

## Talking Points

### Instructions for improving exploratory talk

**Exploratory talk** is the **most important part of effective collaboration**, yet most classroom group work never gets beyond “cumulative” (positive but uncritical) or “disputational” talk (merely trading uncritical disagreements back and forth). Our goal is to deepen our talk during group work into the rich process of true exploratory talk.

Talking Points is a timed activity. You will have exactly ten minutes to do as many rounds of the activity as you can do. Please keep track of who thought what and why.

The overall plan looks like this: each group will consider one “Talking Point” statement at a time by giving it **three rounds of attention**. Each round of attention consists of both **speaking and listening**. Don't get bogged down in overthinking things. The Talking Point statements are provocative and designed to stimulate reactions.

Take turns being the reader for the next Talking Points statement, and always keep in mind that **the most important rule** in Talking Points is, **NO COMMENT**.

#### HOW TO DO TALKING POINTS 10 minutes

The first step of Talking Points is to do the three rounds of speaking and listening that form the core of the activity.

**ROUND 1** – Go around the group, with each person saying in turn whether they AGREE, DISAGREE, or are UNSURE about the statement AND SAY WHY YOU THINK THAT WAY. **Even if you are unsure, you must state a reason WHY** you are unsure. Then **NO COMMENT**. You are free to change your mind during Round 2 and/or Round 3.

**ROUND 2** – Go around the group a second time, with each person saying whether they AGREE, DISAGREE, or are UNSURE about their own statement **OR** about someone else's agreement, disagreement, or uncertainty from Round 1. BE SURE TO SAY WHY YOU THINK THAT WAY. Again, **NO COMMENT**. You are free to change your mind again during Round 3.

**ROUND 3** – Go around the group a third time just to take a tally of AGREE / DISAGREE / UNSURE (no need to say why) and make notes on your sheet. **NO COMMENT**.

Your group then moves on to the next Talking Point.

At the end of ten minutes I will ring the bell and ask all groups wrap up whatever round they are on. When you finish your current round, stop talking so I will know that you are ready to move on.

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**GROUP SELF-ASSESSMENT**  
**2 minutes**

The second step of Talking Points asks groups to reflect on their process and outcomes. At the end of the ten minutes, you will have **exactly two minutes** to fill out the **Group Self-Assessment** sheet. These notes will be the basis for our whole-class debrief, as well as for your group grade (Talking Points is a graded group task).

Again, in your discussion, please maintain the practice of **NO COMMENT**. Say whatever you need to say to have your quick discussion; then stop talking so I will know that you are ready to move on.

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**WHOLE-CLASS DEBRIEF**  
**5 minutes**

The final step of Talking Points is our whole-class discussion. I will ask each group to report out about specifics, such as:

- Who in your group asked a helpful question and what was it?
- Who in your group changed their mind about a Talking Point? How did that occur?
- Who in your group encouraged someone else? How did that benefit the conversation?
- Who in your group provided an interesting additional idea and what was it?
- Who did your group disagree about and why?

Again, during our discussion, please maintain the practice of **NO COMMENT**. In your notebook, write down anything you think might be useful to think about during future Talking Points, but **NO COMMENT**.

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