

Talk about talk

Resource theme: Dialogue in student groups

Resource type: Core Activity

Time required: 30-60 minutes

These **‘Talk about talk’** activities can be used to support students in (i) thinking together about different sorts of talk; (ii) deciding what sort of talk suits what particular purpose.

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Talk about talk

Adapted from the [Thinking Together](#) resources (Dawes, 2016)

RESOURCES

1a Opening Activity: What can I say about talk? (one per person)

1b Group Work: Talk Word Cards (cut into cards, one per group)

AIMS

To think together about different sorts of talk

To decide what sort of talk suits what particular purpose

WHOLE CLASS 1

Introduce the lesson by stressing to students that the specific aim of this lesson is to define some sorts of talk, when they are useful, and why.

Working with a partner to help with reading and ideas, ask everyone to fill in **1a**.

There are no right or wrong answers and spelling and presentation are not important.

Ask pairs to share and discuss their ideas with a different pair. Which answers are the same? Which different? Why? Which are interesting and could be shared with the whole class?

Conduct a whole class discussion in which pairs and individuals contribute their ideas. If possible, bring out the importance of talk:

- as a means of helping us to think together
- as a way of thinking and reasoning aloud – very important in education
- as a way of everyone learning from one another and all doing better

Explain the Group Work Task.

GROUP WORK

Give each group a set of cards (1b Talk Word Cards) and a large sheet of sugar paper divided into 4. (Alternatives: 4 boxes, hoops, sheets of A4 paper, string and blutack to divide the desk top into 4 areas). Ask the groups to label the four areas:

Social Talk

Disagreement

Discussion

Other

The task is to look at the words, talk together to agree what they mean, and then allocate the card to one of the four groups. Dictionaries can be used if required. Some words may fit into more than one category. There are no entirely 'correct' answers.

WHOLE CLASS 2

Ask a group to read their word list for Social Talk. Other groups should check the words which they also have in this category. Ask groups for their reasons for including words which other groups do not agree with. Repeat with other categories, finishing with 'Discussion'.

Ask the groups to consider which of the sorts of talk their group employed to get the job of sorting out the words done:

- Can they provide examples of questioning, reasoning, negotiating, arguing?
- Which sort of talk is the most effective for problem solving?
- Which sort of talk happens most often in groups, for example when working at the computer/ in Games lessons / in curriculum areas?
- What sort of talk do the class think teachers expect them to use when working together?
- Why is talk in classrooms often social? How does this affect thinking together?
- Do people generally enjoy group work and find it useful, or find it difficult?
- Why?
- Are any difficulties to do with the type of talk that goes on?

Discuss problems to do with turn taking, dominance, refusal to contribute, distraction.

Ask the pupils to be aware of the types of talk and try to collect examples over the period of time until the next lesson.

Repeat the lesson aims and check that the pupils feel that they have been achieved.

Closing Activity

Ask the groups to talk together to compile two lists:

- ways people communicate without speaking and listening
- ways creatures which have no language communicate

1a: What can we say about talk? Write a note for each question.

1. Talk around us

Why do people talk to each other?	
Would you describe yourself as good at talking? Why / why not?	
Does anyone ever ask you to stop talking? Who asks this, and why?	
When is talk especially important?	
Do you know anyone who is easy to talk to? Can you say why?	
Can you think of an example of finding it difficult to speak, or listen?	

2. Using talk

Is talk as important as reading and writing?	
Have you been taught how to talk, in school?	
Are you asked to talk together in class? In which lessons?	
Can you think of reasons why talking to each other about work is useful?	
What 'work' can you get done by talking?	
How many different languages can you speak?	

3. Communicating

What happens when people talk but others don't listen?	
What are any differences between talking and writing?	
What are similarities and difference between email, text messaging and talking?	
When is it important to be silent?	
Why is silence important in some places?	
Do some people enjoy silence more than others? Do you?	
Why is talk a good way to communicate?	

Extension Activities.

- a) At home, pupils can ask parents/relatives to describe their experiences in classrooms or at home - when was talk allowed, encouraged, or discouraged.

- b) At home, pupils can find out how old they were when they began to talk, and see if anyone remembers what they first said, or anything amusing they said as an infant. Or pupils could monitor the speech of a younger member of the family to see how they learn to say new words.

- c) Pupils who can speak more than one language can be asked to contribute by describing how they choose which language to use when they are talking. What problems have they encountered? What problems have single language speakers encountered in visiting other countries?

- d) Research sign languages for the hearing impaired/codes eg semaphore.

- e) Pupils can find out about codes for communicating, such as morse code, semaphore, etc. Dance/ drama can be used to explain 'body language' - what are its limitations when compared to spoken language? What are its strengths?

- f) Ask students to compare texting, email, talking together, and writing letters.

- g) Comics can provide a rich source of speech bubbles. In some, language is used creatively to convey sound or action. Analyse the words used to convey talk, the way they are drawn, and the meanings such speech bubbles make.

1b Group Work : Talk Work Cards

brag	ask	talk about
chat	command	comment
chatter	grumble	talk back
conversation	dispute	confess
demand	reason	convince
dialogue	request	mutter
enquire	explain	yell
explain	row	challenge
gossip	assert	whisper
laugh	discuss	mumble
insist	shout	opinion
remind	tell off	inform
stammer	argue	splutter
threaten	compromise	answer
natter	persuade	negotiate
reply	tell	question