twins" above. Decide on the general category (say, animals) and the number of small groups you want to have (say, four). In this example you would give each person a slip of paper with an animal name (say, horse, dog, cat or cow). Everyone starts making their animal's sound and finds the other members of their group.

**Rainbow-** This activity works for dividing into up to seven groups. Decide how many small groups you want and ask people to divide themselves into groups with this number of people. Give them the colors of the rainbow, or ask for someone who knows them, and have each group assign one person to each color, starting with red. They are to stop when each person has a color. Groups are formed by people of the same color (red, orange, yellow, green, blue, indigo, violet).

**Seven Dwarfs-**Have individuals get into groups of seven and have them each label themselves a dwarf. This in itself can be hard to them to get all the dwarfs right. Then tell them to disperse into groups of like-dwarfs bringing all the Docs in one groups, all the Sleepys in another group and so on.

**Hair Bands-** To help identify groups/teams give students small hair bands to wear on their wrists (they fit perfectly). Have 4-6 colors so then you can divide the group up anyway that you need to.