

Paper Plane Intros — Facilitator Run Sheet

Folder: paper-plane-intros · Category: icebreakers · 8–20 people · 15 min · offline + online · print props · tool pack

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15

MINUTES

8–20

PEOPLE

print props

SETTING

Paper Plane Intros — Facilitator Guide

Everyone writes one line about themselves that is not obvious from their face or name tag, folds it into a paper plane, and throws it across the room. You retrieve a plane that isn't yours, read it aloud, and hunt down the person who wrote it — then ask them one real follow-up question. The throw is what forces the room past the people it already sat next to.

Objectives

By the end of the activity, participants will have:

1. Been introduced, by curiosity rather than seating, to someone they would not have chosen to talk to.
 2. Exchanged one real follow-up question — not “is this you” — with the author of the line they caught.
 3. Felt physically what cross-team mixing looks like, so the work version is easy to name.
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When to use this activity

- A group keeps clustering with the same faces and you want strangers introduced to each other, not just warmed up.
 - You have fifteen minutes and a little open floor; the movement is the point.
 - Remote: everyone “throws” by dropping their written line into a shared channel; you read one back and the group finds the author.
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Why a plane, not a card swap

Handing a card to your neighbour keeps people in their lane. Throwing it across the room makes the mix physical and random — the plane lands with someone you'd never have chosen to talk to, and the follow-up question is what turns a parlor trick into two people who now know something real about each other.

Setup

Space: a room with a little open floor so planes can actually fly; pairs finish standing wherever their plane landed.

Materials per person: one plain sheet (A4/Letter) to write and fold into a plane, and a pen. Nothing needs to be printed to run it.

Materials for the room: the instruction, follow-up-question and gallery cards from [paper-plane-intros-prop-card s.pdf](#) — read them aloud or pin them up.

Grouping: the whole group throws at once; retrieval is random by design, so nobody hunts for a friend.

Roles: everyone writes, folds, throws and reads; you count the throw, hold “nothing obvious”, and model one good follow-up before round one.

How to run it

Time	Phase	What you do
0–2	Write	Each person writes one non-obvious line about themselves on a sheet. No name on the outside — only the plane.
2–4	Fold & throw	Everyone folds a plane and, on your count, throws across the room. Each person retrieves one that isn't obviously theirs.
4–9	Read & find	Read the line you caught aloud, then find who wrote it. Ask them one follow-up question — not “is this you”, something real.
9–13	Round two	Write a second line (deeper this time), refold, rethrow, repeat. Two rounds is usually plenty.
13–15	Gallery	Go around: each person names the plane they caught and the one thing they learned about its author.

The two rules

- Nothing obvious. If it could be read off a name tag or a job title, it doesn't qualify — “I've been here three years” is not a plane; “I was a touring chess player” is.
- The follow-up is the activity. Finding the author is the setup; the real moment is the genuine question you ask them afterward.

The card

Use the faces from [paper-plane-intros-prop-cards.pdf](#): an instruction card (what to write, how to fold), a follow-up question card, a gallery card, and blank faces to author your own. The follow-up card is the one that matters — read it aloud before round one so the room has a real example.

Failure modes

- **Everyone writes their job and city.** Read the “nothing obvious” rule twice and give a concrete example before you throw.
- **People grab back their own plane.** If you recognize your line, you must throw it on and catch a different one.
- **The follow-up dies at “is this you?”** Model one real question before round one; the pair who goes deeper gets a better conversation, and the room can hear it.

Variations

- **Remote:** everyone drops their line into a shared channel; you read one back and the group finds the author in chat or on mic.
- **Large group (20+):** split into two throws in halves of the room, then a gallery that names only the surprising lines, or it will not finish.

- **Deeper second round:** make round two “the thing you’d never put on a name tag”, and let the follow-up run longer.
- **Domain reskin:** for a new-team session, ask for a line about how you work (“I alphabetise the shared drive”), so the mixing doubles as a working-style reveal.
- **No-print fallback:** no cards at all — read the instruction and the follow-up rule aloud; the planes are just folded paper.

Facilitation notes

- Keep it moving and loud; the fifteen minutes live or die on the throw, not the writing.
- The strongest moment is someone reading an odd line aloud and a person across the room standing up to claim it.
- A plain sheet per person is enough — no special paper; the folder needs no projector at all.

Put it on the wall

Print `paper-plane-intros-activity-poster.pdf` (A3) to put the run of show, the two rules and the follow-up prompt on one wall while you facilitate.

Props in this folder

- `paper-plane-intros-prop-cards.pdf` — poker-spec print sheet (63.5 × 88.9 mm, bleed and cut guides): instruction card, follow-up-question card, gallery card, blank faces, branded backs
- `paper-plane-intros-run-sheet.pdf` — the print edition: this run sheet + the debrief, bound as one A4 document with bookmarks (`-Letter.pdf` is US Letter)
- `paper-plane-intros-activity-poster.pdf` — the whole icebreaker on one A3 wall sheet
- `paper-plane-intros-guide.md` · `-debrief.md` · `-start-here.md` — the facilitator guide, the debrief, the one-page start here
- `paper-plane-intros-license.md` — what you may do with all of this
- `SKILL.md` · `paper-plane-intros.zip` — the machine-readable manifest, and the whole folder in one download

Agent version

Every file in this folder has a stable public URL — an AI agent can fetch the cards, the debrief and this run sheet with three curl commands (see `SKILL.md`). The paper version needs nothing but a sheet of paper per person, a pen and some open floor.

Paper Plane Intros — Debrief

A roomful of paper planes is a fun trick. A roomful of people who just asked each other a real question is the actual result.

Use with `paper-plane-intros-guide.md`. The gallery at minute 13 is the compressed version; this sheet is the full one.

How to run this debrief

- Ask for **what was learned, not the line that was caught**. The plane is the door; the finding behind it is the point.
- Name the lines nobody guessed out loud — those are where the group’s picture of each other was simply wrong.
- Close on one conversation each person will actually continue today, so it does not stop at “fun”.

Read what came back

1. **The lines nobody guessed.** The planes that stumped the room are where the group’s assumptions about each other were wrong — name a couple out loud.
2. **The far lands.** Which planes crossed the whole room? That is the mixing you did not get from seating or a card swap.
3. **The follow-ups that kept going.** Which pair, finding each other, kept talking past the required question? That is the thing you are actually building.

The four debrief questions

- What did you learn about someone you would never have chosen to sit next to?
- Whose plane surprised the room, and what did we all wrongly assume before it was claimed?
- Where in your real work do people stay in their lane, and what is your version of throwing across the room?
- What is one person here you now want to keep talking to, and about what?

Failure modes of the debrief

Failure mode	Why it happens	The rescue
It stays a party game	The planes are fun on their own	Bridge: this is what cross-team mixing feels like — name one lane in your work that needs a throw.
The gallery is shallow	People read the line, not the finding	Ask each person for the one thing they learned, not the line they caught.
Nobody owned the follow-up	Debrief ends at “fun”	Close on one conversation each person will actually continue today.