

Tutor Tip: Think – and Speak – on Your Feet

Give each learner a small piece of paper. Ask each learner to write a question on it that would be a good question for a discussion, or that would relate to a theme you have been discussing in class. Learners could write a question or, if you prefer, a statement. If you have a lower level class, ask each learner to write a word on each piece of paper. Learners do not write their names on the papers.

The tutor collects all the pieces of paper and puts them in a container. Then, every learner selects one of the papers and has to speak about whatever topic or word is written on it. The tutor should specify the allotted period of time, perhaps two minutes, or three minutes. For advanced levels, explain that in that time speakers have to present a catchy beginning or introduction, reasons or facts in the body of their speech, and then a catchy wrap-up conclusion. If you try this activity more than once, you will see learners gain more confidence speaking, and they will enjoy the challenge of thinking on their feet.

Examples:

Higher Level:

If you have been doing a theme unit on families or families in Canada, give the learners the topic of FAMILIES for this activity. They might come up with questions or statements like:

"At what age should parents leave their children home alone?" or "Children should never be left home alone."

"Children in Canada are spoiled."

"Is it better to have a big family or a small family?"

To springboard to a writing activity, after all the questions have been read and answered, ask each learner to choose ONE question or topic that was most interesting to them and ask them to write a paragraph or essay about it.

Lower Level:

For a unit on families, ask learners to write one family word on their piece of paper, such as "grandmother" or "mother-in-law" or "sister". When a learner chooses a word, he or she has to make a sentence or two about that word, such as "My grandmother lives in Colombia."

For a unit on classroom objects for a lower level class, learners write down names of objects, the papers are shuffled, and students select a piece of paper and then match the word on the paper to the actual object in the classroom.

You may want to give the questions a quick read when you are collecting the pieces of paper from each learner. You want to make sure there aren't any duplicate questions, and you may also want to take out any potentially problematic questions. You could suggest wording to the writer to make the question more appropriate.