

Teaching students how to turn and talk is so important that we have written three lessons on the topic. (And you'll likely invest even more time across the year helping students learn to dialogue in partnerships!) In a Turn and Talk moment, students can gain confidence and sort out their ideas in a safe space. They can prepare for sharing something with the whole group, or process what they have just heard. This lesson is about the logistics of Turn and Talk. It is not yet about really listening deeply, but just physically moving our bodies to prepare for conversation. Depending on your class and the age of your students, you may want to reteach this lesson several times over the course of a few days until this behavior is natural and fast—it could even be made into a little game to get the physical movement quick. Some students will come with previous Turn and Talk experience, and you will be able to move on after you have established the talk partners.

During the Dialogue Micro-lesson

What and Why? Today we are going to learn how to turn and talk with our talk partner. You will get the chance to talk with this person many times. Today we are going to get good at quickly moving our bodies into position to have a conversation. We turn our bodies to talk to a partner because it helps us be better listeners and talkers and lets our partner know that we want to hear their ideas.

How?

1. Turn your whole body so that you face your partner.
2. Ask: “Do you want to go first?”
Decide who has the “Big Ear” role and who has the talking role.
3. Switch roles.
4. Listen for when I _____. (Describe your preferred signal for getting students' attention, such as raising a hand, ringing a chime, or saying, “One, two, three. Turn and look at me.”) That signal means it's time to turn back around to face the whole group again.



Getting Started

During the Turn and Talk

Guided Practice: It Might Sound Like . . . Here is a chart of your Turn and Talk partners. We will keep these partnerships for a while, and then change them. Move to sit with your partner now. (*You will probably want to ask students to sit next to their talk partners from now on when you are going to have a Hands-Down Conversation.*) Earlier today we checked out books from the library for the first time. When I say, “Turn and talk,” you will turn your whole body to your talking partner and talk to them about the books you chose from the library today and what kinds of books you love to read. Ready . . . Turn and talk!



Facilitation Moves As partners talk, circulate, complimenting and adjusting physical behaviors—not worrying too much yet about the content of the talk. You might try interrupting the talk a couple times to let the students practice your “signal” for returning to the group, and then have them turn and talk again, so the movement becomes fluid. Once students are familiar with Turn and Talks and are having longer conversations, you may start to let them know when their Turn and Talk time is coming to an end by saying something like, “We’ll finish up our thoughts for now in one minute,” and then give them your established signal, so that ending the Turn and Talk feels less abrupt.

After the Turn and Talk

Reinforce So remember, when you are talking to another person, even in the cafeteria, you can sometimes make your bodies face each other. This is one way we get ready for listening and talking.

Teacher Tip

We highly recommend establishing “talk partners” for each subject and keeping them the same for a month or so. This way, students can really get to know their partners and still have many talk partners across the year. We form these pairs more or less randomly—we don’t advocate any kind of “ability grouping” for talk partnerships. Turn and Talk trios can be supportive of some students as well.

As a classroom builds the dialogue community, it is crucial to recognize that each individual has different talk patterns and preferred indicators of listening. Cultural norms, family values, and individual hardwiring bring a beautiful diversity to human communication that we want to honor in our classrooms. For example, strong eye contact can be perceived as hostile or even rude by some, whereas others feel it is rude when a person does not make eye contact. Individuals also vary in their comfort with proximity to a speaker. The Hands-Down Conversation classroom honors these variations. Beginning to appreciate and understand these differences can start with the Turn and Talk partner. This lesson helps students begin to get to know their talk partner's preferences and style.

During the Dialogue Micro-lesson

What and Why? Everyone likes to be listened to. Doesn't it feel good when someone really shows you that they care about what you are saying? The interesting thing is, each of us shows that we are listening in different ways. Today we are going to learn how our Turn and Talk partner likes to be listened to so we can be a good talk partner for them.

How?

1. Take a moment to think about what behaviors you would like someone to do when you talk to them. What do you want their body to look like? Their face? What do you want them to say? Nothing? Lots of things? How do your family members show that they are listening to each other? Let's write some of these ideas down here on our anchor chart.
2. Now, tell your partner what kind of listening you like. Remember to look at the anchor chart for ideas to get you going. And tell your partner something you do NOT like a listener to do! (*With younger students you might assign Partner A and Partner B and tell them which partner will talk first.*)
3. Switch and listen to what your partner likes.

Teacher Tip

Model the "How" of this lesson with one student or a partner-teacher in front of the students before asking them to try it out.

Getting to Know My Talk Partner

During the Turn and Talk

Guided Practice: It Might Sound Like . . . Now that you have learned a little about your partner, we are going to try listening just the way our partner likes. Today we are not going to have a whole Hands-Down Conversation. We are just going to practice having a conversation with our Turn and Talk partners. While you talk, see if you can make your body and voice show your partner that you are listening in a way that makes them feel heard. Now turn and talk about this: “Snakes are dangerous, or snakes are not dangerous. Why?”



Facilitation Moves As partners are talking, circulate, asking students to pause their conversation while you check in with them. “So, James, do you feel like your partner is listening to you? Yes? That’s great. Can you give her some feedback about exactly what she’s doing well?” Keep in mind that we are not necessarily trying to get everyone to conform to *our* ideal of what a listener should look like. We can transfer this power to the students. A student may be very comfortable with his talk partner interrupting him midsentence and jumping in. That is fine, as long as both partners are okay with that!

After the Turn and Talk

Reflect Take a moment to tell your partner one thing they did today that made you feel like they were listening.

Reinforce Today you got to know your Turn and Talk partner a little better and try out being a good listener for them. We will have a lot of opportunities to keep working on this with your partner. But *whenever* you are having a conversation with someone, you can watch their body and face for clues about what behaviors they like in a listener.



This lesson sets the stage for deeper listening and paraphrasing to clarify understanding, which we will build upon in Chapter 6. Listening to understand is a difficult skill that develops over time. It's okay right now if the students don't fully understand their partners' ideas and are just making attempts to hear them. In kindergarten and first grade, full development of this skill may take a good portion of the year for some students (in terms of social maturity). Therefore, you will want to keep circling back to reteach and reinforce this lesson periodically. Although many older students have some listening skills in place, we have found that it is still worthwhile to teach them this lesson before moving on to deeper listening moves.

During the Dialogue Micro-lesson

What and Why? Students, you have been working on being excellent Turn and Talk partners and showing your partner that you are listening. Today I want to teach you that when you turn and talk, you have another important job. You will listen to your partners' idea SO well that after they talk, you will understand both their idea AND your idea! We do this because when we listen to other people's ideas it helps our ideas grow too!

How?

1. When you are the "Big Ear" partner, keep your body facing the talker and show that you are listening just the way your partner likes it.
2. When they are talking, try to understand their idea so well that you could tell everyone about it when we come back to the circle.
3. Switch.
4. Switch again if you have time! Keep talking and listening the *whole* time until the teacher calls you back to the circle.
5. Try sharing your idea or your partner's idea in our Hands-Down Conversation.



I'm a Strong Listener

During the Turn and Talk and Hands-Down Conversation

Guided Practice: It Might Sound Like . . . We noticed a lot of trash on our playground yesterday. Many of you came up to me and pointed it out or were talking about it with each other as we lined up. Today we are going to talk to our partners about this. What are you thinking about this trash? What could *we* do about it? Remember to listen to your partner **SO** well, you can talk about their idea. Okay . . . Turn and talk. (*Choose one or two talk partnerships and listen for some ideas that are being discussed so you can see whether the partners reference those ideas later. Use your established signal to end the Turn and Talk when you have read the room to decide they are ready.*) Great, let's have a Hands-Down Conversation about the trash. What should we do? Remember, you can share your partner's idea *or* your own!



Facilitation Moves During the Hands-Down Conversation today, you will be especially focused on whether the Turn and Talk conversations are informing what students say to the whole group. You might hear a student referencing something they discussed with their partner earlier (even if they don't explicitly say, "My partner said . . ."). Note this so you can reinforce it after the discussion. You might enter the conversation during a slow moment and say, "Remember, you can share your partner's ideas too, not just your own." Another helpful move is to have a second Turn and Talk, mid-conversation, to process what has already been said and provide another opportunity for students to hear more ideas from their partner.

After the Hands-Down Conversation

Reinforce Wow, I noticed that Jasmine shared her partner Sam's idea with us today. She must have been listening so well. Sam, I bet that felt good to have your partner listen to you, right? Remember, any time you are talking with another person, your job is to listen so well that you can understand their idea *and* your idea.

Teacher Tip

As you listen to students turn and talk, consider whether to circulate and listen a bit to several partnerships or just stick with one pair and really listen to the whole conversation. While we offer recommendations for your listening throughout the micro-lessons, both options are good teacher listening moves.