Facilitating Introductions - When groups first come together, interactions and discussions can be hindered by apprehension, a lack of understanding the norms of the group, and/or simple unfamiliarity among other possibilities. Icebreakers can be used to create familiarity within the group and ease everyone into the group process. The desired end result is a more open discussion forum and pleasing environment within the group in which the group process can continue.

Prior Knowledge Assessment - One pedagogical advantage of using icebreakers is that they provide the trainer an opportunity to assess participants' prior knowledge. They can then lead to the identification of individual needs within the group while also introducing everyone and helping to create a healthy group environment as with facilitating introductions.

Environment Creation/Fostering Group Unity- The environment has already been mentioned in each of the above uses. A primary purpose of icebreakers can be to help create an open environment in which all participants are willing to open up and participate. Participants need to be encouraged to open up to one another and relax. The introduction and the method by which the icebreaker is carried out can also be designed to encourage a breakdown of status/race/gender/etc. barriers that may pre-exist in the group. As members of the group get to know one another for better or worse, a form of group unity develops, especially in situations in which a common goal both exists and is known by all.

Topic Segues - When starting a new topic, icebreakers can be created to introduce the topic. Often, some form of prior knowledge activity can be used to this end. These are also particularly useful when the members of the group already know each other.

Preparation of Participants - Many learning environments (and this concept is particularly true in online education) require some form of introduction in order to be fully utilized by the participants. By structuring the icebreaker activity into the learning environment or course management system, participants can get to know one another while getting to know the course delivery method.

• <u>Energizers</u> - Some icebreakers are designed simply to energize the group of participants. They can still be very useful for second day/morning activities to help wake up everyone.

What's In It For Me (WIIFM) – Some icebreakers can be used as an alternative to identifying participants' training needs.	O