



## Turn-Taking Tasks, Lifting Listening Levels

Teachers often ask, "*How can I get them to respond to what others say, not just say their own points?*"

To respond, you first need to listen, and to understand exactly what the other person is saying. These two games structure turn-taking dialogue for listening and response, rather than just "waiting for your chance to speak".

### But what if?

In pairs, facing each other. Give "As" a question to ask, that starts with "What if you wanted...?" For example:

What if you wanted to know the time?  
What if you wanted to make some toast?  
What if you wanted to meet the Queen?  
What if you wanted to go to sleep?

"B" responds with what they would do. "A" responds with a "what if". It might go like this...

A: What if you wanted to know the time?  
B: I'd look at my phone.  
A: But what if your phone was out of battery?  
B: I'd charge it up.  
A: But what if you'd lost your charger?  
B: I'd use someone else's.  
A: But what if there was a power cut?  
B: I'd use the clock in the school hall?  
A: But what if the power cut lasted so long, all the batteries had run out?  
B: I'd see when the sun came up...

...and so on. Notice how each turn has to respond to the previous one, raising or rebutting an objection.

## You think... what I think about that is...

Teachers last week asked, "What should you do if a clash of two opinions becomes angry?". Good listening can remove the heat and lead to more light, as in this exercise.

You need a question on which there is genuine disagreement. With older pupils, ask them to write down something they believe, but which they don't think everyone will agree with, and to fold up the paper and put it in a tub. Or you could write statements yourself that you think will divide opinion. For example:

The death penalty is always wrong.  
Children should be able to vote at 16.  
University should be free.  
Begging should be illegal.

Read one out and get them to stand on one side or the other to show what they think. When you find a belief that divides opinion fairly evenly, have people pair up. A starts by saying what they think and why. B responds:

"You think...*[repeat exactly what they said]*...what I think about that is...*[say what you think about what they said]*."

Then A does the same "You think... what I think about that is..." with B's response. Have the exact form of words written on the board to emphasise that there is a required structure for the dialogue.

The repetition requires careful attention to what is said, and the "about that..." forces the speaker to stay on the same point. This pushes the thinking deeper, rather than the talk skipping around on the surface of several unconnected ideas. The aim of dialogue is to interrogate ideas, not just exchange them.

Like many dialogue games, once they know it, you can use it opportunistically within a longer enquiry. It gets the children to self-facilitate more and allows more conversations simultaneously without compromising the quality of the dialogue.