

# Finding out by talking together

**Resource theme:** Dialogue in student groups

**Resource type:** Core Activity

**Time required:** 30-60 minutes

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These **'Finding out by talking together'** activities can be used to support students to (i) audit what talk skills they already have, and see how they can be built on; (ii) use and evaluate productive questioning and active listening.

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# Finding out by talking together

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

## RESOURCES

Paper and pens    stopwatch or timer    clipboards if possible

*2a High Quality Talk (one per person)*

*2b Group Work: Some Starter Questions (one per group or displayed)*

## AIMS

To audit what talk skills we already have, and see how they can be built on  
To use and evaluate productive questioning and active listening.

## WHOLE CLASS 1

Ask pupils to say if they recall why talk in classrooms – particularly groups – is so important, and what its purpose is (discussion/thinking together).

Provide everyone with a copy of 2a. Ask the class to complete the first column.  
(Alternative: pupils ask a friend to look at their 'scores' and pencil in any differences)

Hand out or display **2b: Some starter questions**. Explain the group work task (see below).

## GROUP WORK

One of the group is going to be **interviewed** about their favourite free time activity or hobby. Nothing should be written down. If someone claims they have no interests, they should be asked to describe in great detail what they did the previous evening or weekend, or a favourite tv programme, film or computer game.

Display the prompt questions and explain that these are only suggestions - their own ideas may well be better. Each interviewer must ask questions in turn – or build on what is said by asking their own question. Interviewers must listen carefully to the answers.

*Remind the groups of the aims for their talk together.*

The interview will last **one minute** (use a timer).

After the first interview, the process is repeated with the other members of the group.

## WHOLE CLASS 2

When the interviews are complete, the group talks together to appoint a speaker.

The speaker from each group briefly describes the hobbies of the group members.

Individuals may be asked to answer further questions from class members.

Conduct a whole class discussion about the purposes of **talking in groups**.

During this discussion, explain that the Talking and Thinking Together lessons are designed to help people use a specially effective sort of talk called **Exploratory Talk**.

### Exploratory Talk

Exploratory Talk is talk in which:

- all group members take equal part
- information and ideas are openly shared
- reasons are asked for, and given
- it is useful to hypothesise or speculate
- the group is working to reach an agreement
- the group is thinking aloud together

**Talking Points for this discussion:**

Talk always helps people to think together

We all have the skills to take part in Exploratory Talk

In school, group work is always effective

It's easier to work in a group with friends

Group work is dull and a waste of time

We can name some classmates who work well in groups

We can give three main problems with group work

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

**Closing Activity**

Ask the pupils to look again at 2a. Can they evaluate their performance differently now?

## Unit 2: EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

a) Pupils can interview someone at home, or an invited guest from another class, about their hobby. These interviews can have the aim of helping the pupils become 'good listeners'.

b) The pupils can create a display board depicting their hobby, with a brief description, or use a 'question and answer' format to explain the activity.

c) The talking groups can be given a folder in which group work will be collected. They can discuss how to decorate this in a way which will reflect their various interests.

d) The class can begin a collection from magazines, newspapers, etc, of pictures of people talking together - politicians, parents and pupils, pupils playing games or at the computer, adults discussing things - for display with captions. The uses and purposes of talk together can be stressed.

## 2a: High Quality Talk

Name:

I am working with:

**Think about the way you talk when you're working in a group.**

**Give yourself a score out of 5**

**5 = Brilliant!! Couldn't be better! Keep it up!**

**4 = Really good! Maybe one or two things to work on though. Aim for 5!**

**3 = Good! But I think I might be able to do better.**

**2 = OK! But some problems which seem hard to get round!**

**1 = Disaster!!! Completely terrible!!!**

| <b>Starter Activity:<br/>my marks<br/>out of 5</b> | <b>I can offer these qualities<br/>to my group</b> | <b>Closing Activity:<br/>my marks<br/>out of 5</b> |
|--|--|--|
|  | I listen carefully                                 |  |
|  | I think about what I hear                          |  |
|  | I do not get distracted into social talk           |  |
|  | I can say what I think clearly                     |  |
|  | I always give reasons for what I think             |  |
|  | I understand other people's point of view          |  |
|  | I respect what other people say                    |  |
|  | I have some great ideas                            |  |
|  | I can explain what I mean                          |  |
|  | I ask questions which help others to talk          |  |
|  | I can co-operate with anyone                       |  |
|  | I have good general knowledge                      |  |
|  | I am happy to share what I know                    |  |
|  | I am thoughtful                                    |  |
|  | I talk confidently                                 |  |
|  | I can persuade people by talking                   |  |
|  | I understand why work in groups is useful          |  |
|  | I am happy if my group does well                   |  |
|  | I understand the importance of talk                |  |
|  | I don't always want my own way                     |  |
|  | I know what makes a good discussion                |  |

## Sheet 2b: Group Work: Some Starter Questions for Interviews

- What do you like doing in your free time?
- Where do you go to do that?
- How often?
- What started you doing that in the first place? How long ago?
- Do you need special equipment or clothes?
- Is it expensive?
- How much time per week do you spend usually?
- What do your family think of it?
- Who do you do it with? Have you made friends through it?
- How far have you got with it? Are there levels/badges/certificates?
- What do you hope to achieve?
- Do you ever get fed up, find it difficult or want to stop?
- What keeps you going?
- Do you think other people in this class would like to do it too?
- How hard would it be for people our age to join in? Is it a girls/boys thing really?
- Anything else you also enjoy doing?