

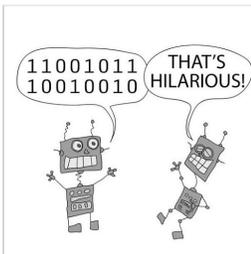
# 8 Ideas for Building Remote Classroom Community

Starting the school year remotely has many potential drawbacks, but perhaps the most deeply felt is the missed opportunity to meet students face-to-face and establish personal connections with them in the first weeks of school. Fortunately, it is still possible to build relationships remotely. Here are **8 ideas** that can work for any grade level, K-12. Try weaving one of these into each remote lesson you teach in the first month of school.



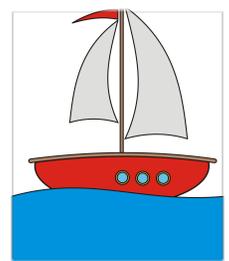
**Rose & Thorn:** Place students into breakout rooms of 4-5 students each. Have them go around and each say hello and share their name. (“Hello. My name is Grace”) After each person shares, the rest of the group welcomes them chorally (“Welcome, Grace”). After each person has been welcomed by name, they go around a second time and each person shares one rose (thing that made them happy recently) and/or one thorn (thing that made them sad or angry recently). Bring class back to whole group. The activity can end there or one student from each group can share out who was in their group (saying each group member’s name) and one rose or thorn that two or more group members had in common.

**Interest Catalog + Community Spotlight:** Create an “interest catalog” for students to fill out where they tell you what their personal interests are. You can find dozens of pre-created ones on Teachers-Pay-Teachers. Each day take one thing from one person’s list and spotlight it for 1 minute at the beginning, end, or in the middle of class. You don’t have to say whose catalog it came from. For example, “Today’s community spotlight is on YouTuber DanTDM. I found this video/image/audio clip online.” (share images or clips with the class).



**Joke/Meme/Music/Video Break:** During each remote lesson, take a 2-minute joke, music, meme, or video break. Have students stand and stretch before, during, or after this break. For example, play a 2-minute clip from one of your favorite songs and have everyone stand and dance (or at least stand and walk around). Or, share a couple of silly jokes and after each one have students do 5 claps above their heads if they think it was funny or 3 spins in place if they didn’t. Afterwards, ask students to submit songs, jokes, memes, or short videos that they like to you to use for future lesson breaks. If they are comfortable with it, let them introduce and share their pre-approved submissions in a future lesson. You can share on their behalf if they are not comfortable.

**In My Boat:** Stand up, say your name, and then make a statement that each student can agree or disagree with. For example, “My name is Mrs. Dearborn and you are **in my boat** if you are looking at a screen right now.” Anybody who is looking at a screen (which would be everyone in remote learning) has to stand up to show that they are “in your boat.” Then everyone sits down and you call on a random student to stand, say their name, and make a different statement. For example, I call on Casey. Casey stands and says, “My name is Casey and you are in my boat if you didn’t eat breakfast today.” Anyone who didn’t eat breakfast stands up. You repeat this process several more times, each time calling randomly on a new student. **PRO TIP:** In each round call on a student who did NOT stand for the previous statement.



**VARIATION:** Add a call and response. For example, after Casey says their name the class says “Hi, Casey” before Casey shares what boat they are in. Or, after students stand to show they are in Casey’s boat, the students that are standing clap twice and say “I’m in Casey’s boat” before they sit back down.

# 8 Ideas for Building Remote Classroom Community



**Analogy Emotion Check-In:** Have students share how they are feeling by typing into the chat bar a related word or phrase. For example, "If your mood were a color, what color would it be? Be as specific as possible. Instead of 'blue' maybe try 'bright blue' or 'gray-blue' or 'blue like the ocean' or another type of blue." **Variation for K-3:** "Choose a crayon whose color matches how you feel right now. Hold it up to the webcam." Or you might ask students what sport, food, animal, or cartoon character most resembles their mood and have them type it into the chat bar (secondary) or act it out physically (elementary) or sketch it (any grade).



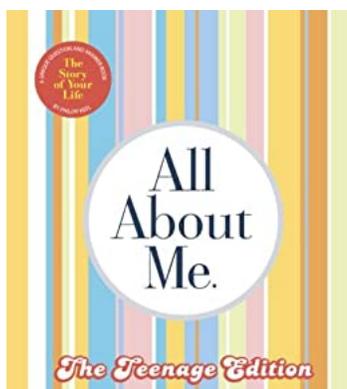
**Virtual Spirit Week:** Schedule a remote learning spirit week. For each day of remote spirit week students can participate in a different way. For example:

- wear your favorite pajamas day
- wear your favorite t-shirt day
- bring your pet/stuffy/action figure day
- wear a hat or head covering day
- fun face make-up day
- red, white, & blue day
- crazy hair day
- school colors day
- superhero day



**Desk Share:** Share an item in your immediate workspace or on your desk that has a backstory. Show the item to the class. Describe the item's significance/back story as best you can in 30 seconds. Use a visual 30 second timer. Then select a random student, or take a volunteer, re-set the timer and have the student show and share. After 6-8 students have shared, let the class know that you will be continuing with the "desk share" for the next few days until everyone has had a chance to share.

**PRO TIP:** As one student shares, type the name of the next student who will share in the chat box, to give them a head's up. Alternately, model the sharing yourself and then announce the order in which the students will share. Give students a day to prepare and start with them the next day.



**Meet Me:** Create an "All About Me" narrated book or slide show that is no more than 3-minutes long. You can do this in PowerPoint, Google Slides, or any other app or program you might be using with students regularly throughout the year. (check out [www.bookcreator.com](http://www.bookcreator.com)). Present your book to your class(es) and then assign each student to create an "All About Me" book of their own with images, words, and narration. Over the first few weeks of school, teach students how to use the technology necessary to create the book and give a little bit of time during several remote classes each week for them to work on it. After the first month of school, start showing one student's completed book at the beginning or end of each lesson until all student's books have been presented.