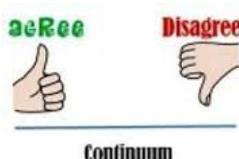


Possible Classroom Activities to Encourage Discussion



Activity 1 - 30:60:90

- Arrange the chairs in two circles, one inside the other, so that the students are facing each other.
- Explain what the lesson is about and set two rules for them to follow: 'We will give our complete attention to the person who is speaking.' and 'We will respect other people's opinions, even when they are different from our own.'
- Students spend 30 seconds or so discussing with the person sitting opposite them the issue that is the topic for discussion.
- The outside circle moves three places anticlockwise and the inner circle moves three places clockwise.
- Students are given one minute to talk about their ideas from the previous conversation and to discuss the reasons why they think what they do.
- Students move again as above and are given 90 seconds to talk about their two previous conversations and to discuss the reasons they think as they do.
- The groups come together for a whole class discussion about the ideas, issues and opinions raised during their discussions.



Activity 2 – Continuum

Place a chair at either side of the room representing the extremes of thinking about an issue. The line between them represents a continuum. Students stand along the line according to their view. They can then form groups with others around them to discuss their reasons why they've placed themselves there. This activity is good to hold prior to a whole class discussion.



Activity 3 – The 5 Minute Rule

Rule: Anyone who feels a particular point of view is not being taken seriously has a right to point this out and call for this exercise to be used.

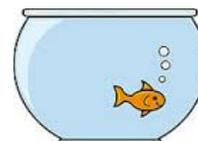
Discussion: The group then agrees to take 5 minutes to consider the merits of this perspective, refrain from criticising it, and make every effort to believe it. Only those who can speak in support of it are allowed to speak, others have to remain silent.

Activity 4 – Fishbowl

A controversial public issue is raised in class. Students are asked to identify with one side or other. The group holding one view gather in a circle in the middle, facing inwards. The opposing view students have their seats in a circle surrounding the inner circle.

Students in inner circle invited to discuss with one another why they feel so strongly about their position on this issue and what it means to them. Students in outer circle are not permitted to speak at this point, can only listen.

Once students in middle have had chance to speak, teacher asks students in outer circle to paraphrase what they heard. Students in middle given chance to affirm, clarify or correct their peers' understanding.



Students then asked to switch places. Repeat the process.

Activity 5 – Neutral Chair



All students start in the middle of the room. Teacher is the neutral chair and starts by giving a 'should' question. Students move to either the 'yes' or 'no' side.

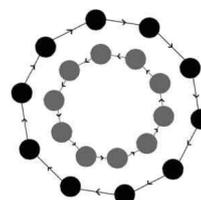
In their positions they discuss among themselves why they are there. Some may choose to switch positions during this stage.

Students then take turns to try to persuade the students in the other group to move position.

Teacher can rephrase questions (and play 'devils advocate') to challenge thinking. "So you're saying that I could and that would be ok?"

Activity 6 – Inner/Outer

(Expert teacher observed in Hess study)



Students prepared for discussion by reading range of material. Asked to categorise info into ethical, definitional and factual issues underlying the topic. Students sat in two circles – inner and outer both facing inwards. Only inner circle allowed to talk. When someone in outer circle wants to speak they tap a student on shoulder and swap places. Teacher used rubric to grade student's participation. Teacher often invited students into inner circle to prevent some students dominating discussion.