



Oral Communication

Introduction to Oral Communication

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Posters for Instruction: Oral Communication

Listen and Speak
Present

Introduction to Oral Communication

Oral skills – both speaking and listening – are at the very foundation of literacy. Classroom talk helps students to learn, to reflect on what they are learning, and to communicate their knowledge and understanding. The strategies in this section provide simple but powerful tools for improving communication in every classroom and all subject areas. Whatever you teach, these tools can help you to obtain more precise information about what your students know and can do. This, in turn, can help you to provide better feedback and guidance. Students need authentic opportunities to learn how to listen and speak effectively in a variety of situations – in pairs, and in small and large groups.

Students are sometimes assigned an oral activity (e.g., working in small groups) without a clear understanding of what is expected and how to be most effective. By taking the time to teach specific oral strategies in the context of your subject area, you will boost your students' confidence and performance.

Struggling students need:

- encouragement and explicit instruction to build their strengths and address their needs.
- a safe and encouraging environment to practise oral skills, if English is not their first language.
- extra practice, a peer to work with, and support from the teacher before presenting.
- well-chosen partners or team members who can model knowledge, skills and strategies at a level that is accessible and not intimidating.

Pair work

Working in pairs provides students with an opportunity to “think aloud” about what they know, and a process for acquiring and reflecting on information. For many students, pair work is a comfortable starting point to practise the skills they will need to participate in larger groups.

Small-group discussions

As with pair work, the strategies for small-group discussion give students the opportunity to develop critical thinking skills, build positive relationships, work cooperatively, and participate actively in their learning. You can put your students at ease by modelling effective skills for small-group discussion and by providing many opportunities to practise these skills in a safe environment.

Whole-class discussions

Students learn more readily in a class where they experience cooperation and a sense of belonging. By involving the whole class in shared activities, and by teaching students how to be good listeners, to respect each other and to participate without fear, you can maximize participation and minimize anxiety for all students.

Presentations

Presenting in front of a class can be a terrifying experience. Most students dread the class presentation, especially if they have not had enough instruction or practice before evaluation. By taking time to teach effective presentation skills before such an assignment, you free the student to focus on the content instead of the “performance.” The quality of presentations improves with effective instruction, practice and support.

Pair Work: Think/Pair/Share

In this strategy, students individually consider an issue or problem and then discuss their ideas with a partner.

Purpose

Encourage students to think about a question, issue, or reading, and then refine their understanding through discussion with a partner.

Payoff

Students will:

- reflect on subject content.
- deepen understanding of an issue or topic through clarification and rehearsal with a partner.
- develop skills for small-group discussion, such as listening actively, disagreeing respectfully, and rephrasing ideas for clarity.

Tips and Resources

- Use Think/Pair/Share in all subject areas for almost any topic. For example: in Business, discuss ethical business practices; in Math, solve a word problem together to better understand the task; in Science, exchange hypotheses before conducting an experiment.
- Use it to help students with their in-class reading. Ask them to read a chapter, think about the ideas, and then take turns retelling the information to a partner.
- Use it at any point during a lesson, for very brief intervals or in a longer time frame.
- Increase the amount of time devoted to Think/Pair/Share, depending on the complexity of the reading or question being considered. This strategy can be used for relatively simple questions and for ones that require more sophisticated thinking skills, such as hypothesizing or evaluating.
- Take time to ensure that all students understand the stages of the process and what is expected of them.
- Review the skills that students need to participate effectively in Think/Pair/Share, such as good listening, turn-taking, respectful consideration of different points of view, asking for clarification, and rephrasing ideas.
- After students share in pairs, consider switching partners and continuing the exchange of ideas.
- See other strategies, including **Take Five** and **Discussion Web** for ways to build on the Think/Pair/Share strategy.

Teaching Reading in Social Studies, Science, and Math, pp. 266-269.

Beyond Monet, pp. 94, 105.

Further Support

- Some students may benefit from a discussion with the teacher to articulate their ideas before moving on to share with a partner.

Pair Work: Think/Pair/Share

Notes

What teachers do	What students do
<p>Before</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have students read a selection or prepare a topic, question, or prompt for a planned Think/Pair/Share activity. <p>OR</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Choose a “teachable moment” during the class where the process of reflection and shared discussion would bring deeper understanding, and insert a brief Think/Pair/Share activity into the lesson at that point. <p>In either case:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider the social and academic goals for the Think/Pair/Share activity, and plan for pairing of particular learners that would further those goals. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read the chapter or section, if the Think/Pair/Share is based on information and ideas from a reading selection.
<p>During</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask students to spend several minutes thinking about and writing down ideas. • Set clear expectations regarding the focus of thinking and sharing to be done. • Put students in pairs to share and clarify their ideas and understanding. • Monitor students’ dialogue by circulating and listening. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Formulate thoughts and ideas, writing them down as necessary to prepare for sharing with a partner. • Practise good active listening skills when working in pairs, using techniques such as paraphrasing what the other has said, asking for clarification, and orally clarifying their own ideas.
<p>After</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Call upon some pairs to share their learning and ideas with the whole class. • Possibly extend the Think/Pair/Share with a further partner trade, where students swap partners and exchange ideas again. • Consider adding a journal writing activity as a productive follow-up to a Think/Pair/Share activity. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pinpoint any information that is still unclear after the pair discussion, and ask the class and teacher for clarification.

Pair Work: Take Five

In pairs, students take five minutes to orally review a concept and present it to the class, usually at the beginning or end of a class period.

Purpose

- Briefly consolidate or reinforce learning.

Payoff

Students will:

- develop a strategy that can be used to review content material in all areas.
- share responsibility for teaching and reviewing with each other.
- “talk” their way into meaning and understanding through verbal rehearsal.
- perceive continuity with content from class to class, especially when a lot of material is being covered quickly.

Tips and Resources

- Use this review-and-share strategy on a regular basis to reinforce the learning of subject-specific vocabulary.
- Have the take-five pairs present their reviews on sheets of chart paper, which you can then post in the classroom for ongoing review.
- Try not to pair students who are too far apart in their ability or understanding of the material.

Further Support

- ESL students may benefit from pairing with a partner who speaks the same first language so that they can clarify the concepts in their first language and build more confidently on their prior knowledge.

Pair Work: Take Five

What teachers do	What students do
<p>Before</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Decide on a concept from the previous day's lesson for review and consolidation Arrange students in "take five" buddies, with a designated student A and student B in each pair. 	
<p>During</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Invite students to engage in a Think/Pair/Share with their partner on a concept, formula, term, etc., from the previous day's work, assigning a different task to the A and B students. (For example, student A recalls or checks notes to find the formula for the volume of a cone, while B does the same for the formula for the volume of a sphere. Each shares the formula with his/her partner. Or student A reviews the process of photosynthesis, while B checks the meaning of all the words/terms in the process.) Let students know that one pair will be responsible for reviewing the concept with the whole class. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review notes, texts, and other materials relating to the concept being discussed. Consolidate learning through sharing, discussing, and clarifying the concepts together. Plan how to present the concept to the class if called upon to do so.
<p>After</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ask one pair to write the formula/process or concept on the board and review it with the class. Repeat the process, if appropriate, by rearranging the pairs and setting another Think/Pair/Share task for review and discussion. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support each other as a team in recalling and explaining the details to the class. Practise and develop the skills of explaining, rephrasing, and clarifying for the class.

Notes

Pair Work: Timed Retell

In this strategy, students practise their listening and speaking skills. Students divide into pairs and take turns speaking, listening, and retelling information in timed steps.

Purpose

- Enhance critical thinking skills.
- Create an argument and be concise in its delivery.
- Develop attentive listening skills while sharing viewpoints on an issue.
- Make connections between written and oral skills.

Payoff

Students will:

- share ideas.
- develop listening skills.
- apply skills in different ways – in pairs, small groups, and with the whole class.

Tips and Resources

- Timed Retell can be informal or more formal, as described here. In the more formal approach, students require more confidence.
- Students may make notes during the brief presentations given by their partners.
- It is possible to use this activity with more extensive subject matter. In that case students will need time to properly research the topic and devise their arguments.
- Additional information about peer editing is found in *Writing Strategies: Revising and Editing*.

Further Support

- The struggling student may feel uncomfortable speaking in front of the whole class. Students should be given other opportunities to share and practise speaking skills before this assignment.
- As always, consider pairs carefully.

Pair Work: Timed Retell

What teachers do	What students do
<p>Before</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Choose a relevant question or issue that might invite debate. • Make sure that students have the appropriate background knowledge on the issue. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individually brainstorm and jot down ideas about both sides of the question or issue.
<p>During</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Put students in pairs, facing each other. • Direct all partner A students to begin by speaking on the “for” side of the issue. Partner A will talk for one minute, while partner B listens. • Ask partner B to retell the talk for one minute. • At the end of one minute, ask partner B to present the opposing side of the argument. • Direct partner A to then retell partner B’s argument. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Decide who will be partner A and who will be partner B. • Partner A speaks for one minute, convincing partner B as much as possible. • Partner B listens carefully and retells partner A’s argument. • Partner B wraps up the retell and then gives the opposing argument. • Partner A listens carefully and retells partner B’s argument.
<p>After</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Invite students to write each other’s side of the issue into a paragraph or letter to the editor. • Put students into groups of four. Each group should contain students who all argued from the same point of view in their paragraph. • Ask students to read their paragraphs to the other members of their group. • Organize the class in a circle to discuss the group findings. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Write a carefully constructed paragraph from the partner’s point of view. • Read the paragraph to the partner to ensure that no important details have been omitted. • Peer-edit paragraphs for sentence structure, grammar and mechanical errors. • Read their paragraph to the other members of the group. • Comment on the points discussed in each reading. • List the common points. • Present the list of common points to the class, ensuring that all group members have a chance to speak.

Notes

Small-group Discussions: Group Roles

Students are divided into groups of a certain size – for example, five members. Each student is assigned a specific role and responsibility to carry out during the small-group discussion.

Purpose

- Encourage active participation by all group members.
- Foster awareness of the various tasks necessary in small-group discussion.
- Make students comfortable in a variety of roles in a discussion group.

Payoff

Students will:

- all speak in small groups.
- have specific roles to fulfil, clearly defining their role in the small group.
- receive positive feedback that is built into the process.
- participate actively in their learning.

Tips and Resources

- It is important to vary the composition of small groups, allowing students the opportunity to work with many classmates of various abilities, interests, backgrounds, home languages, and other characteristics.
- It is a good idea to repeat this activity throughout the year. This will allow students the opportunity to experience different roles and to improve their skills.
- Time the exercise to keep students focused on the task.
- If research is required, involve all students in the process, regardless of their role. This activity provides an excellent way for students to share research and come to a consensus about important information.
- For role ideas, see Student/Teacher Resource, *Sample Role Cards*.
- To encourage students to reflect on their learning, use Student Resource, *Small-group Discussion Reflection Sheet*.

Further Support

- Although it's important to vary the composition of groups, it is also important to consider the particular needs of struggling students.

Small-group Discussions: Group Roles

What teachers do	What students do
<p>Before</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Choose the task or topic for discussion. • Decide how many students will be in each group. • Decide on the roles for each group member. • Prepare role cards for each student. See Student Resource, <i>Sample Role Cards</i>. • For example: Leader: defines the task, keeps the group on task, and suggests a new way of looking at things. Manager: gathers and summarizes materials the group will need, keeps track of time, and collects materials the group used. Note maker: records ideas generated by the group, and clarifies the ideas with the group before recording. Reporter: reports the group's ideas to the class. Supporter: provides positive feedback for each speaker, makes sure everyone gets a turn, and intercepts negative behaviour. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understand the question/task. • Understand their roles and responsibilities.
<p>During</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Divide the class into groups. • Present the parameters of the task. • Explain time limits and keep track of time. • Circulate around the room, ensuring that all students are fulfilling their roles. • Comment constructively on the group process. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fulfil the roles to the best of their abilities. • Use active listening skills. • Act positively and encourage other group members. • Participate fully in the discussion. • Adhere to the time limits set by the teacher.
<p>After</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask students to individually complete an evaluation of the discussion. See Student Resource, <i>Small-group Discussion Reflection Sheet</i>. • Put students in groups. • Debrief with the whole class, asking students to comment on the success, benefits of the exercise. • Plan to repeat this activity, allowing students to try each of the other roles. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complete the <i>Small-group Discussion Reflection Sheet</i>. • Discuss the successes and benefits of using structures/ rules in small groups.

Notes

Sample Role Cards

LEADER

- Does everyone understand what we're doing?
- Have you thought about this in another way?
- We're getting off topic; let's get back to the task.

MANAGER

- Here are the materials we'll need. This is what I think we should look at.
- We have _____ minutes left.
- Now that we're finished, let me gather the materials.

NOTE MAKER

- Would you repeat that so I can write it all down?
- What do you mean by that?
- Let me read to you what I've written so far.

REPORTER

- Let's review the secretary's notes.
- Does anyone have anything to add before I report to the class?
- Does anyone have any suggestions on how to report to the class?

SUPPORTER

- Really good point.
- We haven't heard from _____ yet.
- Please don't interrupt; you'll get a turn.



Small-group Discussion Reflection Sheet

Name: _____

Role: _____

Topic: _____

Comment on **your group's ability** to work together in a positive manner. Consider cooperation, listening, and organization.

What are your group's strengths?

What are your group's areas for improvement?

Comment on **your own ability** to work in a positive manner. Consider cooperation, listening, and organization.

What are your strengths?

What are your areas for improvement?

Comment on your success in fulfilling the role you were assigned.

Small-group Discussions: Place Mat

In this easy-to-use strategy, students are divided into small groups, gathered around a piece of chart paper. First, students individually think about a question and write down their ideas on their own section of the chart paper. Then students share ideas to discover common elements, which can be written in the centre of the chart paper.

Purpose

- Give all students an opportunity to share ideas and learn from each other in a cooperative small-group discussion.

Payoff

Students will:

- have an opportunity to reflect and participate.
- have fun interacting with others and extending their learning while accomplishing the task.

Tips and Resources

- The strategy can be used with a wide variety of questions and prompts.
- Use the place mat strategy for a wide range of learning goals, for example:
 - to encourage students to share ideas and come to a consensus on a topic
 - to activate the sharing of background knowledge among student
 - to help students share problem-solving techniques in mathematics and science
 - to take group notes during a video or oral presentation.
- Groups of 2 to 4 are ideal for place mat, but it can also work with up to 7 students in a group.
- You may choose several questions or issues for simultaneous consideration in a place mat strategy. To start, each group receives a different question or issue to work on. Once they have completed their discussion, the groups rotate through the various questions or issues until all have been explored.
- Place mat also works well as an icebreaker when students are just getting to know each other.
- For a sample place mat, see Teacher Resource, *Place Mat Template and Example*.

Beyond Monet, pp. 172-173.

Further Support

- Give careful consideration to the composition of the small groups, and vary the membership according to the students' styles of learning and interaction, subject-matter proficiency, and other characteristics.
- Some students may benefit from being able to "pass" during group sharing.

Small-group Discussions: Place Mat

What teachers do	What students do
<p>Before</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Divide students into groups of 4 or 5. • Decide on a question for the students to answer. • Distribute chart paper to each group. • Ask the students to divide the chart paper into sections equal to the number of students in the group, leaving a circle or square in the centre of the chart. <p>Note: This middle section can be omitted, depending on the learning task involved.</p>	
<p>During</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Direct each group member to think about, then write silently about a question or topic in their personal area of the chart paper for a determined amount of time. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gather their thoughts about the chosen question or topic and write silently in their own area of the paper, respecting the space and silence of all members of the group.
<p>After</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Give a signal for students in each group to discuss their ideas and experiences and find the common elements or ideas. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have students post the charts to share their group's thinking with the class. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Take turns sharing ideas with the group. • Engage in discussion with all group members to arrive at common elements or ideas. • Record common ideas in the centre of the place mat. • Use oral skills, such as active listening, requesting clarification, and coming to consensus. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Circulate around the room to look at the ideas on the charts of other groups.

Notes

Place Mat Template and Example

<p>Write quietly on your own in your section of the border for several minutes.</p>	
<p>Through group sharing of ideas and experiences, gather common concerns, concepts, and ideas in this section of the place mat.</p>	

Example: Take a few minutes to think about and then individually write down what you know about the Charter of Rights and Freedoms.
(activating students' background knowledge)

<p>it protects people's rights</p> <p>all people should be equal</p> <p>federal government</p> <p>Ottawa</p> <p>equality for all Canadians</p> <p>people have rights</p> <p>freedom to protest against the gov't</p>	<p>guarantees equality of men & women</p> <p>freedom of religion</p> <p>freedom of the press</p> <p>equality for the people with disabilities</p> <p>it affects our laws</p> <p>gives everyone the right to practise their religion</p> <p>federal or provincial - I'm not sure</p>
<p>Religious Freedom</p> <p>EQUALITY</p> <p>All people have rights</p>	

Small-group Discussions: Determining Key Ideas

In this strategy, students work individually to identify three to five key ideas. In pairs, they then share ideas and streamline their list of key ideas down to two to four. Finally, two pairs of students combine to share and reduce further to one or two key ideas.

Purpose

- Share and consolidate learning when reading new material.

Payoff

Students will:

- understand a topic more deeply.
- share learning with peers.
- sharpen skills in small-group discussion, especially in listening and persuading.
- learn to focus on the “big ideas.”
- practise how to summarize ideas.

Tips and Resources

- Use this strategy at the end of a chapter or series of readings to help students summarize the key ideas of the unit.
- Vary the pairing of students so that they learn to work with different partners.
- To help students visualize the process, use Student/Teacher Resource, *Steps for Working Together to Determine Key Ideas*.

Reading Strategies for the Content Areas, pp. 361-364.

Further Support

- For ESL/ELD learners, pair students of the same first language so that they can help each other in their native language.
- Post a chart of expressions related to the language of polite negotiation and persuasion so that students can refer to it. For ideas, see Student/Teacher Resource, *Speaking Out* in **Discussion Etiquette**.

Small-group Discussions: Determining Key Ideas

Notes

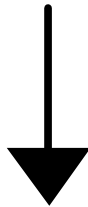
What teachers do	What students do
<p>Before</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide students with blank cue cards or stick-on notes. • Assign a reading selection. • Have students complete an initial summary of the reading in class or for homework before beginning the strategy. • Direct students to write three to five key ideas from their reading, one per cue card or stick-on note. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read and keep notes of main ideas. • Make judgements on what the three to five key ideas of the reading might be. • Summarize the key ideas on three to five separate cards or stick-ons.
<p>During</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Instruct students to form pairs to discuss their key ideas and to narrow these to two to four cards per pair. • Then, have two pairs of students then work together to further negotiate and refine their key ideas to one or two entries only. • If appropriate, review the language of negotiation and polite persuasion with students, in preparation for the negotiation process (e.g., <i>Do you think...? Would you agree that...? I don't agree with that because...</i>). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discuss the key ideas in pairs. Through negotiation, streamline them to two to four ideas per pair. Write the two to four combined ideas on cards. • Combine with another pair to further engage in give-and-take to condense the key ideas to a maximum of two. • Continually evaluate their own understanding of the material and its main ideas as they engage in the negotiation process.
<p>After</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Call upon each group to report their summaries of the most important ideas to the whole class. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Share the selected most important ideas with the whole class.

Steps for Working Together to Determine Key Ideas

On your own, summarize three to five key ideas on cue cards or stick-on notes.



In pairs, share your key ideas and, through discussion, streamline them to two to four ideas between you.



In a group of four, discuss and further trim your list of key ideas to one or two, to be shared with the class.

Small-group Discussions: Jigsaw

Jigsaw is a complex form of cooperative learning and it is important that students have experience with small group learning skills before they are involved in jigsaw. Jigsaw is a cooperative learning technique that provides students with an opportunity to actively help each other in their learning. Each student is assigned to a “home groups” of three to five, and an “expert group” consisting of members from different home groups. Students meet in their expert group to discuss specific ideas or solve problems. They then return to their home group, where all members share their expert knowledge.

Purpose

- Encourage group sharing and learning in a particular task.
- Provide struggling learners with more opportunities to comprehend meaning and ask for explanations than they would normally get in a whole-class situation with the teacher as leader.

Payoff

Students will:

- increase their comprehension and have a compelling reason for communication.
- receive support and clarification from other students.
- share responsibility for each other’s learning as they use critical thinking and social skills to accomplish the learning task.
- gain self-confidence through their contributions to the group effort.

Tips and Resources

- Create mixed-ability expert groups so that students of varying skills and abilities have the opportunity to learn from each other as they become experts on the material.
- As students enter the classroom, hand out cards with the expert group numbers or symbols on them, in order to manage the logistics of breaking off into expert groups. The various readings can also be coded in this manner for easy distribution.
- Provide a question sheet or chart to help the expert groups gather information in their particular area.
- Prepare a summary chart to guide students in organizing the experts’ information into a cohesive and meaningful whole.
- As another option, have the expert groups make presentations to the entire class on their section of the reading material. During the presentations, each student takes cumulative notes or fills in an information organizer, resulting in a complete picture of the reading when all of the presentations have been done.

Beyond Monet, pp. 158-159.

Reading, Writing, and Learning in ESL, pp. 337-338.

Teaching Reading in Social Studies, Science, and Math, pp. 264-266.

Further Support

- Give students a framework for managing their time on the various parts of the jigsaw task.
- Circulate to ensure that groups are on task and managing their work well. Ask groups to stop and think about how they are checking for everyone’s understanding and ensuring that everyone’s voice is heard.

Small-group Discussions: Jigsaw

What teachers do	What students do
<p>Before</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Choose an entire textbook chapter or article and divide it into smaller segments, or pick a series of readings on the same topic. Assign each student to a “home group” of three to five students. Assign each student to an “expert group,” with a focus on a particular segment of the task. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Meet briefly in the home groups before breaking off into the expert groups.
<p>During</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish guidelines for the information that students should include in their summaries (e.g., for a series of readings on chemical compounds, identify the following: the types of compounds, how they are formed, what reactions are caused, etc.). Have expert groups meet to read a selection or work on a task, review and discuss what was read, and determine essential concepts and information, using a question sheet or graphic organizer to guide them. Remind students that the experts will have to consider how they will teach the material to the home group members. Convene home groups so that each student can share his or her expertise with all members of the home group. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work together to make sure that all group members become “experts” on their particular part of the reading task, and help each other to decide how to report the learning to the home group (e.g., as a series of questions and answers; in chart or template form; or some other way). Use small-group discussion skills to share “expert” knowledge with the home group until all members have arrived at a common understanding of the entire task. When presenting information, monitor the comprehension of the group members by asking questions and rephrasing until it is clear that all group members understand the points. If appropriate, fill out a graphic organizer in the home group to gather all the information presented by each expert.
<p>After</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> If appropriate, convene the class as a whole group to review and share learning or to enable expert groups to present to the entire class. Have students reflect on the communication they used to help all group members understand the material. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ask the teacher to clarify any information or ideas that are still unclear or confusing. Discuss what communication helped them to understand the material explained by others.

Notes

Small-group Discussions: Discussion Web

In this strategy, students begin sharing their ideas in pairs, then build to a larger group. The discussion web provides practice in speaking, reading, and writing.

Purpose

- Give students the opportunity to develop their ideas about opposing sides of an issue and share them with classmates in a situation that requires critical thinking.

Payoff

Students will:

- be involved in discussion and critical thinking.
- take responsibility for developing and sharing their ideas.
- reflect on their own developing discussion skills.

Tips and Resources

- The discussion web works well in a variety of contexts (for example: “Should the composting of household organic waste be mandatory?” or “Should patents be granted on living organisms?”) The strategy guides students to think about an issue and gather evidence for both sides of the issue. It is important to choose an issue that has well-defined positions “for” and “against” a proposition.
- Model the process thoroughly to show how the discussion web works before having the class engage in the discussion web activity.
- Prepare a T-chart graphic organizer for students to organize their supporting arguments. For an example, see Teacher Resource, *Discussion Web T-chart Example*.

Teaching Reading in the Content Areas, pp. 160-162.

Teaching Reading in Social Studies, Science, and Math, pp. 269-273.

Further Support

- Some students may need support with notetaking while they read, or clarification about arguments that support each side of the issue.
- Have students fill out the Yes/No T-chart together in pairs.

Small-group Discussions: Discussion Web

Notes

What teachers do	What students do
<p>Before</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use before-reading strategies to prepare students before assigning a reading selection on a relevant topic. • Target a particular position or point in the reading selection and explain that students will read the selection and construct support for and against the point or position in the reading (e.g., genetically modified crop growing should be expanded; cities should offer free public transportation on smog days). • Present the discussion web question to the class. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read the selection chosen by the teacher. • Think about the point made or position stated in the reading selection, and individually try to construct support for both sides of the issue.
<p>During</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explain to students that they will have to develop support for both viewpoints by citing specific reasons. • Allow enough time for students to contemplate and write down reasons for each viewpoint. • Put students in pairs to share their written ideas. • Combine two pairs of students and have them compare their ideas and form a conclusion on which viewpoint to support. • Call on a representative from each group to share the group's conclusion with the class. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Think about and individually record ideas on both sides of the issue, using a T-chart format. • Share ideas with a partner, adding any missing ideas to their T-chart. • Move on to sharing ideas in a group of four, adding any additional points to the T-chart; the larger group must then decide which side of the issue to support, based on both the quantity and quality of the arguments on each side. • Reach a conclusion as an entire class about the viability of each position.
<p>After</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Follow up by asking students to individually write a paragraph about their own position and the reasons for taking it. • Provide time and a framework for students to reflect on the discussion skills they used during the activity, their strengths, and how they can improve. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Write about their position and reasons for it. • Reflect on the discussion skills they used and how they can improve their participation and effectiveness in small-group discussions.



Discussion Web T-chart Example

Should composting of organic waste be mandatory?

YES	NO
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• it protects our environment• it will cut down on landfill• it produces rich soil• it's the natural way• it will make people more aware of taking care of the environment• we should enforce a limit of one small garbage bag per household each week• it will make people more aware of how much food they are wasting	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• it's too hard to enforce• people would need too much training to learn how to compost• it takes too much time and effort – people won't buy in• the cost of supplying a compost bin to every household would be too high• what about people in apartment buildings – how would they manage it?• it would cost the municipality or city a lot of money to collect all the compost

Whole-class Discussions: Discussion Etiquette

In this strategy, students and teachers work together to create a list of rules for discussion etiquette to ensure shared ownership of the classroom environment.

Purpose

- To lay the groundwork for respectful and purposeful whole-class and small-group discussions.
- To create an environment in which students feel their contributions are valued.

Payoff

Students will:

- feel their contributions are valued.
- understand the expectations for appropriate behaviour which are clearly set out.
- participate in class- and small-group discussions.

Tips and Resources

- Negotiate classroom discussion etiquette early in the year or semester. When students understand and participate in framing the rules at the outset, the result in all subject classrooms will be more respectful and productive discussions.
- Provide multiple opportunities for a range of classroom and small-group discussions on a variety of topics.
- Model the rules for class discussion behaviour and the use of inclusive and respectful language at every opportunity in your daily instructional practice.
- Seize upon the moments in the classroom when you can point out the differences between the kind of informal, colloquial speech appropriate in a casual conversation among adolescent friends, and more formal speech required in a class discussion.

Reaching Higher: Making Connections Across the Curriculum, pp. 19-21.

Further Support

- The teacher and students need to be aware of the variety of cultural norms which may affect conversation patterns, such as physical proximity and eye contact.

Whole-class Discussions: Discussion Etiquette

Notes

What teachers do	What students do
<p>Before</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Think about expectations for respectful and productive discussion behaviour in your subject area. See Teacher Resource, <i>Discussion Etiquette</i> for generic suggestions. • Prepare a sheet of chart paper with a heading such as, <i>In our biology class discussions, we will...</i> 	
<p>During</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Set the stage for the brainstorm by telling students that this is an opportunity to jointly come up with a list of appropriate behaviours for class discussions that should be adhered to by all. • Facilitate a joint brainstorming session with the entire class. • Write on the chart those expectations that are agreed upon by the class. • Give examples of appropriate and inappropriate language in class discussions, and write a list of these on an additional chart. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Actively participate in framing the rules of appropriate behaviour during class discussion. • Talk through the differences between appropriate and inappropriate discussion behaviour and why they are important. • Focus on the differences between colloquial language they may use with peers outside the classroom, and more formal language required in a classroom.
<p>After</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Post the discussion etiquette list and accompanying language examples prominently in the classroom and take opportunities to refer and/or add to them throughout the year/course. • Ask students to make connections between the classroom discussion etiquette list and the school's code of conduct. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to take part in the joint negotiation of class discussion behaviour as the year progresses.

Discussion Etiquette

These are some of the etiquette rules that you may wish to have on your class list. Although this list should be created by students, you may want to guide them to ensure your class list is complete.

1. Participate fully.
2. Take turns speaking - one person speaks at a time.
3. Let others know that you have not finished speaking by using phrases such as *I have one more thing to add, furthermore, in addition*, etc.
4. Wait for your turn – don't interrupt.
5. Use supportive gestures and body language:
 - Maintain eye contact with the speaker.
 - Nod to show you are listening.
 - Use encouraging facial expressions.
 - Don't use inappropriate gestures.
6. Use respectful phrases when disagreeing with another speaker.
7. Listen carefully and attentively to other speakers.
8. Encourage and support those around you.
9. Avoid sarcasm and put-downs.
10. Stay on topic.
11. Remain open to new ideas.
12. Use inclusive language.
13. Ask questions when you don't understand.
14. Don't monopolize the conversation.

Speaking Out

Phrases for respectful disagreement include:

I disagree with... because...
I can't agree with... because...
On the other hand...
I doubt that because...

Examples of inappropriate disagreement include:

You're wrong.
No way!
Come on!
What!
That's crazy/stupid/ridiculous.
Are you kidding?
I hate that.
_____ doesn't know what he/she's talking about.

Phrases for politely expressing an opinion include:

In my opinion...
I believe...
I think...
Personally, I feel...
Not everyone will agree with me, but...

Phrases for politely making suggestions include:

Why don't you/we ...
How about...
Why don't we/you try...
One way would be...
Maybe we could...
I suggest we...

Tips for Enhancing Student Discussions

Create a respectful, positive, comfortable classroom climate.

Add wait time to allow students to gather their thoughts.

Rephrase and restate questions for students.

Encourage students to elaborate and give them time to do so.

Ask pointed questions.

Restate the students' points to confirm and clarify them.

Call on other students to extend their classmates' responses.

Use praise that gives specific feedback.

Give students many opportunities to practise speaking.

Limit teacher talk to maximize participation by students.

Students who are struggling may need:

- the option to “pass” in whole-class discussions
- one-to-one coaching and support from the teacher if they do not participate regularly
- yes/no or short-answer questions if they are in the early stages of learning English
- discussion points noted on the blackboard or chart paper to keep track of the discussion and to clarify understanding

Whole-class Discussions: Four Corners

In this strategy, students individually consider an issue and move to an area in the room where they join others who share their ideas. The beauty of this strategy is that it is flexible and can be used for many topics, questions, and subject areas.

Purpose

- Allow students to make personal decisions on various issues; encourage critical thinking.
- Encourage an exchange of ideas in small groups.
- Facilitate whole-class discussion of these ideas.

Payoff

Students will:

- make up their own minds on an issue.
- speak freely in a relaxed environment.
- think creatively and critically.

Tips and Resources

- Encourage students to make up their own mind concerning the issue.
- Possible variations:
 - Consider using more than four areas for response - even six responses can work well with various questions.
 - Try using only two responses; draw a line dividing the room and ask students to stand on one side of it, depending on their decision.
 - Vary the approach by creating a value line. Ask students to rank themselves by lining up in a single line of a continuum, from strongly agree to strongly disagree. This will make student exchanges a necessity so that students can discover exactly where they fit on the line.
 - History: Ask students to make an interpretation about a particular historical event (e.g., Who was responsible for WWII? German people, Hitler, signatory countries of the treaty of Versailles).
 - This strategy would work well as a forum in which students could share a product they have created. In this case students would take their work to one of the corners to share, compare and discuss with other students. This is a very helpful option for students prior to handing work in to the teacher.

Further Support

- The teacher may need to encourage some students and promote equal responses in groups.

Whole-class Discussions: Four Corners

Notes

What teachers do	What students do
<p>Before</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create a statement or question for students to ponder that has the potential for varying degrees of agreement or preference. • Organize the room into four areas (corners) and label with: strongly agree, agree, disagree or strongly disagree or with four descriptors/categories. • Give students ample opportunity to think about the question and take a stance. Students need to be encouraged to make their own choices. • A minute or two should be ample time; ensure that this time is spent quietly so that students make their own choices. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fully understand the question posed. • Carefully ponder the question, making a personal decision as to the position they will take.
<p>During</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask students to move to the corner that best represents their stance on the issue. • Direct students to get into groups of three (if possible) to discuss the reasons for their choices. In cases where the groups are not large enough, pairs may be formed. In cases where only one student is in a group, the teacher could act as the other member of the pair. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Move to the corner that best describes their personal views on the issue. • Engage in an exchange of ideas with other members of their group, remaining open and communicative. • Ensure that everyone is heard and that everyone in the group shares equally. • Prepare to speak to the class about the group's discussions, noting common reasons and differing opinions.
<p>After</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Call upon various groups to share information gathered in small-group discussions with the whole class. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Highlight their group's main points with the class, pointing out commonalities and discrepancies. • Ensure that each member of the group has something to share with the class.

FOUR CORNERS

1**Strongly agree****2****Agree**

Testing new
products on
animals should be
banned.

3**Disagree****4****Strongly disagree**

Whole-class Discussions: Triangle Debate

In this strategy, all students are involved in an informal, whole-class debate. It is a flexible tool that allows students to debate in a comfortable setting.

Purpose

- Encourage students to get involved in whole-class discussion.
- Create a comfortable atmosphere for students to share ideas and debate.

Payoff

Students will:

- participate in an informal debate.
- practise cognitively-demanding speaking skills in a comfortable environment.
- benefit from the research process.
- learn to process ideas and reach conclusions.

Tips and Resources

- This is not a formal debate - it is intended to facilitate whole-class discussion and critical thinking. Refer to Student/Teacher Resource, *Triangle Debating Tips*.
- It may be appropriate to divide the class in half, create two different questions, and prepare for two presentation days. The *Triangle Debate Organizer*, has space for up to 15 students per group; the maximum number of students suggested to ensure that there will be enough time for the presentation of the debate.
- It may be beneficial to do Triangle Debate three times in order to allow students the opportunity to work in all three groups.
- Spread debating over the term/semester/year to give students time to improve.
- If time is an issue, simplify the exercise by creating easier questions that do not require research.

Further Support

- Students who are uncomfortable about this process may benefit from working with a partner, sharing the research process and dividing up the debating process.
- Some students may require extra practice time in order to feel more comfortable with this process.

Whole-class Discussions: Triangle Debate

Notes

What teachers do	What students do
<p>Before</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Decide on the topic or issue for the debate (e.g., in a Civics class teachers could suggest the Canadian government). Brainstorm with students to arrive at a statement that can be debated. Divide students into three groups: group 1 will argue for the issue, group 2 will argue against the issue, and group 3 will prepare comments and questions about the issue. Give students ample time to prepare - this will vary and may or may not include research. Review procedures for the debate so that students may properly prepare. Refer to Teacher Resource, <i>Triangle Debate Procedures</i>. After all research is complete and students are prepared to present arguments, make a final draft of the <i>Triangle Debate Organizer</i> and photocopy for students. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Understand the issue. Create statement to be debated (e.g., Canada should become part of the United States). Students in groups 1 and 2 will prepare their debate speeches. Students in group 3 will prepare insightful comments and questions for each side of the debate. Students will understand all procedures for the debating process. Groups 1 and 2 will make decisions as to the order of their speakers and fill in their section in the <i>Triangle Debate Organizer</i>. Group 3 decides the order in which each member will ask a question.
<p>During</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Arrange chairs in the classroom to reflect the three-group structure, enabling all members to see each other (a triangular shape works well). Act as timer or choose a student from group 3 to perform this function. Act as moderator, calling on students to speak. Act as judge, ensuring that students avoid negative comments. 	
<p>After</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Photocopy Student Resources, <i>Triangle Debate Groups 1 and 2- Reflections</i>, and <i>Group 3 - Observations</i>. Distribute to each student, according to his/her group. Give students ample time to reflect on their experience. Lead whole-class debriefing session about the experience. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fill in the appropriate handout, focusing on both the group and individual roles. Participate in whole-class debriefing session.

Triangle Debating Tips

Here are some questions to think about while you prepare to present your ideas.

1. **Make sure you gather enough evidence to back up your argument:** Do I have proof to back up what I want to say?
2. **Organize your thoughts clearly and logically:** Will my audience be really clear about what I have said?
3. **Use strong, convincing language:** Do I sound confident? Have I used too many over-used words like *good, very, really, like*, etc.?
4. **Repeat, rephrase key ideas:** Will my audience hear what I want to say? Will my main points stick with them?
5. **Make eye contact with everyone in the room:** Do I make everyone in my audience feel as if I am talking directly to them?
6. **Vary your voice:** Do I sound monotonous? Have I varied the pace? Have I varied the volume, saving my loudest voice for the points I really want to drive home?
7. **Use appropriate gestures:** Does my body language emphasize what I want to say?
8. **Prepare for rebuttal:** Have I considered what the opposition will say; am I prepared to argue against it?
9. **Prepare for questions:** Have I considered what questions will be asked of me? Am I prepared to answer them convincingly?
10. **Practise, practise, practise:** Am I really prepared?

WORK TOGETHER TO ENSURE YOUR ENTIRE GROUP'S SUCCESS!

Triangle Debating Procedures

Topic: _____

These procedures are intended to act as a guide. Refer to them throughout the process to ensure that you are on the right track.

STEP ONE: The class is divided into three groups

STEP TWO: Each group is given a different task to complete:
Group 1 will argue in favour.
Group 2 will argue against.
Group 3 will comment on remarks made by a speaker and pose questions to groups 1 and 2.

STEP THREE: Groups will get together to create a plan of attack, decide on their main argument and how they will organize their speeches. It is important, at this stage, to refer to the *Triangle Debate Organizer* handout and begin to make choices concerning the order of speakers.

STEP FOUR: Students work individually to prepare speeches. Everyone in groups 1 and 2 is required to speak for 2 minutes. Everyone in group 3 is required to comment for one minute on points made by the two previous speakers and to prepare two insightful questions to ask of group 1 and two insightful questions to ask of group 2.

STEP FIVE: When all individuals have created their speeches, each group comes together to listen to their arguments as a whole. It is important to follow the order set in the *Triangle Debate Organizer* so that they have a clear impression as to how their argument will sound. At this point, groups may offer suggestions, make changes and polish their arguments.

STEP SIX: Practise, practise, practise and be ready to go.

Remember - you are a team! Stay positive and support each other throughout the process.



Triangle Debate Organizer

The following is the order in which each speaker will speak. Simply follow the numbers to see when it is your turn.

Group 1
Speaks for 2 min.

Group 2
Speaks for 2 min.

Group 3
Comments on last two
speakers for 1 min.

1. _____	2. _____	3. _____
4. _____	5. _____	6. _____
7. _____	8. _____	9. _____
10. _____	11. _____	12. _____
13. _____	14. _____	15. _____

WHEN THIS IS FINISHED, EACH MEMBER OF GROUP 3 WILL POSE ONE QUESTION TO GROUP 1 AND ONE QUESTION TO GROUP 2.

THESE QUESTIONS MAY BE ANSWERED BY ANYONE IN GROUPS 1 AND 2.



Triangle Debate Groups 1 and 2 - Reflections

Name: _____ Group: 1 2 (circle one)

Topic: _____

Comment on your group's ability to work together in a positive manner. Consider cooperation, listening, and organization.

What are your group's strengths?

What are your group's areas for improvement?

Comment on your own ability to work in a positive manner. Consider cooperation, listening, and organization.

What are your strengths?

What are your areas for improvement?



Triangle Debate Group 3 – Observations

Name _____

Debate Observed _____

What were the strongest arguments made by group 1? Why?

What were the strongest arguments made by group 2? Why?

Identify some of the excellent debating strategies used by the debaters.

List some ideas that you learned about this topic.

What skills will you try to remember to use when it is your turn to debate?

Presentations: Presentation Modelling

Many students are hesitant to give presentations in class; they are uncomfortable or nervous and do not clearly understand what an effective presentation looks like. By demonstrating an ineffective presentation, modelling an effective presentation, and facilitating student collaboration, teachers will ease student stress and clearly define an effective presentation.

Purpose

- To clearly define exemplary presentation skills.
- To create a comfortable, safe environment in which students may be successful in presentations.

Payoff

Students will:

- collaborate with each other and the teacher to improve the teacher's ineffective presentation.
- experience, first hand, examples of ineffective and effective presentations.
- observe their suggestions for improvement in action.

Tips and Resources

- Teachers may consider modelling only the effective presentation. Teachers need to be cautious when demonstrating the ineffective presentation - a sense of humour goes a long way to help your students be comfortable.
- It may be helpful to videotape both the teacher's first presentation and the improved presentation so that students may re-examine the changes.

Further Support

- Give careful consideration when determining pairs of students who will present together.

Presentations: Presentation Modelling

Notes

What teachers do	What students do
<p>Before</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prepare a brief presentation for the class that demonstrates ineffective presentation skills. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Observe teacher's first presentation and prepare to comment on areas in need of improvement.
<p>During</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask students to write down all of the things that needed improvement in the presentation. • Divide class into small groups. • Facilitate whole-class discussion about the areas needing improvement. • Discuss how these improvements might take place. • Prepare a new presentation for the class, making improvements suggested. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Write down all areas needing improvement. • Discuss ideas with small group, compiling one list to be presented to the class. • Present ideas for improvement to the class. • Observe improved presentation. • Write down further suggestions. Discuss with the class how these suggestions may improve their own presentations.
<p>After</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Distribute <i>Effective Presentation Skills</i>. • Facilitate class discussion - is anything missing that needs to be added? • Give students a topic for their presentations. • Divide class into pairs - these pairs will give each other constructive criticism as they prepare to present. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Add any new ideas to their handouts. • Prepare presentations. • Practise presentations. • Work in pairs throughout practice sessions to give each other constructive criticism and helpful hints. • Before presenting, use handout as a checklist to ensure their presentations are effective • Present to class.



Effective Presentation Skills



Is the topic presented clearly and logically?	
Is the presentation clearly organized with an introduction, middle, and conclusion?	
Does the speaker have a thorough knowledge of the subject?	
Did the speaker gather information from a variety of sources?	
Did the speaker use visual aids to support the presentation?	
Did the speaker use appropriate tone and language for a classroom presentation?	
Did the speaker use effective eye contact with the audience?	
Did the speaker talk fluently without false starts?	
Did the speaker vary the volume of speech?	
Did the speaker vary the rate of speech?	
Did the speaker articulate clearly?	
Did the speaker use conjunctions effectively? (e.g., <i>and</i> , <i>then</i> , <i>because</i>)	
Did the speaker explain unfamiliar terms to others?	
Did the speaker talk for the appropriate amount of time?	
Did the speaker avoid unnecessary movements such as shuffling, toe tapping and shaking?	
Did the speaker involve the audience in the presentation?	
Did the speaker engage and inspire the audience?	

Posters for Instruction: Oral Communication

A series of communication posters is included in this resource document. They are intended to provide reminders for students when they are reading, writing or engaged in discussion in class. These posters can be displayed during instructional time or when students are practising the skills. While the posters appear as 8 ½ x 11" size in this document, they can be enlarged to legal or ledger size paper using a commercial photocopier.

In oral communication, the posters focus on listening, speaking and presenting.

Listen & Speak



To be an effective communicator, I ...

- ↳ focus on what is being said.
- ↳ keep an open mind.
- ↳ let the speaker finish before adding ideas.
- ↳ respond with a question.
- ↳ avoid sarcasm and put-downs.

Communication

Present



How can I improve my presentation skills?






- ↳ Understand and explain your content.
- ↳ Organize with a beginning, middle, and end.
- ↳ Emphasize key ideas (repeat, rephrase).
- ↳ Use strong, convincing language.
- ↳ Use visual aids.
- ↳ Repeat, rephrase key ideas.
- ↳ Practise.
- ↳ Prepare for questions.

Communication

Listen & Speak

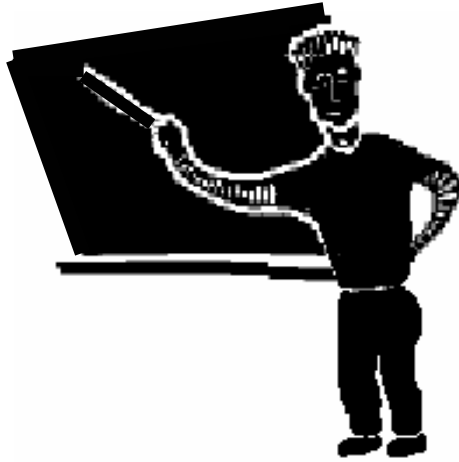


To be an effective communicator, I ...

-  focus on what is being said.
-  keep an open mind.
-  let the speaker finish before adding ideas.
-  respond with a question.
-  avoid sarcasm and put-downs.

Communication

Present



How can I improve my presentation skills?

- 📌 Understand and explain your content.
- 📌 Organize with a beginning, middle, and end.
- 📌 Emphasize key ideas (repeat, rephrase).
- 📌 Use strong, convincing language.
- 📌 Use visual aids.
- 📌 Repeat, rephrase key ideas.
- 📌 Practise.
- 📌 Prepare for questions.