



## Fast Friends by Heather M. O'Connor

### Don't Box Me In:

A classroom activity adapted from the video [Don't Put People in Boxes](#)

We often judge other people. We stick to our friends, and to the people we know. We form cliques, convinced that the people we *don't* socialize with are nothing like us. Nothing is further from the truth.

The imaginary boxes we draw around others perpetuate stereotypes about popularity, race, gender, culture, ability and socioeconomic status. This eye-opening activity breaks open those boxes. It shows students that the emotions they feel and the interests they enjoy are not so unique after all.

1. Make a list of questions. (See sample questions below.) If you stick with easy answers about interests and hobbies, this activity makes a good icebreaker for the first week of school.

If your students are comfortable with each other, you can sprinkle in a few deeper questions with braver admissions as the game goes on.

2. Find a large open area like a gym or playground. Create 4 to 6 home bases around the perimeter of the area.
3. Tell students to choose a home base. They will return to this base after every question.
4. Ask the students a question. Students that can answer “yes” move to the centre of the circle. (Teachers may wish to play along.)
5. Tell the students to return to their home base, and ask a new question.

Here are a few sample questions

#### Easy questions

- Whose favourite colour is blue?
- Who has a favourite sports team?
- Who doesn't like pizza?
- Whose favourite subject is math?
- Who knows how to swim / ride a bike?
- Who tells good jokes?
- Who is forgetful?
- Who lives with a grandparent?
- Who has been the “new kid”?
- Who had an imaginary friend?
- Who is never on time?
- Who likes to draw?
- Who wishes they could fly/do magic?
- Who has already read 3 books this week?
- Who has a sibling/is the oldest/youngest?
- Who helps out at home?
- Who is a really good hugger?

#### Deeper questions

- Who has a bad temper?
- Who gets bored at recess?
- Who is looking for a friend?
- Who feels lonely or sad sometimes?
- Who has a hard time saying sorry?
- Who finds it hard to make friends?
- Who is afraid of spiders/snakes/the dark?
- Who has a hard time sitting still?
- Who has lost someone they love recently?
- Who has been bullied?
- Who has bullied someone else?
- Who likes to tease?
- Who says the wrong thing sometimes?
- Who has accidentally spilled a secret?
- Who has hurt someone's feelings and felt bad about it?

I love doing events and in-person or virtual school visits.  
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