

Conversation starters and guidelines

Starters

Conversation starters is a step-by-step way of supporting your students in developing dialogue and creating habits of respectful interaction. It can be handy to print them on small cards or a fan and give them to each of your students to use when having conversations in classroom.

Conversation starters:

- I think/in my opinion ...
- I (dis)agree with ...
- Linking to ...
- What makes you say...?
- What do you mean with ...?
- How do you see ...?

Offline conversation guidelines

It can be very helpful to formulate guidelines when exercising conversations or interactions in classroom. It supports the students in developing dialogue and creating habits of respectful interaction.

You can come up with guidelines as a teacher or can construct a set of guidelines together with your students. You can find a working method to do so in this module: 'civil conversation set up'.

Here is an example of a discussion guideline for the students:

- **I respect** someone else's ideas (no laughing at, ...)
- I let everyone speak.
- **I listen** carefully and give proof of listening (nodding, ...)
- I give my own opinion
- **I ask questions**
- **I build** upon other's ideas
- **I summarize in my own words what has been said (to check for common understanding)**
- **I'm prepared to change my mind**

Spice up your interaction! Guidelines for effective questioning with children

- Ask open question (not yes/no, there is no wrong or right answer; or questions that already provoke a certain answer).
- Challenge their thinking
- Summarise and reformulate their answers (to check understanding and give them time to reflect further).
- Dig deeper by asking questions out of genuine curiosity.

Examples of questions:

- Do you agree, don't agree or have doubts about it? Why? How would you explain ...? How does this make you feel? How do you/we relate to this?

- What exactly do you/he/she/they mean by ...?
- Who is involved? What could he/she/they think/feel about ...?
- What makes you say that ...? Can you explain why/how....?
- What did you learn from ...? How did it confirm, strengthen or change your point of view? How would you express the thoughts/ideas or feelings of ...?
- What does ... make you think about? What does ... make you wonder, what questions raises ...? What do you want to know or learn more?

Online conversation guidelines

Online, as in real life, certain norms, values and rules also apply, so called Netiquette. Online courtesy! It includes the unwritten rules about how you behave on the Internet. Online and offline conversation guidelines don't need to differ that much, but there are some specific guidelines.

When students engage online with each other, it's good to set some guidelines. Be kind and react on messages in a positive, helping way.

Don't swear or use abusive language in your online communication. Think before you post!

- Is my post clear? Is what I say or post not open to interpretation?
- Am I empathetic? Do my posts take into account other people's sensitivities and feelings?
- Is it necessary for me to post this? Am I not posting overly banal things that are actually totally irrelevant and could possibly cause (image) damage as a result?
- Do I look at my post critically before I post it? Consider the above issues and this in terms of content and form.