



Discussion Carousel

A device for getting everyone to take part in productive, if not circular (!) discussion.

HOW?

1. Clear the desks.
2. Have the group sitting on chairs in two circles, an 'outer' and an 'inner', of equal numbers. The inner circle faces outwards and the outer circle faces inwards. In other words, everyone is facing a partner.
3. The facing pairs are given a prompt and have a conversation for, say, three minutes. They are asked to make sure that each has a chance to speak. The teacher lets them know when it's half time.
4. When the time is up, the outer circle stands and 'spins round' (more accurately 'shuffles round') to the left until the teacher says stop. Students sit down, facing a new partner.
5. Before the new pair launch into *their* conversation, developing the subject further, each has to summarise to the other their **previous partner's** contribution. Listening skills to the fore!
6. Once again, when time is up, the outer circle 'spins' and new pairs are formed. Students have to summarise both their first and second partners' contributions before conducting their third conversation.
7. This may be repeated as many times as is useful.

APPLICATIONS

- Useful for any type of discussion. The discussion may be very academic, for example: an A Level question, formulating a precise definition of a technical term or phenomenon, constructing a model paragraph answer to a GCSE question, planning a method to test a hypothesis.
- Use it to revise a topic or to find out what people already know before a new topic is begun.
- Use it to evaluate a product (in Technology for example), or to evaluate the learning process itself.
- It is a way of 'broadening the mind' whenever matters of opinion are to be discussed (in English, Religion, Health, History). It prepares for argumentative writing.
- Use it to help students formulate their own opinions and therefore gain confidence before an open whole-class discussion.
- *Discussion Carousel* can be conducted in a modern foreign language.

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WHY DO IT?

- Creates maximum participation - half the class is talking at any one moment.
- Enables each student to hear a range of opinion quickly.
- Practises listening skills.
- Encourages empathy.
- Gets students used to working with others at random.
- Deepens students' thinking by making them test it out on others.

VARIATIONS

1. If the students are nervous and have poorly developed listening skills, they can be allowed to take notes on what their partners say as an 'aide memoire'. This is a stage to grow out of quite quickly though.