

INCORPORATING OPPORTUNITIES FOR INTERACTION AND SHARING

The attention span of young learners is a lot shorter than that of older students. Young learners need frequent opportunities to move around, take breaks, and interact. They also love to share information about their lives and experiences. In this week’s Teacher’s Corner, we will examine some simple ways to incorporate movement and interaction into any lesson in the young learners’ English classroom.

TURN AND TALK

Turn and talk may already be familiar to some teachers, but it is very significant when working with young learners. In this strategy, students have a partner toward whom they physically turn and talk about a question asked or topic stated by the teacher. For instance, the teacher could say, “I want you to turn and talk to your partner about something fun you did over the weekend.” Then, partners turn to each other and discuss the topic for a set amount of time. This simple strategy is great to use with young learners because the more frequently you provide opportunities for young students to share about their experiences or opinions, the more they will feel connected to content and valued in the classroom community.

This strategy is quite easy to integrate throughout the school day and requires very little preparation. The most important aspect is to rehearse procedures and expectations with your students. This will train your class to start and stop talking efficiently so that you can get back to your lesson. This strategy can be used with any topic or content. For instance, if you are reading a book to students, follow these steps:

Steps	What to say and do
Link the content to students’ lives with a question.	“Wow, (name of character) feels very surprised right now! Can you think of a time that you felt surprised? What made you feel that way?” Give students about ten seconds to think quietly.
Remind students of the proper procedures to follow.	“In just a moment, I will signal you to turn and talk to your partner about a time you felt surprised. Be sure that you both have time to share. When you hear the signal, start talking. When you hear it again, it is time to stop.”
Give students a signal to begin.	Ring a bell, clap your hands, or loudly say a special word to signal students. Listen in on their conversations and be sure both partners share. They should have about one minute for both partners to speak, depending on the question.
Give students a signal to stop talking.	Ring a bell, clap your hands, or loudly say a special word to signal students. Quickly acknowledge some of the conversations you heard by saying, “I heard that (student’s name) was surprised once because _____.” Return to the lesson by saying, “Let’s keep reading to find out why (character’s

name) is so surprised.”

When you introduce this strategy in your classroom, you will likely have to review procedures many times and remind students of your expectations. However, if you remain consistent, students will master the procedures. For very young students, it is helpful to assign partners ahead of time and have them seated next to each other. Initially, you may also want to plan and write 2 or 3 *turn and talk* questions into your lesson plans where you see opportunities for students to share information. Once you have done this several times, you will be able to quickly come up with *turn and talk* questions while you are teaching or when you feel that students are becoming restless and need to interact.

THINK-PAIR-SHARE

Think-pair-share is similar to turn and talk because students have time to think individually before they discuss a question or idea in pairs. As with *turn and talk*, the more well established the procedures are, the more efficiently this strategy can be integrated into your teaching. The difference here is that pairs have an opportunity to share with the whole class after their discussion.

You can follow the same procedures outlined above. After students finish their discussion, each pair should have time to share their ideas. For this reason, this strategy works best when you give students an opinion question, a question with specific answer choices, or when you ask them to make predictions. Again, if you are reading students a book, a question to ask for a *think-pair-share* is, “What do you think (character’s name) will do next?” or “Do you think (character’s name) is right to feel so angry?”

Once you have followed the steps above, you can quickly restate the question and then call on one student from each pair to provide the answer or conclusion reached during the partner discussion. To make this run smoothly, you can pre-assign partners (as noted above) and designate one partner as A and the other as B. Give each pair a number. Then you can easily say, “We are going to share, starting with pair number one. I would like partner B to tell the class what you and your partner predict (character’s name) will do next.”

If you rehearse the procedures each time you use this strategy, it will become another easy way to quickly give your young learners a chance to interact and share their experiences.

STAND UP/SIT DOWN (OR THUMBS UP/THUMBS DOWN)

You can also give young learners a chance to share opinions or information nonverbally. You can ask learners to stand up or sit down, or show thumbs up or thumbs down according to their opinions and experiences. This is a very easy strategy to integrate, and the questions can be simple, such as:

- Stand up if you like _____. Sit down if you do not like _____.
- Show thumbs up if you have been to _____. Show thumbs down if you have not been to _____.
- Stand up if you think (character's name) did the right thing. Sit down if you think what (character's name) did was wrong.

You can extend this strategy by asking students to quickly find someone who is displaying the same response or the opposite response and explain why they made their choice. Or you can use this strategy to collect data about different topics for use during an activity. You can also use this to review information by making true/false statements and asking students to respond according to what they think is correct/incorrect.

While many of these strategies are likely familiar to many English teachers, the difference lies in how often you should use them if you teach young learners. As mentioned before, young learners have trouble sitting and listening for long periods of time. The more frequently you can include opportunities for young students to move around, talk, and share ideas, the more they will learn. The strategies presented this week require very little planning and are therefore a quick and easy way to incorporate interaction and sharing into your lessons.