

GRADE LEVEL: Elementary

CATEGORY: Creating Conversation

SKILLS: Asking questions

GOAL: Students will be able to ask who, what, why, where, when, and how questions.

MATERIALS:

- Spinner
- Paper
- Pen

STEPS/STRATEGIES:

1. Write around a spinner, 'who', 'what', 'why', 'where', 'when', and 'how'.
2. Generate a list of topics that interest students. Leader writes topics on cards.
3. Have students spin, then choose a card, and ask a "who, what, etc." Question related to that topic.

REFERENCES:

Freeman, Sabrina, Ph.D., and Dake, Lorelei, B.H. Teach Me Language.
Langley, B.C.: SKF Books, 1996.

GRADE LEVEL: Elementary

CATEGORY: Creating Conversation

SKILLS: Asking and answering questions

GOAL: To increase a child's ability to form and ask questions and to answer them in more than one way.

MATERIALS:

- Board game of interest (i.e. Sorry or Candyland)
- Pre-generated list of questions or question cards

STEPS/STRATEGIES:

1. Talk about why it's important to ask questions...to gain information, to develop friendships, to show that you are interested in a person or topic. Brainstorm a list of questions that students may want to ask others.
2. Teach students how to ask questions and model the skill for the students using steps such as:
 - a. Turn your body toward the person.
 - b. Look at the person's face.
 - c. Say the person's name.
 - d. Ask the question.
 - e. Listen to the answer.
3. Introduce the board game to make sure the students know how to play.
4. Introduce a variation to the game. After each student's turn, the student chooses a question (either from the list, cards, or a question of his/her own) and uses the skills learned to ask another person the question.

TIPS:

- Include picture symbols on question cards.
- Print out the steps for "How to ask a question" and post it in the classroom.
- Bring the question cards or list of questions to the student's general education classroom to prompt interactions with peers.

GRADE LEVEL: Elementary

CATEGORY: Creating Conversation

SKILLS: Giving and receiving compliments

GOAL: Children will be able to practice giving and receiving compliments.

MATERIALS:

- Soft ball (i.e. Koosh)
- Pre-generated list of compliments or compliment cards

STEPS/STRATEGIES:

1. Discuss compliments...what are compliments, categories of compliments (physical appearance, other people's actions, strengths or abilities).
2. Discuss positive and negative reactions to compliments...accepting compliments by saying thank-you, or denying the compliment or putting down the person who is giving the compliment.
3. As a group, brainstorm lists of possible compliments and appropriate reactions to compliments.
4. Explain and model the game. The ball is tossed to a student. The person throwing the ball gives the compliment and the person catching the ball accepts the compliment.

TIPS:

- Make sure everyone in the group gets a turn to give and receive a compliment.
- Include picture symbols on compliment cards.

GRADE LEVEL: Elementary

CATEGORY: Creating Conversations

SKILLS: Topic Maintenance

GOAL: To increase the student's skills to stay on topic in a conversation.

MATERIALS:

- Several soft tossing objects, such as bean bags, pom-poms, etc.
- Topic cards

STEPS/STRATEGIES:

1. Talk about staying on topic during conversations and the reasons why it's important to stay on topic (i.e., to show the other person that you're listening and that you are interested in what they have to say).
2. Discuss ways to stay on topic in a conversation and give examples.
 - a) Commenting demonstrates interest and supports what the person is saying.
Examples: saying "cool," nodding head, elaborating on statement
 - b) Questioning gains more information about the topic or the person's experience.
Examples: using wh- questions
3. Practice topic maintenance by playing "Bonk." Each person in the group has a soft tossing object. One student draws a topic card or comes up with their own topic to discuss. The student begins the conversation by making a statement related to the topic. Other students and facilitator add to the conversation by commenting or asking a question. If/when a student comments or asks a question unrelated to the topic, other students in the group can "bonk" them by tossing their object at the student. The student that went off topic has another chance to remain on topic, and "bonk" balls are returned to the students.

TIPS:

- At first, it may help to structure the game by going around the group in a circle.
- After practice, encourage more random comments and questions by students in order to practice a more typical conversation.