

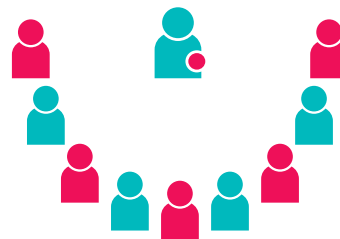
Creating an environment where everyone feels confident and has the opportunity to participate is essential for good engagement. From group sorting to voting, here are some ideas which will help everyone to get involved.

GROUND RULES

Ground rules help to create a safe and constructive environment which will enable students to feel more comfortable participating. Encourage your group to create their own rules to give them ownership and motivation to stick to them. Have no more than five rules to make them easier for everyone to remember.

TALK OBJECTS

To ensure that only one person is speaking at a time, make a rule that people in a group may only speak when holding the talk object. A generic object such as a microphone or a ball can be used, or you could theme the object to the activity.



TALK TOKENS

Talk tokens are a way to help give everyone an opportunity to contribute to a discussion by managing the dominant voices and encouraging quieter members to participate. Give everyone a few talk tokens which they 'spend' when they contribute to the activity. You can give tokens a time limit or encourage students to spend a minimum number of tokens. Plastic counters, playing cards, small toys or coloured pieces of paper all make good talk tokens.

CAR PARK

If an off-topic issue arises, or if somebody has a lot to contribute to one aspect of a discussion, the point can be 'parked' by writing the comment up at the front of the room. If there is time, come back to it at the end of the session. This acknowledges a contribution, without losing focus on your topic.

GROUP SORTERS

Group size and group dynamics can have a significant impact on engagement. Groups can be self- or preselected, or they can be picked at random to remove any feelings of unfairness. You can simply pick names out of a hat, but other ideas for group sorters include:

- Playing cards – mix up groups by the card colour, number or suit
- Make a set of your own cards using a set of images linked to your topic

PEER OBSERVATION

Peer observation is an empowering tool for students and gives them an active role in an activity or discussion. Divide the group in two and have one half doing the activity and the other half observing and recording what happens – then swap roles. Things to look out for could include: What do you think went well? Did anyone say or do anything you had not considered?

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITY

Assigning roles to individuals in a group can help to involve the quieter members and to focus the more dominant ones. Roles could include:

- Chairperson/facilitator – to coordinate and facilitate the group's work
- Record-keeper – to observe and record the group conversation and progress
- Reporter – to report back to the whole class what the group have done

VOTING

Starting and/or ending an activity or discussion with a vote allows everyone to share their personal views and opinions about a topic. Simple voting might include 'hands up' or a secret ballot, but here are some other voting techniques that you could try...

Human barometer

A human barometer is a great way to capture a spectrum of different views and opinions:

- Label one side of the room/wall 'for' and the opposite side 'against'
- Get students to either stand across the room or place sticky notes on the wall, between the markers at the point where their opinion currently lies – take a photograph so that you can compare the results before and after
- Repeat after the session to see if any opinions have changed



Voting cards

A quick and easy way to capture and see people's opinions is to use voting cards. You could theme the cards using images related to your topic, or you could use 'traffic light' coloured cards, where red represents 'against', green 'for' and amber 'not sure'.

Prop voting

Voting can be themed to the topic using props. Your options are limited only by your imagination. Here are just a few ideas:

- Use a set of scales and get people to place weights or counters on either side of the scales to see where the balance of opinion lies
- Get people to share their views by asking them to take their pick from a choice of things linked to the topic – eg to respond to the question 'should we colonise Mars?' people could vote by picking a picture of the Earth or a picture of Mars
- To give a visual overview of the outcome of a vote, get people to vote by putting balls or coloured paper into labelled jars