



# RELATIONSHIP SKILLS:

## Table Talk

*"One of the most sincere forms of respect is actually listening to what another has to say."*

*- Bryant McGill*



### TEACHER NOTES

Almost every aspect of effective cooperative learning rests on a strong foundation of active listening. Students, like adults, benefit from intentional practice of this vital skill. Providing brief, structured experiences with active listening builds the "muscle" (neural connections) that help students attend to another person's words and ideas without interrupting.

The power of being fully listened to by others who are truly present is an extremely satisfying experience. And building the internal capacity to be self-aware enough to note when we have the urge to interrupt, add on, or even just verbally affirm a speaker plus the self-management to control that urge provides the foundation for excellent communication and relationship skills.

To fulfill the Common Core State Standards expectation that students will offer opinions, listen and communicate effectively, and understand others' perspectives, it's important that students get to know one another and become comfortable with communicating effectively. This also helps them work well in groups and supports their ability to stay focused and productive.



**DURATION:** 10 minutes

**GOALS:** [Teacher/Student Goals](#)

### MATERIALS:

- Timer
- Board for illustrating roles (speaking and listening faces)
- [Attention signal](#)
- Preparation: Divide students into groups of three or four (group members should vary each time activity is repeated)



**MAIN POINTS:** Introduction (4 minutes)

- Students will practice active listening and speaking skills.
- Each student will have one minute to speak on a given topic, while the others in their group listen.
- Provide students an opportunity to reflect on their listening after each one-minute round.
- It can set an enjoyable tone for this activity to draw faces on the board as you introduce this activity. As you introduce the first person who will be speaking, draw a face with exaggerated eyes (because they'll be remembering to make eye contact with everyone in their group when they talk, so that all will feel included) and an open, "talking" mouth; the remainder of the faces can have large eyes, a closed-mouth smile, and huge ears, to show that they look and listen.





# RELATIONSHIP SKILLS:



## GUIDING LANGUAGE

Today we'll be doing Table Talk. Our goal is to keep getting to know each other better by listening carefully to everyone's ideas as we take turns sharing. We're going to have a topic that we all have a turn to talk about, one person at a time in our small groups, for one minute each. While each person in the group takes a turn speaking for one minute, everyone else will be actively listening. Begin drawing faces on the board.

The first person to speak (Draw face with large eyes and wide open mouth with a numeral one below it.) will have one minute to talk about our topic. When it's our turn to talk, we'll remember to make eye contact with everyone in the group, looking at each person so we all feel included. Make sure that everyone in your group can hear your voice.

Persons number two, three, and four will listen and watch. Draw faces with exaggerated eyes and ears, and number them for each of the listeners in your groupings.

Our topic for today is \_\_\_\_\_. (See topic ideas below.) We'll take some private Think Time about the topic, so that we all have our own idea in mind already, and can truly listen when the talking starts. (Pause.) I'll give you a moment more to think about that while I go around and assign numbers in your group.

When you give numbers, first ask each group, Who wants to go first? Then quickly give each student in the group a number. To check quickly to make sure they all know their numbers, ask each group to raise their hands when you call their number: Ones, raise your hands; twos, threes, fours...

## TOPIC IDEAS

- What are some games you like to play? They can be solo, group, or team games; board, card, sports, computer, or playground games...
- What is one of your favorite days of the year, and why?
- If you could travel anywhere, where would you go, and why?
- If you could have any animal for a pet, what would you choose, and why?
- What were some of your favorite things from when you were younger? Toys, shows, books, movies...



## MAIN POINTS: Activity (5 minutes)

- Reinforce listeners' role of paying attention to the speaker without talking themselves.
- Keep time for each round with brief accountability reflection between each round.



# RELATIONSHIP SKILLS:



## GUIDING LANGUAGE

*Person number one will speak first, and the whole minute belongs to them. If they are quiet some of the time, respect that they are thinking. What if person two has a question? They have to wait! What if persons three and four have something to add to what person one says? They have to wait for another time! Person number one, it's your turn to talk about (repeat topic).*

*Start the timer for one minute. When it goes off, bring the room to silence with your attention signal.*

*All the "person one" people, raise your hand if you talked. Good job! If you didn't, that's okay—try again next time.*

*Persons number two, three, and four: Raise your hand if you did not talk, not even a little! It can be trickier than it seems. If you didn't raise your hand, try your best to just listen next time.*

*Person number one, raise your hand if you truly felt like everyone in your group was listening to you. You don't need to say anything specific; we're doing this to give everyone a chance to practice their skills right now. Groups, if you notice that your speaker didn't put a hand up, try to make sure that you are actively listening—sitting up and focused in a friendly manner.*

Repeat this quick group reflection for all rounds, as each speaker takes their turn.



## MAIN POINT: Closure (1 minute)

Provide group reflection and accountability time.



## GUIDING LANGUAGE

*Raise your hand if you think you improved on your listening and speaking skills today. Raise your hand if you feel as if you know the people in your group a little bit better. Let's take those good listening skills into our work today!*



## EXTENSIONS

This simple, engaging strategy, repeated often to increase participants' skill level, provides a quick and enjoyable "brain break" during academic learning.

Once participants are confident with the structure, this is also an excellent content-based discussion group strategy.



# RELATIONSHIP SKILLS:

## Teacher: Relationship Skills goals

*Relationship Skills: The consistent performance of socially acceptable actions that promote and maintain positive connections with others.*

**My students are able to:**

- Listen attentively to others
- Speak in ways that engage others
- Show appreciation to others for communicating effectively

**I am aware of my individual students' abilities to:**

- Speak and listen effectively
- Communicate their appreciations and suggestions for future communications
- Engage in positive ways

**The environment I create supports my students' growth related to:**

- Building open, positive relationships
- Supporting effective, engaging communication skills

**STUDENT: Relationship Skills goals and demonstrated behaviors**

**Students will:**

- Take turns speaking and listening
- Communicate appreciation and suggestions in an engaging way
- Share ideas, thoughts, and feelings

**DESSA SELF-MANAGEMENT INDICATORS**

(Highlighted indicators are directly addressed in this lesson.)

I can:

Compliment or congratulate somebody
Do something nice for somebody
Show appreciation of others
Greet a person in a polite way
Attract positive attention from peers
Express concern for another person
Attract positive attention from adults
Make a suggestion or request in a polite way
Offer to help somebody
Respond to another person's feelings



# RELATIONSHIP SKILLS:

## Attention Signal



### MAIN POINTS

- A well-practiced and consistently implemented attention signal is essential in group learning situations. Whether adults or students, any gathering of engaged participants is going to be deeply immersed in meaningful, task-oriented conversations during which the you will need to get their attention.
- While there are many versions of attention signals (flashing the lights, clapping, raising or lowering your voice), one that has been most consistently effective is to raise your hand in the air and wait for everyone else in the room to raise their own hand and be silent before your proceed with directions or information.
- This signal works well because it engages participants in a multi-sensory experience. There will be kinesthetic engagement (raising their own hands) and visual (seeing others raise their hands) and auditory (hearing the noise level drop) cues. It also reinforces two social-emotional/DESSA constructs: Self-Management and Social Awareness.



### GUIDING LANGUAGE

*There will be many times when you are working together and talking to one another, and I'll need to be able to get your attention. When you see me raise my hand, you'll have two jobs. One is to raise your hand too. That gives others around you a visual cue that they should quietly look my way. The other is to stop talking! That will help the room quickly become silent, so you can hear the next direction or announcement.*

*As we get used to using this attention signal, you'll notice that you're building on two SEL skills. One is Self-Management, as you regulate yourself to do those two jobs of raising your hand and becoming silent. The other SEL skill you'll be building is Social Awareness, as you cue in on what others around you are doing. If we help each other by following these two steps, we'll soon be able to get in and out of lively conversations seamlessly.*



### TEACHER TIPS

- Cultivate patience, realizing that it's a positive signal of deep engagement for participants to be so caught up in their academic dialogue that they are reluctant to stop, or don't immediately notice your silently raised hand.
- Hold an inner and outer attitude of goodwill as the group settles into complete silence before you begin talking. If you consistently wait for complete silence, the group learns your expectation and will become quiet more quickly over time. If you begin to talk while some participants are still talking, they will believe that it's okay for some people to continue conversing, and are much less likely to meet your stated expectation for the Attention Signal. (It's not necessary that every hand goes up, but is necessary that all are quiet.)
- Refrain from restating your expectations or from singling out participants with requests that they become quiet. Let your silent raised hand be the only signal they have to attend to, and soon it will become the only signal they need!