

NEGOTIATION TEACHING TOOL
Created by Evrea Ness-Bergstein
enbergstein@gmail.com

Title

Write First, Talk Later

Brief Description

Students will be given short written prompts about communication issues and will work in small groups, carrying out “silent conversations”. Instead of speaking to one another, students will respond in writing to the prompts and then to each other’s comments – all via writing/drawing on large poster papers. Only during the last stage of the activity, will the students begin a free verbal conversation about the prompt (quote), their own comments and what they read on the poster papers of the other groups.

Learning Objectives

- Listening skills: responding in depth to others
- Finding one’s inner voice and formulating ideas before speaking
- Reflecting on written versus verbal communication
- The *respectful* sharing and enlarging on ideas in small groups

Lead-in / Preparation

- 5-6 sheets of very large poster paper (3-5 students per poster paper)
- Print-out of the 5-6 writing prompts (quotes) on communication (see attached quotes)
- Colored markers (1-2 per student)
- Scotch tape for “anchoring” the posters on the tables
- Classroom set-up: 5-6 tables set up around the classroom, with room for the students to move around between the tables.

Note: Gloss (in L1) any difficult words in English that appear in the prompt/quote.



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Estimated Class-Time Required

45 minutes – 1 hour (with reflection time)

Note: It's important not to rush the process and to allow for reflection at the end of the activity, which is a core element in understanding the importance of this type of communication.

Description of Activities

Handout: Quotes/cartoons about communication and miscommunication (see below)

Source: "Big Paper" Building a Silent Conversation" <https://www.facinghistory.org/resource-library/teaching-strategies/big-paper-silent-conversation>

1. Set up the classroom in advance so that there are 5-6 large tables around the room and on each table is a writing prompt/quote printed out in large type and glued onto a large poster paper. 3-5 students should be grouped around each table AFTER you explain the activity. (It's preferable not to have chairs around, as students will be moving around the room.)
2. Tell the students that they will be having a different kind of discussion: "a written conversation" with each other about a specific theme: how people communicate. They will have a chance to express their opinions/ thoughts/ reactions to the quotes/cartoons they see on their poster papers AND to each other's comments and reactions. But the catch is THAT THEY WILL NOT BE ALLOWED TO SPEAK. Students will get markers and they can respond with written comments but also with pictures, diagrams, question marks, arrows, etc. The only requirements are to write clearly so that others can read it [and nothing inappropriate such as profanity].
3. The Process:
 - a. Students in small groups read their poster prompt and begin to comment in writing about the prompt and ask questions of each other on the poster. It's fine if the written conversation starts with the topic of the prompt and then goes in different directions. They should answer each other's questions and respond to



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comments. Everyone can write on the poster at the same time, as they stand and/or move around the table. (10 minutes)

- b. Students are now asked to leave their small groups and start to walk around, reading ALL of the other posters. They should use their markers to write comments and questions on the posters of the other groups. (15 minutes)
- c. Students return to their original small groups, back at their tables. They look at the comments that have been made by the other groups and now they are allowed to discuss everything out loud within their group: the meaning of the quote, the reactions of other students to their comments, etc. (5-7 minutes, or as needed)
- d. Debriefing and Reflection: whole class activity (10 minutes) -- see below "Reflection" for some guided questions.

Optional: Become the class reflection and debriefing by saying: "Raise your hand if you thought this was easy/hard to do."

Key Vocabulary / Phrases

Quotes, "this activity will be completed in silence", "a written conversation" / "a verbal conversation", debriefing

Assessment

Feedback from the students during the "debriefing" at the end of the activity.

Written Exit ticket (optional): "what did you learn from doing this activity?"

Reflection

Debriefing this activity is crucial. Ideally, students should sit or stand in a circle and discuss how it felt to not be able to speak but to respond only in writing to each other's comments. How was it different from speaking in a small group? How difficult was it to stay silent? What did they learn from their peers' comments? How did it feel to communicate in this way?

What thoughts/issues came up about communication in general?



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Comments

It's important to emphasize the most crucial rule of this "game": the activity must be completed in absolute silence! At some point later on in the activity, the participants will be allowed to speak to each other (when instructed to do so by the teacher/facilitator). Up until that point, whatever they want to say, must be done with the markers in writing.

Quotes/cartoons about communication and miscommunication

The most important thing in communication is
hearing what isn't said.

Peter Drucker

You can change your world by changing your words... Remember, death
and life are in the power of the tongue.

Joel Osteen



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**"Let's begin our meeting. . . everybody talk,
nobody listen."**

(Source: https://www.cartoonstock.com/directory/c/communication_skills.asp)

The basic tool for the manipulation of reality is the manipulation of words. If you can control the meaning of words, you can control the people who must use the words.

Philip K. Dick



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I'm not really
a control freak
BUT...
can I show you
the right way
to do that?

(Source: <https://www.theverge.com/2014/10/8/6947215/calvin-and-hobbes-were-even-more-destructive-than-you-think>)



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Relatable Post #2988

I love people who
text back instantly.

so-relatable.tumblr.com



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