

Introduction to Thinking Together

Lesson Two: Agreeing the Ground Rules

(See separate notes for this lesson)

What teachers say

It is important at the start of this lesson to remind children of what they said about talk in the first lesson, especially the qualities of good talkers and listeners. Before they start the group work it is a good idea to remind them that they need to be respectful of other people's ideas and opinions as they talk to reach a joint decision.

Give the groups a chance to agree on two rules of their own, as well as their choices from the list. This gives them a context to try out the kind of talk they have said is important.

Resources

Ground Rules for Talk cards - 1 set needs to be cut up for each group before the lesson
Large pieces of paper and marker pens for each group

Objectives

To establish a set of 'ground rules' for talk.

"We are learning to agree a set of ground rules for talking to each other"

Possible criteria for success:

Children are able to decide some ground rules
Children can say why rules are important
Children can reach an agreement about the ground rules for talk

Whole Class Introduction

Note: *The aim of this whole class discussion is to ensure that children are aware of the value of rules, that rules are not just restrictions, but can help groups of people to be safe (e.g. in cars) or things to be fair (e.g. everyone on a team knows the rules and tries to stick to them). It may be important to remind children that the element of competitiveness in games is inappropriate within a talk group, who are working together to share their thoughts..*

Introduce the concept of 'ground rules' as basic rules that everyone knows. For example in the supermarket:

- We queue to take our turn to pay.
- The check out assistant doesn't make rude comments about what we are buying.

Discuss reasons for rules, which may be to do with safety or fairness.

In a car the driver is taught rules to do with safety. But there are also ground rules for the passengers. Ask for suggestions about what these might be. Some examples might be:

- Stay in your seat
- Don't open the door while the car is moving
- Don't distract the driver

How do we learn these rules?

What would happen if the rules were changed:

- going down ladders and up snakes;
- sharing out all the Monopoly money.
- What if only some of the players agreed?

Bring out the idea that we have to agree to rules if they are to have value.

Show and explain the learning objectives for this lesson.

Now discuss with the class the sort of ground rules they think are important for talk in groups at school. Children can be encouraged to draw on their experiences of their discussions in the first lesson.

- When talking together, what worked in their groups?
- What went wrong?
- Who is good at speaking and listening? How do we know?

Encourage the children to consider the idea that talk helps thinking. Bring out the ideas that in group talk all opinions will be valued, that questions must be asked, and that all opinions must be backed up by a *reason*.

Group work

Each talk group needs a set of rule cards. Ask the groups to talk together to sort the rules into 3 categories:

1. Good ideas for ground rules for talk
2. Bad ideas for ground rules for talk
3. Unsure.

When they have done this, the groups need to agree on 4 of the good ideas to choose as rules for talk. Finally they need to agree on two more good ground rules of their own and write these on the large sheets of paper.

Plenary: Whole class

Ask each group to report back on the rules that they felt were important. Make a note of the rules. When the list is complete explain to the class that it is very important that they understand that they are agreeing to talk together using these rules from now on.

After the lesson, make a poster of the rules and display it in the classroom.

Further group work

Now ask each group to agree on a ground rule for talk that might be especially important if a group is working together at the computer.

Whole class work

Ask each group to report back on these ground rules for talk at the computer. Again, make a note of the rules. As before, explain that they are going to try to use these rules from now on. (See notes for suggested rules). Discuss whether the lesson objectives have been achieved. Refer to the criteria for success as a means of considering whether the objectives have been achieved.

Teachers' Notes for Lesson Two

This is a key lesson in which the basic ground rules for talk are agreed and established with the class.

Ground rules for talk

The following rules have been found to encourage educationally effective discussion.

- All relevant information is shared amongst the group
- Assertions and opinions should be backed up with reasons
- Suggestions and opinions can be challenged and discussed
- Alternative opinions and ideas are considered before any decision is made.
- Everyone in the group should be encouraged to speak by the other members.
- The group should try to reach an agreement.
- The group accepts collective responsibility for decisions made and any actions taken because of these decisions.

It is vital to stress that all opinions will be valued and that, most importantly, all assertions must be backed up with a reason.

During the lesson, encourage the children to create their own version of these rules. Make sure that they understand that they are different from other rules relating to talk that they may have come across, such as don't talk in assembly or don't shout in the classroom.

Ensure that the children understand that they are agreeing to talk together using these rules from now on when they are working together in groups.

Rules for working together at the computer could include:

1. Remember to use the ground rules for talk
2. Talk together to decide on how to solve a problem
3. Agree what to do before clicking onto the next screen
4. Sort out who is using the mouse and keyboard before you start, so that it doesn't get in the way of the talk about the program.