

Working together

1.7 LET'S DISCUSS (6)

1

Targeted skills

Wait one's turn, enrich ideas, complete other people's answers, reformulate, reach a consensus.

2

Objectives

Learn effective communication skills and how to have small group discussions.



Learning Activity



PREPARATION

Materials for each team

Four student sheets “The Spaceship” or “The Alligator River”
Student sheet “Sequence of Expected Behaviours”
Observation sheet

Cooperative structures

A four-stage rocket
Roles: observer and time keeper

Group formation

Heterogeneous teams of five or six students



ACTIVITY

Getting started

Form teams.
Assign a topic for discussion: E.g. Should cell phones be allowed in school?
Allow five minutes for discussion.
Observe and note examples of good and bad group discussion techniques.
Give feedback after the discussion.
Identify the factors that influence good or poor discussion.

Procedure

The “four-stage” practice: Tell students that they will be practicing four skills that are needed for good discussion (conciseness, listening, understanding and participation).

Propose a discussion topic (based on the “The Space Ship” or “The Alligator River” texts).



FEEDBACK

Feedback on what was learned

Ask the teams to present their solution and arguments to justify their choice.

Feedback on the cooperative process

Ask the observers from the other teams to share their notes. Identify negative and positive behaviours.

THE FOUR-STAGE ROCKET⁽⁷⁾

1. Conciseness:

Go straight to the point and approach the subject directly.

Choose a person to keep time for the group. Their job is to make sure the students discuss the subject for five minutes and that each person speaks for no more than 15 seconds at a time.

2. Listening:

Pay attention to what is being said.

Choose a new time keeper. Continue discussing the topic for five minutes, always making sure that no one speaks no more than 15 seconds at a time. This time, however, each participant must wait three seconds after the previous person has finished before speaking.

3. Understanding:

Summarize out loud what the previous person just said, before expressing your own idea.

Change time keeper and repeat the instructions given above. In addition, the speaker must summarize and restate what the previous person just said. This is known as understanding the point of view of another person. The person who is being summarized must nod their head to indicate that his or her thought has been properly summarized. Discussion can only resume once this step has been successfully completed.

4. Participation:

All members must participate.

Choose a new time keeper. Continue discussing the same topic for five minutes. All previous rules apply, plus one more: no one can speak a second time until all the members of the team have spoken.

After each step, ask the group's time keepers whether or not the group succeeded in mastering the targeted skill. They may comment on the difficulties encountered in the discussion. Remind the class why each skill is important.

Choose one of the students who did not act as time keeper to be an observer. Continue to discuss the topic for five minutes, without the rules, but trying to use the four skills: conciseness, listening, understanding and participation. Observers will note down good examples of each behaviour (see observation sheet).

SEQUENCE OF EXPECTED BEHAVIOURS

- Speak for 15 seconds.
- Wait three seconds after previous speaker before speaking.
- Summarize out loud comments from the previous speaker and wait for a nod of approval before continuing.
- Speak again when everyone else has spoken.

List of Negative and Positive Behaviour

Negative Behaviour	Positive Behaviour	Very Positive Behaviour
<p>Speaks too much</p> <p>Doesn't listen to others</p> <p>Insists that everyone adopt his or her ideas</p> <p>Doesn't help others correct their negative behaviours</p> <p>Criticizes individuals rather than ideas</p> <p>Lets the others do all the work</p>	<p>Has innovative ideas and suggestions</p> <p>Asks for and gives back information</p> <p>Explains things to others</p> <p>Organizes his or her ideas</p> <p>Checks to see if group is ready to make a decision</p>	<p>Invites passive members of team to express their ideas and opinions</p> <p>Listens attentively to ideas of others</p> <p>Acknowledges good ideas and suggestions</p> <p>Is willing to change his or her mind if someone has a better argument</p>

STUDENT SHEET



THE SPACESHIP

The purpose of this game is to choose seven people to board a spaceship to go to another planet. You have just learned that a nuclear attack has been launched against the U.S. and that the Americans have just launched a missile in retaliation. It is the end of the world.

The spaceship has the capacity to establish life on a different planet. Eleven names have been chosen at random to board the space craft, but there was a mistake and now only seven people can board the vessel.

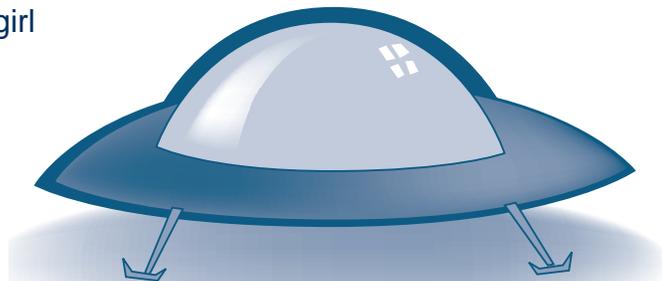
The goal of your group discussion is to decide which seven people will be chosen to implant life elsewhere.

Remember that the ship can only take seven people.

No one can be chosen without the unanimous consent of the whole team.

Here is the list of chosen people:

1. A 30-year-old violinist who is a member of an orchestra
2. A 67-year-old priest
3. A 23-year-old engineer and his 21-year-old wife (they have refused to be separated)
4. A 40-year-old police officer who refuses to go without his gun
5. A boy your age who goes to the same school
6. A 25-year-old dropout who was recently arrested for armed robbery
7. A 32-year-old grade 6 teacher
8. A 40-year-old female doctor
9. A 50-year-old female sculptor
10. A 25-year-old poet
11. A 1-year-old baby girl



STUDENT SHEET



THE ALLIGATOR RIVER⁽⁸⁾

Once upon a time, there was a girl named Abigail, who was in love with a boy named Gregory. The boy had an unfortunate accident and broke his glasses. Abigail, his friend, offered to go and get the glasses repaired. But the eye doctor lived on the other side of the Alligator River and the bridge had been swept away in a flood. Poor Gregory couldn't see a thing without his glasses and Abigail desperately wanted to get across the river to get to the eye doctor. While she stood alone on the bank of the river tenderly clutching Gregory's glasses, a boy name Sinbad came down the river in a boat.

Abigail asked Sinbad to help her cross the river. He agreed on condition that once across the river she would go to a certain store and steal the transistor radio that he coveted. Abigail refused and went out see her friend John, who also had a boat.

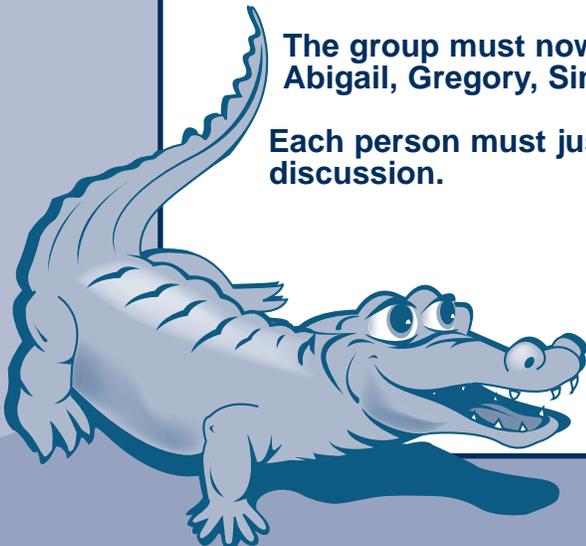
After Abigail had explained her problem to John, John said he was far too busy and didn't want to get involved. Feeling she didn't have any other choice, Abigail went back to Sinbad and agreed to go through with his plan.

When Abigail gave Gregory back his glasses, she told to him what she had to do to get them fixed. Gregory got so mad that he told her he never wanted to see her again.

Utterly furious, Abigail went and told the whole story to her friend Slug. Slug felt so sorry for Abigail that he promised to get even with Gregory. They went to the ball park where Gregory was playing and Abigail was very happy to watch Slug hit Gregory, breaking his glasses.

The group must now rank the characters from best to worst: Abigail, Gregory, Sinbad, John, Slug.

Each person must justify his or her choice throughout the discussion.



8 - Simon, Howe and Kirschenbaum, 1972, pp.292-293.

OBSERVER SHEET

Name of observer: _____

Names	Conciseness Getting straight to the point	Listening Being attentive	Understanding Repeat part of the previous comments	Participation Everyone participates