

Gallery Walk

Stations or posters are set up around the classroom, on the walls, or on tables. Small groups of students travel from station to station together, performing some kind of task or responding to a prompt, either of which will result in a conversation.

Concentric Circles

Students form two circles, one inside circle and one outside circle. Each student on the inside is paired with a student on the outside; they face each other. The teacher poses a question to the whole group and pairs discuss their responses with each other. Then the teacher signals students to rotate: Students on the outside circle move one space to the right so they are standing in front of a new person (or sitting, as they are in the video). Now the teacher poses a new question, and the process is repeated.

Hot Seat

One student assumes the role of a book character, significant figure in history, or concept (such as a tornado, an animal, or the *Titanic*). Sitting in front of the rest of the class, the student responds to classmates' questions while staying in character in that role.

Pinwheel Discussion

Students are divided into 4 groups. Three of these groups are assigned to represent specific points of view. Members of the fourth group are designated as "provocateurs," tasked with making sure the discussion keeps going and stays challenging. One person from each group (the "speaker") sits in a desk facing speakers from the other groups, so they form a square in the center of the room. Behind each speaker, the remaining group members are seated: two right behind the speaker, then three behind them, and so on, forming a kind of triangle. From above, this would look like a pinwheel.

Conver-stations

Students are placed into a few groups of 4-6 students each and are given a discussion question to talk about. After sufficient time has passed for the discussion to develop, one or two students from each group rotate to a different group, while the other group members remain where they are. Once in their new group, they will discuss a different, but related question, and they may also share some of the key points from their last group's conversation. For the next rotation, students who have not rotated before may be chosen to move, resulting in groups that are continually evolving.

Snowball Discussion

Students begin in pairs, responding to a discussion question only with a single partner. After each person has had a chance to share their ideas, the pair joins another pair, creating a group of four. Pairs share their ideas with the pair they just joined. Next, groups of four join together to form groups of eight, and so on, until the whole class is joined up in one large discussion.

Affinity Mapping

Give students a broad question or problem that is likely to result in lots of different ideas, such as "What were the impacts of the Great Depression?" or "What literary works should every person read?" Have students generate responses by writing ideas on post-it notes (one idea per note) and placing them in no particular arrangement on a wall, whiteboard, or chart paper. Once lots of ideas have been generated, have students begin grouping them into similar categories, then label the categories and discuss why the ideas fit within them, how the categories relate to one another, and so on.

Fishbowl

Two students sit facing each other in the center of the room; the remaining students sit in a circle around them. The two central students have a conversation based on a pre-determined topic and often using specific skills the class is practicing (such as asking follow-up questions, paraphrasing, or elaborating on another person's point). Students on the outside observe, take notes, or perform some other discussion-related task assigned by the teacher.

Think-Pair-Share

Simply have students *think* about their response to a question, form a *pair* with another person, discuss their response, then *share* it with the larger group. Because I feel this strategy has so many uses and can be way more powerful than we give it credit for, I devoted a whole post to [think-pair-share](#); everything you need to know about it is right there.

Socratic Seminar

Students prepare by reading a text or group of texts and writing some higher-order discussion questions about the text. On seminar day, students sit in a circle and an introductory, open-ended question is posed by the teacher or student discussion leader. From there, students continue the conversation, prompting one another to support their claims with textual evidence. There is no particular order to how students speak, but they are encouraged to respectfully share the floor with others.

Speed Dating

Pair up for a given time limit—1-2 minutes. Each student has the half the time to answer a question or offer an opinion. After the time, one student moves to the left or right. Repeat as needed. 4 or 5 rotations will be about enough. Regroup and discuss in a larger setting.

Literature Circles

Perfect for leading up to large class discussions for literature. Appoint or elect roles: discussion director, literary luminary, connector/researcher, illustrator. Rotate roles each day so all get a chance at each role. Hold accountable for reporting to large group. Adapt roles as needed. Use time limits and monitoring wisely. Roles descriptions accessed via QR code.

Jigsaw

Four groups of students read four different articles or research four different topics. Each of the students in a group is given a different letter (A, B, C, D, E, and F). The numbered groups meet together to discuss their assigned article after reading independently. They plan how to present to other students. Regroup using letters, so there are now six groups of four students. Each person presents their article and the rest of the group takes notes. This way everyone is able to learn information from all four issues/stories.

Say Something

This is great as a warm-up, to help students process a complex topic, or to practice the skill of building a conversation. Students stand in a circle or sit on their desks. Everyone must “say something” new about a text or topic. Each student must briefly summarize the conversation/comment that came prior to his or her comment before building the conversation, playing devil’s advocate, or continuing with a new idea. This reinforces the idea that one’s voice in a discussion does not exist in isolation and is really entering into a conversation.

Small Group Discussion

Present a problem or question to the group. Appoint or elect specific roles—facilitator, recorder, responder, questioner, reporter, etc. Make sure the group is held accountable for the work—make them report. Present reasonable time limits—less than you think. Monitor the groups

Tea Party

Provide each student with a notecard with a key word or phrase. Have them circulate with each other exchanging ideas or predicting. This is a great pre-reading strategy or a review strategy for history. I use it with poetry. Use time limits. Once circulated, ask the whole class what observations they made, what conclusions they draw, or what predictions can they make.

Pass-Pass-Synthesize

This is a written student led discussion strategy. Students respond to a question or write about a topic for a set amount of time before “passing” the paper to a partner who then writes for another set amount of time. After two rounds of response and writing, the paper is passed a third time. This time, each student has to read the two previous responses and “synthesize” them together. You may want to provide students with sentence stems for synthesis and response. This has natural extension to share-out or a whole-class share out.

Graffiti Wall

Display questions, work, pictures. Students walk by and leave written comments by the station using post-it notes. Review via a full class debriefing.