Icebreakers

Games

Activities

# Introduction

In this document, we have compiled many ideas for icebreakers, activities and games. For each activity, we have indicated the suitable age group, the number of players and the occasions for which the activity can be used. You can use these at home, in a small group, during activities like Sunday School, Junior Soldiers, Corps Cadets, Character-Building Programmes and sports ministry. This way, you can choose what fits your situation best. New this year are the ideas for babies and toddlers!

Are you mainly outdoors? Then check out the outdoor activities. Do children enjoy being creative? Look at ‘Creative Arts’. We hope that with these games, you can engage with the theme ‘Look Up!’ in a creative, meaningful and interactive way. Mobilise children and young people to organise these projects and have fun!

# Icebreakers, Games and Activities

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## Baby Song  ‘To your child the most beautiful voice is yours!’

**For: 0–3-year-olds with at least one parent**

**Number of participants:** between 4 and 16 adults with their babies

**Duration:** about 1 hour

The tempo in this group is calm and gentle, building on a personal relationship between mother/father and child. The leader encourages the parents to sing and interact with their child through nursery rhymes, simple Christian songs and songs from their own childhood.

### Necessary Equipment

* a place to change nappies
* mats or blankets
* a box of musical instruments or items that function as musical instruments.

### Useful Equipment (not necessary)

* toys
* cloth, bedsheet or parachute canvas
* light scarves (nylon, for example)
* imagination – more imagination – and even more imagination!

### The Musical Leader

You don’t have to be a musical expert to lead a Baby Song group. What matters most is the simplicity and the intimacy – not fancy effects as accompaniment or choral parts. Use your own voices, not a CD.

* Focus on eye contact and use this as a tool.
* Be calm and humorous.
* Use variety in your voice, i.e. talk, whisper, sing.
* If things go wrong – laugh.
* If you find something too complicated, just skip it and move on.
* Talk as little as possible between the songs.
* Don’t introduce the next song, but keep the flow going with songs in sequence.
* Repeat songs and rhymes several times until you can see that everyone is enjoying it.
* Take the time to observe and wait for the children to react when you do something before you move on to the next item.
* Make sure you know the songs that will be sung.
* Ask the parent to look at the child when they are singing or doing rhymes, and stress the importance of eye contact.

### Start with a short devotion and prayers.

Gather the children with parents in a circle. Lay the children down on their backs on a blanket or mat inside the circle, facing their parent. Lead them through various nursery rhymes, preferably ones that the parents recognise from their own childhood. Use different hand movements, pieces of cloth or other eye-catching items for the different songs. If you use instruments, let the children feel and try them. For example, let each child borrow an egg shaker when you sing more rhythmic songs. Other tips include having songs that encourage the parents to get up and dance with their children. Throughout the session, talk about looking up and being attentive to the children’s gaze and reactions.

### End with a short devotion and blessing.

Encouragement: See if you can start a group that meets once a week and make it a permanent part of your programme. Then the programme, songs and equipment can be more varied.

Example: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LbSZAhO2imk>

## Touch-and-Feel Game

For: everyone, especially 1–2-year-olds

Find something the children can touch and feel. Ask the child how it feels: is it hard, soft, wet, cold, warm, gross or nice? The game also stimulates the child’s language development because the child has to explain how different objects ‘feel’.

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## The Child’s First ‘Seek-and-Find Tasks’

For: everyone, especially 1–2-year-olds

Invite the children to seek and find ordinary items like shoes, socks, flowers and leaves. Take some time together to wonder about these items and thank God for all that he gives.

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## Hide-and-Seek

For: everyone, especially 1–2-year-olds

Encourage the child to hide and suggest that they ‘help’ their parents to find them by barking like a dog or tweeting like a bird.

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## Dance Party

For: everyone, especially 1–2-year-olds

Have a dance party with the children while listening to songs like ‘Look up!’.

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## Sensory Game with bag of peas

For: 0–6-year-olds

**Number of participants:** between 2 and 12 children

When a little one starts to gain control over their hands, a sensory bag can be exciting. If you have a young child who puts everything in their mouth, this can also be a safe way to let them explore, but remember to keep an eye on them.

A sensory bag can be filled with various things and taped to the floor, chair or wall. With older children, the game can quickly become rough, so it might be wise not to leave the bag available all the time if you want to reduce the chance of it bursting.

### Instructions:

1. Fill a ziplock bag with the desired content. Frozen peas would be a simple option.
2. Try to get as much air out as possible before sealing the bag.
3. Make it extra-secure by applying some tape around the seal.
4. Tape the bag to a surface.

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## Play with DIY Playdough

For: 3–6-year-olds

Make simple playdough with few ingredients.

### You Will Need:

* 1–2 dl of body lotion (unscented/child-friendly)
* about 2 dl of corn starch
* food colouring
* something to mix it in and with
* optional: cookie cutters

### Instructions:

1. Mix the corn starch and body lotion together. Choose an unscented body lotion or one you know your child can tolerate.
2. If the dough feels too sticky, you can add more corn starch. The amount of body lotion depends on the type you choose. The richer the lotion, the better.
3. Add food colouring to give the playdough a fun colour.
4. The finished playdough should be stored in an airtight container in the refrigerator for the best shelf life.

Use the dough to make animals, figures and so on.

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## ‘Look Up’-game

For: 6–13-year-olds/everyone

Can be used as an icebreaker, an introduction and a game

This is a game in which you put focus on listening to directions and promoting social comfort. The goal is to get eye contact.

### Instructions:

The participants start by standing in a circle facing each other. Consider forming more than one circle if there are more than 10 participants.

One person is chosen to lead the game. The leader starts by saying ‘Look down’, and everyone looks down. Then the leader then says, ‘Look up!’. Everyone looks up, towards another player’s face, and locks their gaze that way. The leader askes anyone who got eye contact to raise their hands. If no one raises their hands the game continues. If someone got eye contact with another person, they give each other a high-five.

If you’ve formed more than two circles, the ones who got eye contact jump over to another group.

The game continues. If the game carries on for several rounds without anyone getting eye contact, consider mixing the groups or dividing into smaller groups.

Count how many times you were able to get eye contact with someone else.

When you look up you instantly fix your gaze on someone else. You’re not allowed to look around and search for eye contact.

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## Tangle-master (Knutemor)

For: 6-year-olds to everyone

Can be used as: a game for children or at an intergenerational gathering

Use your eyes: how can you untangle the knot?

The participants choose one person to leave the room. This person is the ‘tangle-master’.

Everyone else forms a circle facing each other and holds hands. Note that it’s very important not to let go! Start entangling the sides of the circle by going under, over and around each other, without letting go of the other person’s hands. You’re creating a huge human knot. When the group feels that the knot is difficult enough (or they can’t move anymore), they shout in unison: “Please help us, tangle-master!”

* the tangle-master must now untangle the huge knot in front of them.
* the tangle is solved when everyone is back to standing in a circle, facing each other.
* choose a new tangle-master and repeat the process.

### Alternative:

There is no tangle-master. Best in groups of 10 people or fewer.

Everyone stands in a circle facing each other. Everyone reaches out their left hand and grab someone else’s. Do not grab the hand of the person standing next to you. Then everyone reaches out their right hand and grab the hand of someone else. Again, not the hand of the person standing next to you. Now the goal is to entangle this knot without letting go of a hand. They will end up standing next to someone completely different from before.

Good to do in a smaller group, or as a competition between several groups – who can untangle first?

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## Kim’s Game

For: 3–18-year-olds

**Number of participants:** between 5 and 10, mostly because you need to get close to the things being laid out in front of you

Can be used as a game or an activity for children and teenagers

**You need:** a blanket or a tablecloth, 5–15 items (depending on the level of difficulty)

**Tip:** The items can be figurines or smaller props you use to illustrate Bible stories later. For example, tiny dolls, a toy boat and so on, but can also be ordinary items like a spoon, a pencil a piece of fruit or vegetable.

### Instructions:

Put all the items on a table and cover them with a blanket. Make sure none of the objects are showing. Let the children enter the room. Explain the rules to the children before lifting the blanket to reveal the items. The children will now have 30 seconds to memorise them all (longer if you want to make it easier, shorter to make it more difficult). Lift the blanket so everyone can see the things on the table. Place the blanket back over them. Tell the children to close their eyes and, when you’re sure no one is looking, remove a few items. Tell the children to open their eyes, lift the blanket and ask which objects are missing. Continue this until all the items are gone.

**Important:** Do not let the children talk amongst themselves during the game.

**Tip:** For older kids, hand out a pen and paper and get them to write down the missing items for each round. If they get everything right, they get a small prize. Alternative for the younger children (3–6-year-olds):

Ask one child to step outside. Then choose another child to come forward and hide under a big blanket. Get the first child to come back into the room and ask them to guess who’s under the blanket. If the child needs a hint, get the one under the blanket to make a little sound. If possible, let everyone try a round.

## The Fetch Game

For: 6-year-olds to everyone

Can be used as an icebreaker and a game for children or at an intergenerational gathering

Divide the group into two or more teams that compete against each other. A leader/adult has a list of 5–10 items (or more) to be fetched. One person on the team acts as the ‘fetcher’. This person is responsible for delivering items to the leader. All other participants act as ‘fetch helpers’, meaning they help find the items to be fetched. Make sure each team chooses a team name.

Examples of items:

* a shoe in EUR size 39 / 8.5 US size / 6.5 UK size
* four white socks and one blue sock
* a pen
* 10 flowers
* a hair tie
* and so on…

**Tip:** Ask them to fetch items that will be used for the devotion, or items they must ‘look up’ to find. Example: leaves, something from shelves and so on.

**Tip:** Appoint someone to the role of assistant to help keep track of points.

**Tip:** Make it more exciting by giving the participants a certain time in which to fetch the items.

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## Reflection Activity: ‘Look Up’

For: 12-year-olds and older

**Number of participants:** ideally, between 3 and 30 people, or unlimited

Can be used as an introduction or a game for 12-year-olds and older

**You will need:** a roll of (wall-)paper long enough to cover a person, plus pens and markers for the whole group.

### Instructions:

One person in the group volunteers to lie down on the paper. The leader, or another person in the group, then draws the outline of the person and writes ‘Look up’ above the head. Now the rest of the group gets a few minutes to think about what they associate with the words ‘Look up’. What do they think of, for example, in connection with the Bible, today’s society and themselves?

Then invite everyone to come and write their thoughts inside the person’s outline on the paper. If they have several thoughts, they write more things.

Another way to do this is to have several large sheets with different themes under ‘Look up’ spread around the room. Examples of these could be:

* To whom do you look up to?
* Who in our society are looked down upon?
* How does it feel to be looked down upon?
* Where do you look for help?
* Which Bible verses talk about ‘look up’?

Let the young people walk around and write their thoughts on the sheets. Then, if they are comfortable enough, ask if anyone wants to share what they have written and why. Alternatively, read aloud what is written on the different sheets and discuss the themes. Invite people to share their stories by asking questions like:

* Can you tell us more about this?
* I wonder what you mean by this.
* I wonder what helped you when…
* Could you give us an example of this?

End with an open prayer, where everyone who wants to is encouraged to pray for what has been written down or any thoughts that have emerged during the discussions.

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## God’s Creation

For: all ages

Can be used at Sunday school, children’s and youth clubs, or at home in the living room

Look up and outside at God’s creation! How can we use the great outdoors to create art?

### What you need:

* large sheets, scissors and glue
* materials from nature
* paint or coloured pencils if desired
* fabric, thread, yarn or other things available at home can also be used

### Instructions:

Bring the group outside and look around. Collect anything that can be used to create an illustration. For example, leaves, flowers, sticks, sand, stones, etc. Try to get as many different textures and colours as possible.

If you have limited time or cannot take the children and young people outside, materials can be picked and arranged in advance. You can also use fabric, yarn or other things you already have at home/at the club room. Now the task is to create pictures and illustrations using everything you’ve gathered up. Here are some examples of how you can use them:

* illustrating the Bible stories related to the International Day of Children and Young People. Collaborate on one large picture or create different scenes from the Bible story individually. For example, illustrate when the fishermen cast their nets from the boat to catch fish. Grass can become nets, leaves can become the sea, branches can become the boat, etc.
* making a piece of art featuring something that God has created. It can be anything from arranging leaves and flowers to become animals, or an artwork of what you see when you look out of the window. Alternatively, use leaves, mushrooms and similar items as stamps by painting on them and stamping directly onto a piece of paper.
* creating a tall tower which is so tall that you must ‘look up’ at it.

Only your imagination sets the limits. Work with different textures and colours. Find a wall at the corps, or a wall at home, where you can hang the artworks. If the Bible story is illustrated in several pictures, make sure to hang them in the correct order!

# Creative Arts

Using our imagination and creativity is one of the best ways to express ourselves and to worship God. It allows people to go beyond words to express their deepest beliefs, thoughts and feelings. Encourage people to be creative as possible. Think about arts like:

## Dance

Create a dance using the theme song. If you are excited, record a video and submit it for the international competition! Every year, we have an international competition that allows participants to show their talents and skills, but also to connect with others through the online events we will have.

## Singing

Set up a choir or group and sing the theme song in your language.

## Theatre

Create a play based on this year’s theme of ‘Look Up’. What does ‘look up’ mean to you? Maybe you want to look up from your phone and distractions, look up to the stars or look up to God?

## Art

Develop an art project with children and young people in the corps. You decide on the artistic expression, but the aim is for it to be a collaborative project involving several people. How can you work together to encourage others to ‘look up’? Think of paintings, drawings, murals, but also other ways and materials that you can use. Maybe someone wants to create an animation or video!

# Outdoors – Games and Activities

## Experience Nature

For: everyone, but especially 0–2-year-olds

Take the little ones out to a small grove or a park. Babies can also greatly enjoy being outside.

* Put the baby down on a blanket outside, and you will discover that it looks up at the trees and the insects flying around with wide eyes. Let crawling children crawl around and find insects.
* Find areas and things (stones, fallen trees, branches) that give the child the opportunity to stand up, support themselves and move about.
* Give the child the opportunity to move on their own. Be patient: there are a lot of exciting things to discover on the ground, which the child is much closer to than adults.
* Let the child feel things with their mouth as long as it’s not dangerous.

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## Stargazing

For: all ages

Can be used at children’s or youth activities and family activities

If you are able, plan a night to watch stars. Take time to explore the stars, their names and function. Here are some stargazing tips:

**Choose a good spot and a good time.** Select a time and place where you can see the stars properly and where you are comfortable and safe as a group. Make sure you bring necessary things like binoculars, bug spray, drinks, snacks or extra layers of clothes.

**Help everyone to understand what they are seeing.** Maybe you can bring a map or a guest who knows a lot about stars?

**Let the children ask questions.** Try to ‘wonder’ together and have a conversation about what you are observing. If the conversation doesn’t start spontaneously, ask questions like: What is the brightest star you see? What names do you know?

**Make a connection with God.** Help children and young people to connect the stars with God by asking questions like: Who made the stars? Or by sharing stories about the stars, such as in Genesis 15:5 (NIV):

‘*He took him outside and said, “Look up at the sky and count the stars – if indeed you can count them.” Then he said to him, “So shall your offspringbe.’*

Or Psalm 8:3-4 (NIV):

*‘When I consider your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have set in place, what is mankind that you are mindful of them, human beings that you care for them?’*

**Evaluate.** Directly, or fairly soon after stargazing, evaluate how it was to do this activity together. What did people learn from it? How did it help them to connect with God? How did they feel about the activity? If possible, write or draw the findings on a big piece of paper to show in a meeting or hang up in one of the rooms of the (corps) building.

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## Blind Volleyball

For: 6-year-olds and older

**Number of participants:** 8–20 people

Can be used at children’s or youth activities and family activities

Blind volleyball is a fun ball game suitable for various age groups. In this game, the participants play volleyball without being able to see the other side of the court or the players there. Everyone will need to pay close attention to where the ball crosses the net and react quickly.

### What You Need:

* Volleyball
* Sheets, cloth or a tarpaulin
* Tape or rope to mark out the court

Stretch a sheet or blanket over an existing volleyball net or use a rope to hang the sheet. Position the sheet in such a way that the teams cannot see each other. You can set out the volleyball court with a rope, or tape. The exact size of the court isn’t crucial, but as a guideline you can maintain a minimum of 3 x 5 metres on each side.

Once the court is ready, the game can commence. Divide the group into two teams. In the centre of the court a sheet hangs over the net to prevent the two teams from seeing each other. The game is played simply as volleyball. If the ball touches the ground on your side or if you hit the ball out, you lose a point. The team that scores a point will serve next. The ball may be hit a maximum of three times on one side before it must go over the net.

### Variations:

A fun variation is to have a ‘look-out’ from each team positioned at the side of the court. This person can coach their team and call out where the ball is likely to land.

Instead of a volleyball, water balloons can be used. So if a participant fails to catch a water balloon or it lands on them, they’ll get wet. This is particularly a fun variation for warm days.

### Tips:

If the players are very young, you may allow them to catch the volleyball with their hands.

Consider using a beach ball to make the game a bit easier.

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## Sunflower Sky Watch

For: all ages

**Number of participants:** 2–20 people

Can be used at children’s or youth activities and family activities

**Duration:** 1–2 hours (plus ongoing growth time)

**Location:** backyard, community garden or classroom

### Materials Needed:

* sunflower seeds (choose a variety suitable for your climate)
* planting pots or garden space
* potting soil
* watering can
* labels and markers (for names and dates)
* gardening gloves (optional)
* a large piece of paper or poster board
* coloured markers, crayons or paint

### Steps:

#### 1. Introduction to Sunflowers

* Gather participants in a circle and provide a brief introduction about sunflowers, their growth stages and their importance to the ecosystem.
* Discuss how sunflowers are named because they ‘turn’ to follow the sun, and relate this to the theme ‘Look Up’. Encourage participants to think about how growing sunflowers will inspire them to literally and metaphorically look up to the skies and their Creator.

#### 2. Preparation for Planting

* If using pots, assist participants with filling them with potting soil. If using a garden plot, prepare the space by clearing any debris.
* Show how to create a small hole in the soil to plant the seeds (about 1-inch deep).

#### 3. Planting the Seeds

* Provide sunflower seeds to each participant. Encourage everyone to plant their seeds and cover them gently with soil.
* Allow participants to place labels next to their pots or in the garden referencing their name and the planting date for future reference.

#### 4. Watering

* Demonstrate how to water the seeds gently. Ensure everyone understands the importance of not overwatering.
* Encourage everyone to participate in watering the seeds together.

#### 5. Observation and Sky Watch

* As the seeds begin to grow, encourage participants to observe their plants regularly. Create a schedule for a follow-up observation day.
* See which sunflower grows the highest and measure its height. Have a conversation with each other about what sunflowers need to grow.

### Additional Ideas:

* Community Involvement: If planting in a community space, consider a planting day event where families can work together.
* Growth Journals: Supply each participant with a simple journal to document their observations, which can be shared during follow-up gatherings.
* Educational Component: Provide information on how sunflowers support pollinators and the environment.
* Competition: Add a competition element by awarding the planters of the highest sunflowers.