3.2.2 Melting Icebergs

Brief description, and rules of the game

Melting Icebergs is a movement-based learning activity focused on creative problem-solving, in which students are challenged to find new and imaginative ways to fit safely onto an increasingly smaller surface. The central question of the game is not who stays in and who is eliminated, but rather: How can we creatively organise ourselves so that everyone can fit? Students experiment together with body positions, spatial arrangements and movement strategies, while experiencing that creativity often emerges from shared thinking, cooperation and repeated trial and error. The activity emphasises effort, experimentation and collaboration rather than competition or success.

Skill focus

- **Primary Skill Focus**
  - Creativity
- **Complementary/Secondary Skill Focus**
  - Problem-solving
  - Flexibility

Age group	Student number	Duration
8-10 years old	whole class working in small groups (8-8 students per group)	25-30 minutes

How to play - brief game rules

1. Preparing the Playing Area: The teacher places a large carpet, blanket or sheet on the floor in the classroom or outdoors. This represents the “iceberg”. The students gather around the carpet. The teacher introduces the story framework of the game: “This iceberg is slowly melting. Your task is to make sure that as many people as possible can fit on it, even as it becomes smaller and smaller.” It is important to emphasise that there is no elimination, there are no ‘wrong’ solutions, effort and trying new ideas are what matter most.
2. Game Process – Finding Creative Solutions: The students step onto the carpet. From time to time, the teacher signals “melting” (e.g. by clapping or using a sound signal), then folds part of the carpet, or replaces it with a smaller one. After each round, students must reorganise themselves in a new way so that everyone fits on the carpet, no one steps off, they support each other safely. Students naturally begin to crouch or sit down, lean on each other’s shoulders, invent and test different body positions and arrangements.
3. Strengthening Conscious Creative Thinking: The teacher may briefly pause the game and ask reflective questions such as: “What was your idea?” “What helped everyone fit on the carpet?” “What could we try next time?” These questions help students become aware of their creative thinking processes and support metacognitive reflection.

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Indoor/Outdoor Classroom layout notes

The game requires a spacious and safe area. It can be played in the classroom, in the gym, or outdoors (e.g. schoolyard, grassy area). The teacher should ensure that the surface is non-slip, the carpet or blanket is an appropriate size, sufficient space is available for safe movement.

How does this game develop the primary skill?

During Melting Icebergs, creativity develops as students invent new body positions, try unusual spatial arrangements, create strategies together, respond flexibly to changing conditions. The activity demonstrates that creativity is not individual "genius", but rather the result of shared idea generation, experimentation, adaptation and cooperation.

What do we want to achieve regarding primary skill development (student understanding and/or behaviour)?

As a result of the game, students become more willing to try new solutions, recognise the power of collaborative thinking, handle problems more flexibly, experience that their ideas matter and contribute to success.

Suggested use, and practical examples

- In Physical Education lessons, the game works well as a creative warm-up or main activity. In addition to physical movement, creative problem-solving plays a central role, as students organise movement and positioning based on their own ideas rather than predefined exercises. This helps make PE lessons more reflective, cooperative and thinking-oriented.
- In class teacher sessions or community-building activities, the game supports cooperation, communication and attention to others. Students experience that every idea counts in achieving a shared goal, and that creative solutions often emerge through dialogue. It is especially useful when forming a new class community.
- During school trips, the activity is easy to implement, requires minimal equipment and works well outdoors. Stepping out of the usual learning environment encourages students to experiment more freely, remain physically active and create positive shared experiences that strengthen group cohesion.

Materials and tools needed for implementation

- 1–2 large carpets, blankets or sheets
- a signal tool (e.g. clapping, bell)
- a safe, spacious area

Guiding questions

- How did you manage to make sure everyone fit on the carpet?
- Which idea worked best?
- Was there a solution you did not think of at first?
- What did you learn about working together?

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Tips and Tricks for dealing with challenges

- **Challenge:** Students give up too quickly.
  Tip: Emphasise that there is no time limit. Introduce "one more idea round" before stopping.
- **Challenge:** Dominant students take control.
  Tip: Encourage quieter students to share ideas as well. Allow a different student to suggest a solution in each round.

Difficulty level tailoring

Beginners (6-7 years old): At beginner level, creativity appears in trying out ideas together and in safe experimentation. Students can explore at a calm pace how to create different body positions and spatial arrangements, while experiencing that every idea can be valuable. The "melting" happens more slowly, a larger carpet can be used, and more time is provided for thinking and discussion. The emphasis is on shared thinking, paying attention to one another, and trying out basic problem-solving strategies in a safe and supportive environment.

Advanced learners (8-9 years old): At advanced level, creativity is reflected in quick adaptation and the conscious search for original solutions. Students invent increasingly complex body positions and spatial combinations while responding flexibly to changing conditions. The space is reduced more quickly, leaving less time for organisation, and problem-solving without speaking can be introduced, encouraging new forms of communication. Predefined "creative challenges" (e.g., only sitting positions are allowed) may also be applied, enhancing flexibility, cooperation, and complex thinking.

Experts (9–10 years old): At expert level, creativity emerges as innovative collaboration, where students spontaneously develop new systems and strategies under continuously changing conditions. The reduction of space may happen at an unpredictable rhythm, and multiple consecutive challenges can be combined (e.g., no speaking and only specific body parts may touch the carpet), requiring students to think flexibly and act in close coordination at the same time. This level demands a high degree of trust, body awareness, strategic thinking, and rapid creative adaptation from all members of the group.

Debriefing and reflection questions

At the end of the game, the teacher initiates a short, guided discussion to help students reflect on their thinking processes, creative solutions and cooperative experiences. The teacher reinforces creativity, collaboration and the courage to try ideas, rather than focusing on success or failure. Possible closing questions:

- What solution did you come up with to make sure everyone fit on the carpet?
- Was there an idea that seemed strange at first but worked well in the end?
- How did you help each other during the activity?
- What happened when very little space was left?
- What new body position or arrangement did you try?
- Who shared an idea that helped the group move forward?
- What did you learn about yourself during this game?
- What would you do differently if we played again?

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