

# Think-Pair-Share

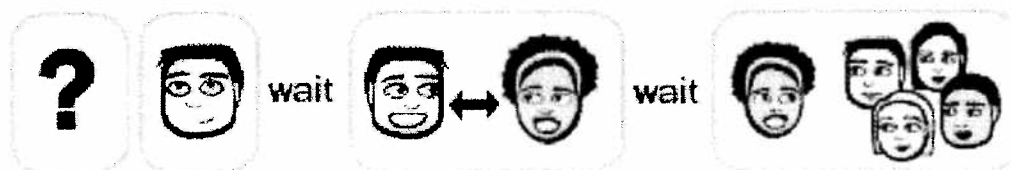
## PURPOSE

As with Random Reporter, this simple questioning technique keeps all the students involved in class discussions and provides an opportunity for every child to share an answer to every question. It takes the fear out of class discussion by allowing the students to think carefully about their answers and talk about them with a partner before they are called on to respond. For shy or tentative students, this can help put the emphasis back on learning instead of on simply surviving class. The technique was developed by Frank Lyman of the University of Maryland (1981).

## BREAKING IT DOWN

To use Think-Pair-Share, follow these steps:

- Ask the question.
  - Have the students individually **think** about an answer for a few seconds.
  - Allow the students to **discuss** their answer with a partner for a few seconds.
  - Finally, have the students **share** in teams or call on a few students to share their answers with the class.
- During what part(s) of a lesson would you be most likely to use Think-Pair-Share? Why?



## FINE-TUNING THE TECHNIQUE

- There is no magic amount of think time and pair time. In general, depending on the complexity of the question, allow the students to think for five or six seconds, and to pair for perhaps ten seconds. You want to give them just enough time to think and to spark some ideas in their partner, but not enough time to get off-task.
- Give a specific task when asking the students to pair. For example, say "Take ten seconds to talk with your partner and come up with one answer to the question" or "Talk with your partner for a few seconds and see if you can come up with two solutions to the problem."
- When it comes time for the students to share their responses (in partners, in teams, or as a class), anything doesn't go. The students need to provide correct, well-reasoned, clearly explained answers. Use questioning to help students or teams flesh out their answers. Model the elements that make an answer stronger – phrasing the answer as a complete sentence, using words instead of gestures, supporting answers with evidence, and so forth.

- If the students are not prepared to answer questions, ask yourself whether you are allowing silent time for individual students to think before having them pair with their partners. Are you allowing partners time to talk before asking them to share with the team or the class?

Why is it important to ask students to think on their own for a few moments before allowing them to share with partners?

- Listen to partner and team discussions to see what kind of responses the students are giving. This can provide valuable clues about how well students work together, how well they grasp the concepts, and what images they use to make those concepts stick in their minds. Not only does this information make a good informal assessment, but it might also prove useful the next time you teach the material.
- Make sure partners are of different academic levels. This allows the students who are at a lower level (or who are very shy) to hear and practice a response from a higher-level or more secure student, become inspired to think of another response, and gain the confidence to share their own answers.
- To help visual learners, add hand signals to call attention to the different steps in this routine. For example, ask the question and then point to your temple and say "Think." After a suitable amount of time, extend your right index finger and middle finger together and say "Pair." When partners are ready to talk with their teammates, touch the tips of both index fingers and middle fingers together and say "Share."
- To vary responses during share time, vary your questions. Encourage your students to react to what others have said – to compare answers, add information, agree, disagree, or otherwise respond to the answers proposed by their classmates. Teachers call this Think-Pair-Share-Compare. Award team cooperation points for active listening.
- If you want the students to share with the class, do not feel as though you must call on a representative from every team. After calling on one or two teams, ask other teams to give a thumbs up if they had similar answers.
- Do not allow the students to shout out answers or raise their hands. If you want to make sharing more random, use numbered slips of paper, wooden sticks labeled with the numbers one to four (or five), or the aces, twos, threes, and fours from a deck of cards to call on students. (See *Random Reporter*.)
- Think-Pair-Share is a highly effective routine for questions that require students to exert their mental muscles, but not all questions merit such extended contemplation. For simpler queries, you might do better with Thumbs Up/Thumbs Down or by eliciting a quick response from one or two students and moving right on.