

JOURNAL DISCUSSION

For some students, it can be intimidating to share pieces of their writing. Students might be worried that their writing isn't as strong as that of their classmates, or they might feel that the content of their writing is too personal to share out loud. Promoting a positive learning environment and cultivating personal relationships among students can help alleviate some of the anxiety that students may feel when sharing their writing. This week's Teacher's Corner focuses on sharing personal information—through student writing. In this activity, students introduce and meet a classmate through a written journal discussion. The activity is designed to get students comfortable sharing their writing in a low-stakes activity, while also building their personal relationships.

LEVEL

Intermediate and above

SKILLS

Writing

GOALS

During this activity, students will be able to

- Write and respond to questions about themselves

MATERIALS

- Pencil/pen and paper

PREPARATION

- Put students into pairs in advance of class. Try to pair students who do not know one another.

PROCEDURE

1. Introduce the activity by putting students into pairs and explaining that today they will “meet” their partner through a written conversation.

2. Tell students to take out a piece of paper and to fold it in half lengthwise. (See Appendix A for an example.)
3. Tell students that they are going to write three sentences, on the left side of the paper, to introduce themselves.
4. Give students a few minutes to write.
5. Once students have written their three sentences, tell them to trade papers with their partners. Encourage them to stay quiet since this activity is focused on communicating through writing.
6. Now tell students that on the right side of the paper, they are going to write a response to their partners' sentences. Their response is going to be in the form of a follow-up question. Tell them that the question should not be a yes/no question, but one that requires a fuller answer. This means they should write *wh-* questions (These are questions that begin with the words *who*, *what*, *when*, *where*, *why*, or *how*.).
7. After students write their follow-up question on the right side of the paper, they should then hand the paper back to their partners.
8. Students will then write a short response to their partners' questions with some additional, related information and then hand the paper back to their partners for another question.
9. Students will continue to work with their partner on this for 7-10 minutes, or until you observe that they have had a full conversation.
10. Once enough time has passed, tell students to take their own papers back and to write a one-paragraph summary on the back, explaining what they now know about their partners.

VARIATIONS

As an alternative structure, you could have students work in groups of 3-5 students. Students then pass their papers to the left, and all members of their group will write a question before the paper returns to

the student for response. With bigger groups, students will have a greater variety of questions and more to respond to during the conversation.

Depending on students' level of language, you can vary the number of sentences students should write in their responses.

Finally, this style of written conversation can be used beyond personal introductions and adapted to fit a brainstorming assignment or a peer review assignment.

APPENDIX A

Responses	Questions
<p>My name is Daniel and I'm studying engineering here at the university. I want to be a mechanical engineer and design better, more efficient cars. I'm married with two children.</p>	<p>How old are your children and what are their names?</p>
<p>My daughter, Ella, is 10 years old and my son, Hector is 6 years old. I love them so much and have so much fun spending time with them.</p>	<p>What kinds of things do you like to do with your children?</p>
<p>We love to go to the park on weekends and fly kites. My daughter is getting really good at it, but my son is a little too slow and small to get the kites flying high.</p>	<p>How did you become interested in flying kites?</p>
<p>My dad was a kite maker in his spare time when I was young. He would take me to kite races and enter competitions. I don't do competitions anymore, but I still like to go out with a kite.</p>	<p>What do you like to do in addition to flying kites?</p>