

Developing speaking and listening skills:

A tool for museums, galleries and archives

Who is this tool for?

- Heads of learning
- Education officers
- Freelance educators / artist practitioners

Why might you use this tool?

- To develop literacy-based workshops
- To incorporate speaking and listening into current workshops

What does this tool include?

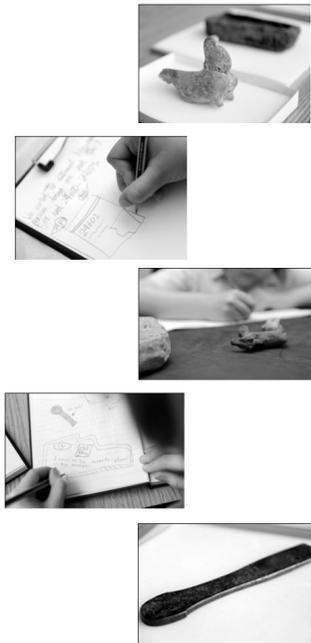
1. Some questions to aid reflection on current practice.
2. Some suggestions for incorporating the following into museum education workshops:
 - Speaking
 - Listening
 - Group discussion and interaction
 - Drama
 - Questioning
3. Some suggestions for differentiating activities for different age groups and abilities at Key Stage 2.



How could you use this tool?

In general:

- Sections not need to be read or used sequentially.
- Pick, choose and adapt the activities as you see fit. There is no suggestion that all will fit your organisation.
- Activities and suggestions may suit a wide range of existing workshops, adding a new dimension to current learning
- As far as possible, the activities included have very little, if any, cost associated with them
- Above all, these are suggestions. You might, quite appropriately, end up picking only one or two ideas from this tool.
- Where possible, talk to teachers about the approaches you adopt. They may not use exactly the same names, but creative teachers will understand the approaches.



Section 2: Reflecting on current practice

- The questions could be used to explore how speaking and listening skills are used in current or planned workshops.
- While there are no right or wrong answers to these questions, they may be helpful in identifying areas you wish to develop

Section 3: Some ideas for developing literacy in workshops

- Each page addresses one area and includes:
 - ◇ Some general pointers
 - ◇ Some ideas for developing practice
 - ◇ Some potential issues which might arise

Section 4: Some ideas for differentiation across Key Stage 2 (age 7-11)

- Recognising that sometimes there can be a variance in ability across groups of different ages or from different backgrounds, there are some suggestions for how a workshop might be adapted to suit a spectrum of ages or needs.

1

Some questions about speaking and listening

Children should be regularly involved in work which encourages them to use talk effectively and see its value. These are useful questions to ask about your practice:

When is speaking and listening the focus of an activity, such as contributing to group discussion, asking questions at an interview, listening actively to a speaker?

When is speaking and listening the outcome, such as taking on a specific role during discussion, a prepared talk or report, a performance, or a reading?

Where does discussion and group work result in action, such as agreement on a course of action, the solving of a problem or the production of a leaflet?

How are structures and deadlines made clear and adhered to so that time is not wasted and talk is purposeful?

How do different children undertake different tasks and when do they need to collaborate and negotiate to achieve an overall aim?

When are children the experts and when do they genuinely have information to tell others?

Where and when do children have the opportunity to rehearse, practise and apply newly acquired speaking and listening skills?

How and where do children reflect on their use of talk and its impact on their learning?

2

Reflecting on your workshop 1/2

These are no right or wrong answers to these questions and not all need to be answered.

They are offered as an opportunity to explore some areas (both general and literacy-related) common to most workshops.

Which is the main focus of the workshop?

Literacy / speaking and listening		Other curricular area: which?	
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How much do you alter the workshop? (tick all that apply)

It's a standard session which we don't usually change	
It's a standard session that we would adapt a little after talking to the teacher	
We're quite likely to adapt a session quite a bit or create a bespoke session after discussion with the teacher	
We have options (e.g. different or altered activities) to adapt a session for younger or older pupils	
We have options (e.g. different or altered activities) to adapt a session for less able or more able groups	
We rely on the skills of the person who delivers the session to adapt the content	

What age range is the workshop for?

Key Stage 1 and 2	
Key Stage 1	
Key Stage 2	
Lower Key Stage 2 (Years 3 and 4)	
Upper Key Stage 2 (Years 5 and 6)	
Specific year group(s) – which ones?	

What proportion of the questions are open (long answer) questions?

More than ¾ of them	
More than half of them but less than ¾	
About half them	
Less than half of them but more than ¼	
Less than ¼ of them	

2

Reflecting on your workshop 2/2

During the workshop, what proportion of the talking is done by the leader?

Most of the time ($\frac{3}{4} +$) – there’s a lot of information to give!	
More than half of the time but less than $\frac{3}{4}$	
About half the time	
Less than half of the time but more than $\frac{1}{4}$	
Less than $\frac{1}{4}$ of the time	

How often do the children have quiet time to think during the workshop?

More than $\frac{3}{4}$ of the time	
More than half of the time but less than $\frac{3}{4}$	
About half the time	
Less than half of the time but more than $\frac{1}{4}$	
Less than $\frac{1}{4}$ of the time	

How often do the children work in groups during the workshop?

More than $\frac{3}{4}$ of the time	
More than half of the time but less than $\frac{3}{4}$	
About half the time	
Less than half of the time but more than $\frac{1}{4}$	
Less than $\frac{1}{4}$ of the time	

What proportion of the workshop is spent in learning through movement, drama etc?

More than $\frac{3}{4}$ of the time	
More than half of the time but less than $\frac{3}{4}$	
About half the time	
Less than half of the time but more than $\frac{1}{4}$	
Less than $\frac{1}{4}$ of the time	

Remember, there are no right or wrong answers—these are merely prompts for your reflection.

3

Suggestions for development: leader / child talk

Ideally, the ratio of *talking time* in a session should approach **80% children talking, 20% adult talking**.

This can seem difficult to achieve if the session has a lot of factual content— could some of the content be delivered within groups?

Think—pair—share / snowballing:

When a question is asked or an object / artwork / piece of text is considered, give the children time to think in silence, before asking them to share their ideas with a partner.

Feedback to the class can then be by 'hands up' or by snowballing: pairs join to become 4s, 4s becomes 8s, 8s becomes half the class and then the class joins.

Quantity versus quality:

Consider whether the total quantity of factual content is really needed. Could some of this be provided more appropriately in the teacher's pre- or post-visit work.

Alternatively, could the delivery of the information be through reading and group work?

'Mantle of the expert' :

Children enjoy feeling that they are experts on a subject. It may be possible to give each group of children a different artwork / object(s) / set of information which they become 'experts' on.

Spokesperson / envoys / rainbowing:

Each group can elect a spokesperson to report back for them, send envoys to other groups or reform into new groups each with a member from the original group.

Things to consider:

- 'Info dump' - are there other ways to give or discover information without the leader talking?
- How can we avoid a succession of 'hands up' scenarios?

3

Suggestions for development: effective listening

'Active listening' can be a difficult skill to acquire, but one which can sit alongside speaking activities in museums and galleries. Often a key aim with listening activities is to give **responsibility** before the activity, e.g. 'When we feedback, you will be reporting on what your partner told you.'

Key skills:

Here are some key pointers for listeners:

- Look at the person speaking
- Give them your full attention
- Do not interrupt
- Nod (or smile) to show you understand
- Ask questions (when it is OK to do so) if you do not understand. This will show that you have been thinking about what you hear.

Listening triangles:

Children work in groups of three and take on the roles of:

- a **speaker** to explain a topic,
- a **questioner** to find areas of clarification
- a **note-taker** who reports back on the success of the first two.

These roles could be rotated.

Reporting back:

Encouraging active listening:

- Ask pupils to report back to the group what their partner or a fellow group member came up with
- Envoys— one child from within the group will go and tell one or more other groups what their 'home group' came up with. The 'home groups' will be listening to what the envoy visiting them says.

Warm-ups:

Quick activities which get small groups listening to each other are:

- Word tennis—each child adds a word to the ongoing story
- Sentence tennis—like word tennis, but adding a sentence starting with 'fortunately', 'unfortunately' or 'suddenly'
- Make it clear—one child describes something for their partner to draw. The artist needs to listen and ask questions to clarify

Things to consider:

- Are children only listening to adults?
- How long should a listening activity last? Most of us do not take in information after a few minutes.

3

Suggestions for development: group discussion and interaction

Group working gives ownership of learning to children. Where possible, it is very positive to change grouping sizes and constitution from time to time. Teachers may initially prefer groups they're used to, but generally see the benefits once they've seen it in action.

What do we know?

What do we want to know?

Groups can focus on an artwork, object(s), text or a topic word. Together they discuss (and, where possible, also write) what they know already and/or can work out from their source material, followed by what they'd like to know—a great opportunity to generate their own questions (not all of which have to be answered in the session).

At the end, they might only feedback one item from each list.

Rainbowing:

Each initial group has a different object, artwork, piece of text or issue to learn about and discuss.

It is generally preferable for each group member to make notes.

Each member of the original group is given a colour.

New single-colour groups are formed who share the information or ideas the original groups have discovered.

Posters / mind maps :

Pairs or groups of three work together to create a visual representation of their understanding. This could be before they start (in which case they can return to it as the session unfolds).

The poster / mind map could form the basis of a presentation or could help groups generate questions about future learning. (Not all of this has to be done during the session).

'Split down the middle':

If techniques such as conscience alley or a polarisation debate are used, where children end up with opposing views or ideas of outcomes, it is useful if the each opposing group can work together initially (possibly in sub-groups) to help them share their ideas and practise the sort of language they will use to make their point of view as persuasive as possible. Sometimes repeating this process partway through the main activity helps sharpen their approaches.

Things to consider:

- How much prior knowledge do the children have? Probably more than we expect!
- Do children all have to have exactly the same experiences / source material / discussions?

3

Suggestions for development: drama, role play and movement

Without needing a lot of confidence from workshop leaders, drama and role play can provide challenging and exciting ways for children to engage with objects, artworks and archive material.

Soundscape:

Why should an artwork or object be still and silent?

Use a 'magic microphone' pointed at different parts of the artwork or a 'secret volume control' for the object and encourage children to listen with their 'inner ear', thinking of words to describe the sounds they hear.

After paired discussion and feedback, children could bring the sounds to life.

Talk for me:

- Children take it in turns to say what the object wants to tell the class about its 'life story'
- Hold a speech bubble above a character in an artwork. Children say what could go in there (structure added if words like 'I feel...' are in the bubble)
- Children create a tableau of characters from an artwork or the person who owned an object. Other children say what the characters are thinking.

Climb inside :

Imagine you could open a window and climb inside a painting or shrink small enough to crawl inside or over the surfaces of an object.

- How would you move? (Do it!)
- What would you say to people watching you?
- What secrets can you find?

Improvisation:

There are a range of simple approaches which help children engage more fully:

- Discussing and acting out a conversation between two characters connected with an artwork or object
- Flash back or fast forward to explore what's happened before
- Characters share a conversation or action with the class, who suggest alternatives or improvements

Things to consider:

- Can we give children a chance to warm up their drama skills?
- How do we mark if we are in or out of a role during a workshop? A hat or scarf are often handy markers.

3

Suggestions for development: questions

The types of questions we ask and our approaches to pupils' answers can make all the difference to their learning. Expect the unexpected in answers!

Use more open questions:

How do you frame your questions to encourage longer and more thoughtful / detailed answers?

Cue words:

- How...?
- Why...?
- What do you think...?
- Explain...
- Describe...
- Tell us about...

Be ready to rephrase questions—children may not perceive them to mean what you think they do

Children creating their own questions:

Questions don't have to be one way. Given the tools (e.g. the cue words and an understanding of the difference between closed and open questions), they will come up with a range of questions. They may be able to try these out on the leader, other pupils or save them for future research.

Time to think:

It is always useful to give pupils time to think about possible answers to a question.

Let them know in advance that they will be thinking and not saying or putting their hands up. Sharing their answers in pairs or with groups may be useful—especially if you ask group members to feed back other people's ideas to aid inclusion

Philosophy:

Sometimes an artwork or object can spark 'big' questions about the world, e.g.:

- Is beauty in the eye of the beholder?
- Should human remains be displayed in the museum?

These questions might be generated by children and you may decide to debate them (e.g. with a polarisation debate)

Things to consider:

- Closed questions have their place, but will more open questions increase the variety of responses?
- Avoid 'Guess what answer I'm thinking of' questions
- Does it always matter if an answer is 'right' or 'wrong'?

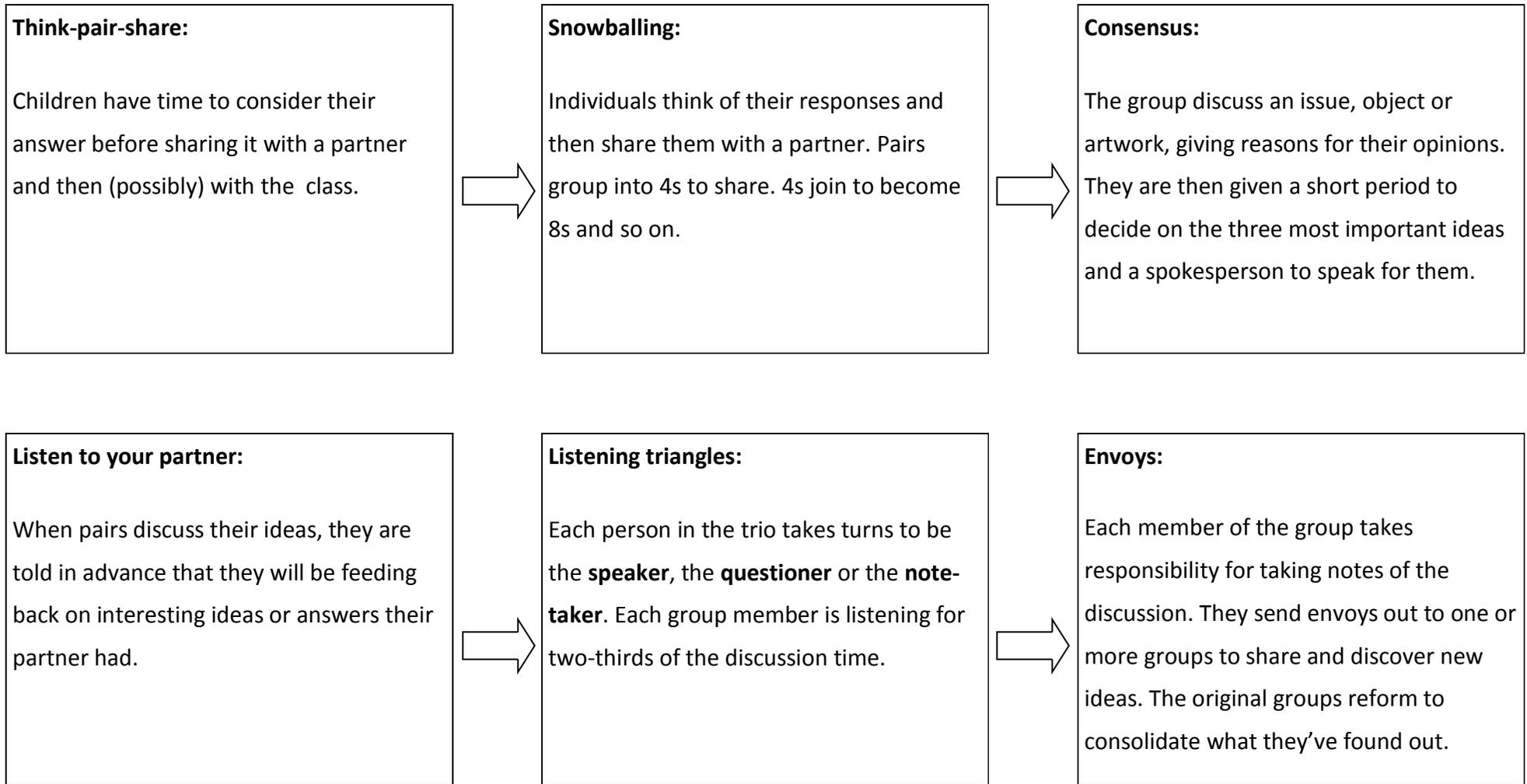
4

Developing skills across Key Stage 2

Some **suggestions** for how speaking, listening and group activities might develop with different age or ability pupils.

Year 3 / Less able

Year 6 / More able



4

Developing skills across Key Stage 2

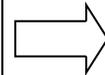
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Rainbowing:

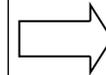
Home groups discuss their source material. Each member of the group is given a colour. New groups are formed based on their colours. Each member of the new group is an expert and shares their findings with their colour group.



Group roles:

Children are assigned or choose these roles within the group while discussing:

- **chair** – introduce, organise, prompt and summarise;
- **scribe** – summarise and check, for example, the accuracy of their notes;
- **reporter** – summarise, present, clarify and follow up, for example, questions from others;
- **mentor** – prompt, rephrase, question, clarify.
- (optional) **observer** – watches how the group works



'Town meeting:

The group is given the role of an important meeting, e.g. *the Roman senate debating whether to invade Britain, a Victorian society debating how to provide education for the poor*
They research and/or use artwork/objects and conduct their debate / discussion within role, but also taking on different functions of the group.

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