



Virtual Classroom Exchange



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education

Empatico.

What is the Virtual Classroom Exchange?

It is a unique feature of your new Macmillan course, which enables teachers to connect their students online with other users of the course around the world, encouraging them to use English for a real communicative purpose in an authentic cultural exchange.

What are the students going to learn?

The Virtual Classroom Exchange brings together learners from different cultures and backgrounds to promote teamwork, collaboration and foster intercultural awareness. Not only can the students research and present the projects, which are part of the course, to their own class but they will also have an opportunity to exchange them with their peers in a different school or country, using English as the means of communication.

How does it work?

After registering your class on our dedicated platform, you will receive a notification when a partner class has been found, and you can begin your Virtual Classroom Exchange journey. Learners will need their Student Books to be able to work on and share their project outputs with their partner class.

What if I need help setting up the Virtual Classroom Exchange for my class?

Setting up your virtual exchange is simple but should you run into any problems you can contact support@empatico.org at any time.

Students' personal data is protected and connections are always facilitated by their teacher, ensuring a safe learning environment.

How to register your class

- 1 Type empatico.org/mvce into your web browser
- 2 Where asked, type in your name, your email address, your location (town/country) and details of each class (age, level, times available) you wish to register. For example: B1 class, Mondays and Tuesdays from 4–5pm, 12–13.
- 3 Read and accept the Privacy Policy and Terms of Use
- 4 Start exchanging!



Virtual Classroom Exchange

OVERVIEW



- ① **Your quick guide to Virtual Classroom Exchanges** (page 3) explains the main benefits of virtual classroom exchanges for your learners and gives useful ideas for activities you can organise, as well as a quick overview of how to set them up. Your partnership with another teacher, which in itself can provide an invaluable professional development opportunity, forms the foundations of any successful virtual exchange. For learners to get the most out of these exchanges, either as a whole group or peer-to-peer interactions, prepare and support them well on their virtual learning journey!
- ② For an exchange to run smoothly, everything needs to click into place. **How to connect your classrooms online** (page 4) provides advice on how to build rapport with your fellow teacher and for students in both classes to create and maintain an engaging learning experience. **KWL information lightbulbs** (page 13) is a whole-class activity which can help to activate prior knowledge and prepare questions for the other class. Further activities to help connect the participants before and after the exchange can be found in **Setting objectives in a Virtual Classroom Exchange** (page 5) and **Giving structure to the Virtual Exchange** (page 6), during the exchange in **Your quick guide to synchronous communication** (page 9) and **How to be digitally savvy** (page 10), while useful digital tools and resources are suggested in **Your quick guide to asynchronous communication** (page 8) and **How to keep your students safe and secure** (page 11).

- ③ Agreeing on objectives that work for both classes helps to get the most out of their exchange. **Setting objectives in a virtual classroom exchange** (page 5) highlights the importance of setting shared lesson objectives and considers what these could be. It provides advice on how to help learners work towards achieving their objectives by sharing success criteria so that learners can take responsibility for, and reflect on, their own learning. **Over to you!** and **Tag it!** (pages 17 and 18) encourage a positive approach to assessing the collaborative learning that takes place during the exchange.
- ④ The process should be sufficiently straightforward: create interest to fully engage students in the tasks; prepare students for the activity; exploit the materials as much as possible to maximise language and skills practice, and keep learning on track; follow up with reflection and evaluation to assess the learning and identify areas for improvement (both in terms of learning and teaching); and using the activity as a springboard for connected tasks. **Giving structure to the Virtual Exchange** (page 6) gives practical tips, strategies and activities for doing all of this.
- ⑤ **How to keep your learners focussed** (page 7) provides strategies to keep your students engaged, making sure that they communicate effectively and respectfully with a high degree of participation and quality collaboration. Effective turn-taking in a virtual environment is essential for active learner participation but needs to be managed effectively in both classrooms. **Hand Signals** (page 14) is a good activity for learners to put their creativity to work by designing culturally appropriate hand signals to indicate that they agree or disagree, want to ask a question or have something to add to the discussion.



- 6 Many digital resources enable learners from each class to communicate and collaborate at different times (asynchronously) and from different places. These tools help to further expand student opportunities for interaction beyond the live (synchronous) part of the exchange. They can be used beforehand to help learners prepare, or after the event to reflect on the experience. Evaluating students' learning or gathering feedback can also be done asynchronously. **Your quick guide to asynchronous communication** (page 8) provides an overview of different communication tools that facilitate this, gives some suggestions for when to use them and highlights what to be aware of.
- 7 For students, the most exciting part of any virtual classroom exchange is the real-time (synchronous) communication with the other class. Here, students have the opportunity to use and improve their English speaking and listening skills by communicating in an authentic environment. **Your quick guide to synchronous communication** (page 9) provides advice on how to choose the most appropriate videoconferencing platform for both classes; suggests tools for engaging students during the virtual interactions to ensure real learning and avoid passive participation; and gives tips for successful videoconferencing. **Lucky numbers** (page 15) engages both classrooms in a fun way and can be adapted for any age group and topic.
- 8 A virtual classroom exchange will go smoothly if equipment is tested first and students can practice trying out the digital platform, its tools and features, especially when participating from home. **How to be digitally savvy** (page 10) provides advice on what to check before the exchange, suggests what aspects of technology learners need to know and gives several trouble-shooting tips and will help you to set up a Plan B for those unexpected events!
- 9 The first step towards **How to keep your students safe and secure** (page 11) is to establish clear online security guidelines from the start. This guide provides advice on how to protect your student's online activities, shows them how to take responsibility for their own safety and ensures both their physical and their digital well-being. **Safety first!** (page 16) teaches students to decide what personal data is safe to share, what needs to be protected and encourages them to reflect on and seek further advice for more complex online issues and safety concerns.
- 10 Some of the best activities for an exchange are collaborative projects, in which each class undertakes the same task and learn through knowledge and information sharing. These projects allow students in each class to engage in meaningful communication that utilises their language and digital skills whilst giving them the opportunity to be creative through collaboration with their peers. They are an excellent opportunity for intercultural communication, critical thinking and learning aspects of communication that go beyond what a course book can provide. **Your quick guide to collaborative projects** (page 12) gives several examples of these.



Your quick guide to *Virtual Classroom Exchanges*

Bringing learners from different cultures and backgrounds together using digital communication tools leads to many positive outcomes in the language learning classroom. **The virtual classroom exchange can help promote teamwork, collaboration and digital literacy as well as fostering intercultural awareness**, all in the target language.

1 Why exchange?

Interacting with learners worldwide will help students develop cross-cultural awareness and understanding. Building meaningful relationships and developing a positive, open-minded attitude are key to success as a **global citizen** in this modern interdependent world.



Interacting online with others outside their immediate community will strengthen learners' **life skills**. Such essential skills as critical and creative thinking, intercultural communication, and collaboration will enable students to identify and appreciate cultural differences.



Creating meaningful content together through the virtual classroom exchange will help students to take control of their learning. And exchanging student-generated content such as projects with young people of their own age from different backgrounds will **enhance learner engagement**.

2 What to do

Learners from each class can **interview** one another, as groups or peer-to-peer. Statements on the board can prompt **discussions** to compare or contrast meaningful topics from each class's perspective. **Polls** and **questionnaires** can help establish similarities and common ground between the two groups.



Students can share **projects** or **stories** with each other. Or small groups can create content and then give online **presentations** in real-time, as a group or individually. Young learners can sing a traditional song and older students could role-play an aspect of their culture.



In addition to 'live' videoconferences, you could do **asynchronous activities** where learners respond in their own time to short texts, stories, photo messages, videos or even challenges on a shared digital document or app. This is good for developing **learner autonomy** and caters to students who can **work independently**.

3 How to start

Both teachers should meet beforehand to discuss the **technical and logistical practicalities** to make sure their classes get the most out of the exchange. Ask yourselves: What do we want to achieve? What are our learners' needs? What technology is available?



The next step is to address **educational considerations**: How do we inform and/or involve parents? How do we ensure a safe digital learning environment? What learning outcomes will we prioritise? What kind of topics are meaningful for our learners? What kind of tasks enhance the learning process? What kind of materials are required? How do we assess the activity?



Finally, **conduct a practise session** with the other teacher to check the digital settings and classroom set-up. Decide on an alternative way to communicate using email or a messaging tool in case things do not work on the day. With all this in place, you have the ingredients for a **respectful, authentic, meaningful, mutually beneficial and, above all, enjoyable learning experience**.

How to *connect your classes online*

Putting in time and effort when setting up a virtual classroom exchange with another school for the first time makes all the difference to how successful the exchange will be. These exchanges can help you to discover and connect with colleagues who have same interests and enthusiasm as you – somebody you can plan, share ideas and team-teach with. Through the exchange, you **will learn to prepare a new type of lesson that will engage your students and bring language learning to life.**

1 Establishing contact



Use your **personal connections**. Do you or your colleagues know any teachers who might be interested in a virtual classroom exchanges with your class? Has your town got a twin town or sister city in another country? Does your local chamber of commerce have connections in other towns, in your own country or abroad? Start small: perhaps do your first exchange with a school in your own country so that you can learn from the experience.



Look for connections via **online social media groups**. Join professional teacher associations and English Language Teaching chatrooms where you can send out a request. Your local education authority or an international cultural association may have a teachers' online support group that can connect you with other schools in your country.

Look for a **professional digital platform** that connects schools, such as Empatico® (an educational platform connecting classrooms around the world), the British Council's Connecting Classrooms® (linking schools in Africa, the Middle East and South Asia), or the EU's eTwinning® (schools in Europe) and eTwinning Plus® (schools in countries that neighbour Europe).



2 Making the right choice

Think about **where in the world you want to connect** with. Is it another part of your own country, a neighbouring country or another continent? If your partner classroom is in the same **time zone** or just one or two hours behind or ahead, it will be easier for your two classes to meet up synchronously in real-time.



Consider the **ideal profile for your partner classroom**. Should it be exactly like the classes in your school or would a different kind of educational setting make the learning experience more interesting? A school in the countryside or a big city? A modern school or a more traditional one? You probably want students of a similar age and language level.



Make sure your partner classroom has **similar expectations**. Find out how much time they will devote in their monthly timetable or school year to the exchange. Do they have the same aims and curriculum learning outcomes as you? If not, consider what the implications could be and what changes you might need to make.

3 Building a working relationship

Agree with the other teacher the **duration** and **frequency** of the exchange and **how often** you will meet up. Check if your school terms and the academic calendar are the same or not. Decide on the **topics** that will be of interest to all students and consider the kinds of **tasks** that you can carry out together (for example a collaborative project or a series of interviews).



Decide on the **digital resources** that you will use for live communication (a videoconference, a chat app, etc.) and for the asynchronous virtual learning environment (an online notice board like Padlet® or a video discussion tool like Flipgrid®). Ensure that these are suitable for both groups to use.



Plan how to **structure each exchange** with the other teacher. How will both of you prepare the students to give them the confidence to be active participants, ready to get the most out of each collaboration? What activities will you need to do in advance of any exchange and what will be a suitable follow-up?

Setting objectives in a Virtual Classroom Exchange

Learning from virtual exchange projects is best achieved when both teachers **agree on objectives which meet the needs and abilities of both groups of learners**. Learners are more likely to engage if they are aware of these objectives and understand how the activities help achieve them. Reflecting on the exchange experience helps consolidate learning and allows you to consider areas for future learning. This can lead to greater learner confidence in future exchanges.

1 Setting objectives

Responsibility needs to be shared for the success and well-being of learners in both classes. Because of this, it is important that the teachers involved agree on appropriate **shared lesson objectives** for pre-, while- and post- exchange stages which focus on realistic learner outcomes.



Virtual exchanges provide opportunities to focus beyond the language curriculum. To enhance motivation, get learners to think about how they can improve their **social and emotional learning** (empathy, respect for diversity ...), **global citizenship** (perspective taking, sense of identity ...) and **digital literacy** (e-safety, data management ...).



Set **SMART objectives** which are: **Specific**: Clarify *what* learners need to achieve, *when* and *how*. **Measurable**: how can learners see their progress? **Achievable**: Are the goals challenging but doable? Do you need to provide extra support? **Relevant**: Are students interested in the topic? **Timely**: Can the objectives be achieved within the timeframe?

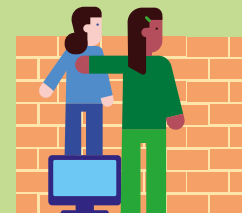
2 Reaching the destination

Learners need to know exactly what *you* want them to achieve. After designing your lesson objectives, share **Can do statements** written in student-friendly language to encourage learners to consider how they could work together to achieve the objectives.



Whereas objectives and success criteria are the same for all, every learner is unique. Knowing your learners allows you to **differentiate tasks** appropriately for them, providing extra support or upping the level of challenge or providing learners with a degree of choice: how long to talk for, or how many questions to write or record.

Online collaborative tools such as Google Docs® or Padlet enable learners – even in different locations – to work together and be supportive to each other. During asynchronous work, tools such as Flipgrid® or Padlet allow learners to flexibly access your instructions and look at modelled tasks at their own pace, **providing equitable learning opportunities**.



3 Assessing success

Stopping and thinking about learning develops autonomy and helps learners realise that the choices they make and the skills they use affect their success. Encourage students to **evaluate** which of the *Can do* statements they have met and if they have achieved the lesson objectives.



They can also **reflect on the task**: for example, what they liked or disliked and what they would do differently next time.



Collaborative assessment helps peers reflect on the learning process with others. This can be done as a whole class, in groups or pairs, including, if agreed with the other teacher, reflecting on the other classroom's performance. Together, learners can identify if the *Can do* statements have been met, nearly met or not yet met and how to improve their learning. Online boards like Padlet are great tools to collaboratively assess learning.



Students need to know both *what* to feedback on and *how* to do this appropriately so ensure you teach useful language for giving feedback kindly and constructively.

Successful learning activities are structured to prepare teachers and students for *what* they have to do, *when*, and *why*, as well as maintaining engagement. This is indispensable with activities that take place in online exchanges in which students may be working independently, physically distant from the teacher; when teachers and classes are collaborating; and where each class is 'on view' for at least some of the time.

1 Get ready

Get students excited about participating in the exchange. Students' interest can be aroused by asking them to **predict** what they think they will be learning, or by stimulating their curiosity by asking them to carry out small-scale **independent research** on the topic. Students need to know what the exchange is about and what they are going to do – but keep some element of surprise if possible!



Equip students with the language and skills they need for the tasks by **highlighting target language** (including the pronunciation of key words) and **practising sub skills** such as note-taking. The exchange should be linked to the curriculum objectives to demonstrate that class-time is being used productively. If students self- or peer-evaluate, train them how to carry out these evaluations appropriately.



Deal with the **practicalities** of the exchange. Make students aware of the **learning objectives** and give them a checklist of **specific tasks** they must complete. If you plan a group activity, students will need to know what each person's role is and how they should interact.

2 Get the most out of it

Give students who are not actively speaking a **reason for watching or listening** to the exchange to ensure they stay engaged and focused: provide them with a task to carry out or questions to answer. In breakout rooms, **ensure that students have both a task and a role**.



Provide students with **support** while they carry out a task. This can be simple 'on-the-spot' input of language and ideas or more structured **scaffolding**; for example, written prompts or unfinished sentences for students to complete while speaking.



Monitor students and **take notes for feedback**. Ensure they are on task and behaving appropriately, nominate the next student to speak (if required), note down the language they use to inform future lesson planning: in an exchange the focus is likely to be on content and students' capacity to effectively communicate.

3 Follow up

Look for **further opportunities to exploit the topic or language**: send follow-up questions, share an online quiz, or summarise what was discussed or presented, possibly as online posters to share with the other class.



At the end of an exchange, one class could set a **virtual challenge**, asking the other class to research a particular issue or perform a task (possibly recorded), with students reporting back at a later stage.



Don't forget to acknowledge the hard work of the other class and to **publicise the exchange** via a school magazine or assembly. Students can **send a 'thank you' letter or gift**, saying what they enjoyed.

Finally, after the exchange, allow time for **self-reflection** about what went well and what could be improved. If time allows, undertake **collaborative reflection** with the other teacher and reset goals. Building a positive and trusting relationship is important to analyse successes, overcome challenges experienced and learn lessons for the future.



How to **keep your learners focussed**

For virtual exchanges to be successful, it is essential to effectively manage the learners and the learning process and create an environment that is conducive to learning both for class-based and virtual exchanges. Besides designing engaging tasks and having a structured approach to the exchange, it is important to **make expected behaviour explicit and manage participation and collaborative work so learners can take ownership of their learning appropriately.**

1 Ensuring respectful communication

Before classes meet, both teachers should **agree on topics** that are inappropriate to talk about as well as checking about **cultural differences** relating to body language, such as hand gestures, that learners may need to know.



Ensure learners **listen actively**, facing and looking at the speaker and using body language to show attention. Encourage learners not to interrupt and to signal if they want to talk. Show how to support the speaker through encouragement and enquiry (*That's interesting. Why do you think that? ...*) and put these on the wall to remind students.



Teach learners to **THINK** before they speak: is their comment **True, Helpful, Interesting, Necessary and Kind?**



Ensure students **show respect for time** and come prepared to the exchange; encourage them to get their point across quickly and allow time and give others a chance to contribute to the discussion.



2 Managing participation

To get learners actively participating, structure activities that meet their interests and language level with tasks to prepare before class and time to practice beforehand.

Think about seating so everyone can see the screen before starting and assign roles to keep everyone involved; decide who will speak, who will be the timekeeper and who will take notes for the reflection stage. This will aid your **classroom management**.



Synchronous and asynchronous tasks need to be managed differently. Participation in synchronous tasks requires effective turn-taking, while learners working on tasks asynchronously often require support to agree on schedules and micro-tasks. You can set alerts so learners receive a notification of pending tasks and share an online calendar which will allow learners in different countries to see deadlines in their own time zones.



Regular **direct communication** with learners' parents or legal guardians can help to assure a successful exchange. Check that you have the appropriate consents for your learners to participate in the virtual exchange.

3 Ensuring effective collaboration

During class-based or one-to-one virtual exchanges, learners need to be effective at turn-taking and **hand signals** are an effective way to coordinate communication. Before the exchange agree on some basic culturally appropriate hand signals for turn-taking, agreeing, disagreeing or asking questions.



If your software allows it, create Break Out Rooms (BORs) for small groups to work collaboratively. Giving learners a responsibility in the BOR ensures everyone is actively involved and aids classroom management. **Assigning learners different roles** such as reporter, timekeeper, note taker or summariser enables the development of a variety of skills and frees up both teachers to monitor the BORs.



Getting students to give **appropriate feedback** promotes cooperative learning and develops their evaluation and reflection skills. Peer feedback encourages autonomy which helps to motivate learners as well as improving self-reflection. Teach learners the **TAG** formula for giving feedback: **Tell** something you like, **Ask** a question, **Give** a positive suggestion.



Your quick guide to *asynchronous communication*

The main focus of a virtual classroom exchange is a synchronous (real-time) event with the partner-class, but **in case of a large time difference between partner-classes, asynchronous (not real-time) communication is an effective way for learners to connect with their partner class.** Check which tools are available and accessible in both locations and which devices learners will be using. Some tools are less effective on a tablet or mobile phone. The general rule is to keep it simple with a few easy-to-use multi-purpose apps and tools.

1 Tools for communication



Email requires minimal technical skills, is free and reliable while Telegram®, Signal® or WhatsApp® offer **instant group messaging functionality.** Check the age restrictions for these apps and your schools' policies about sharing phone numbers.



A **blog** allows 'one-to-many' communication and allows more in-depth discussions. If you enable comments, the blogger and the readers can have ongoing conversations whenever they like. You can create blogs with Wordpress®, Wix®, Edublog® or Moodle®.

Learning Management Systems such as Moodle®, Google Classroom® or Edmodo® include a 'many-to-many' **virtual forum** you can use to manage class discussions.



Flipgrid® and Screencastify® enable **interactive video discussions** which are particularly useful when internet access cannot support a real-time virtual exchange.



Padlet and Glogster® are versatile web apps that allow users to post texts, videos, audios and images on a **digital wall.** You can use these tools to get students to brainstorm, create a class or country profile or work on their projects.

Videos are a way to connect and communicate visually and asynchronously, and exchanging short videos can help develop a variety of useful transferable skills. Loom®, Screencastify® and most mobile phones or tablets provide recording options.



2 Which tool and when?

Before the exchange, students can use Padlet, Mentimeter® or Google Docs to asynchronously **communicate** their ideas, ask questions, or collect information they want to present.



Tools like email, WhatsApp, Padlet, Mentimeter, Google Docs and Google Forms® are useful after the event to **reflect** on what went well and how to make it even better.



File-sharing services like Google Drive®, Dropbox® or a portfolio app like Seesaw® can be used for learners to **share their work** and helps build a stronger sense of community and empathy.

While platforms like Kahoot!®, Gimkit®, Quizziz®, Quizlet® and Edpuzzle® offer **game-based learning** to students, they can also be used for assessment purposes by the teacher. Work uploaded on a drive or shared on Padlet can also be used to **assess learners' language performance.** Flipgrid® and Voicethread® allow presentations or speaking skills to be easily assessed offline.

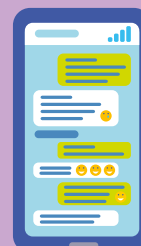


3 Tips for asynchronous communication

The **teachers' role** is to check that the tools you want to use work on the different devices your students use and if there are age restrictions which affect them. Show learners how to use the tools independently.



The **learners' role** is to interact asynchronously with other learners. Encourage them to use videos and texts, emojis, star ratings and follow-up questions.



Your quick guide to *synchronous communication*

The main aim of a virtual classroom exchange is to give students an opportunity to use English to communicate with peers from another school. This brings language to life by providing an opportunity to apply their grammar and vocabulary learning. For a real-time (synchronous) exchange to work, both classes will need to be in similar time zones and have their videoconferencing technology set up and running. Students will also need to be willing to engage, actively listening and confident enough with their English to interact.

1 Choosing the tools

For teachers who want a simple video exchange, a **platform** like Skype® or Facebook Messenger® may be sufficient. These allow both classrooms to communicate in real-time, share screens and files and carry out written communication via the chat box.



Videoconferencing platforms like Zoom®, Microsoft Teams® or Google Meet® are better suited to those who require advanced features such as a waiting room to hold students before the lesson, breakout rooms, shared online whiteboards or integrated learning using platforms such as Moodle. These will require training, especially if students access them from home.



Specialist educational exchange platforms (for example Empatico®) provide videoconferencing facilities which are ideal for a classroom setting. When you create a profile, you include information about your class, which is used to match you to a similar class. They also have tools to support teacher-to-teacher communication, to facilitate in-class virtual exchanges, and resource banks of activities.

2 Keeping students engaged

During synchronous communication, students will want to ask questions, discuss topics, share ideas and make comments. Whilst students are presenting, others can watch, take notes, and exchange their ideas and any new information learned from the speakers. Use an online **digital canvas** (like Padlet) or a **word processor** (like Google Docs) which also allow teachers to monitor and track student engagement when logged on from home.



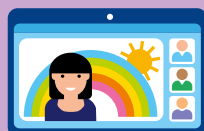
Polling is a good way for all students to participate. This could be done at the end of a debate or discussion to feedback on any aspects that you wish learners to focus on, e.g. whether arguments were persuasive. Students will need access to a personal device to vote with and a tool like Google Forms, Mentimeter, Survey Monkey® or Aha Slides®.



Online live quizzes are another way of keeping all students on task and engaged throughout an exchange. Games-based learning platforms like Kahoot! and Socrative® offer fun activities that also act as a **formative assessment tool**. From the responses given, teachers can gauge what their students know, understand and can do.

3 Tips for success

Consider changing the **virtual background** during face-to-face presentations. Many platforms allow users to insert a background picture or video. This can be fun as well as a teaching tool to provoke descriptions and conversations. Alternatively, it may be appropriate to remove distractions and ensure that the background is just 'calm and quiet'.



Vary **how students communicate** so they practice using all the tools of communication at their disposal in the virtual context. This could include writing, using emojis, animated gifs and memes in the chat box, or holding up pictures or hand-written messages, or conveying information through mime, body language and/or facial expressions.



Teachers should keep an **alternative channel for communication** open during an exchange, like WhatsApp or similar. This allows them to share private messages with each other and, in case of a technical breakdown or Internet outage, lets them maintain a line of communication whilst the video-conferencing issues are resolved.

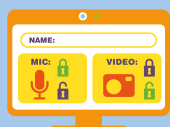
How to *be digitally savvy*

A real-time virtual exchange with another class is exciting for learners, but a lot depends on the technology.

To make sure the virtual exchange goes as smoothly as possible, there are several things to do beforehand: testing your internet connection, familiarising yourself with the chosen platform and technology, assuring that all learners can access the platform, specifying how certain features of the platform can be used and being prepared for technical challenges are all part of an exchange.

1 Ready, steady ... check!

Before testing the equipment, study the functionality of your videoconferencing platform. Does it run smoothly using wi-fi or would an Ethernet cable provide a more stable connection? Does the platform limit the number of participants? Do the apps you want to use load on learners' devices?



Do a **dry run** to test the equipment. Can all students hear the audio from where they will be sitting, or do you need external speakers? Does the camera show all the learners or do you need to change the seating? Can all learners see the screen or do you need to project it on the board?



Train students to stand in the right spot for the camera and speak at an appropriate volume. Teach them how to hold an item or photo in front of the camera. This reduces any anxiety about being filmed and makes the exchange more enjoyable.

If necessary, make sure students know how to log on and use their camera and microphone. Check that learners are clearly visible (without direct sunlight behind them) and audible. Practise using the chatbox to exchange messages.



2 Follow the rules

Set **clear rules about using cameras and microphones**. Before the session, go to the platform settings to mute all participants by default; this way learners can unmute themselves when they are invited to speak. If you decide to use Break Out Rooms (BORs), make it clear when cameras can be on or off.



Think about **rules for the chatbox**. Is it only to answer questions asked by the teachers or can learners write comments at any time? Prepare general rules and links to copy and paste into the chatbox as needed. It's often possible to download the chatbox conversations to monitor what students have said.



Check your school policy and local legislation about **filming students** and storing data. Get parental consent in advance if required. Above all, tell your learners if the exchange will be recorded and remind them to behave and speak appropriately.

3 Troubleshooting tips

Open all links and files you are planning to share before the exchange to make everything run much smoother. Open an online document before the session and use it to collect notes for feedback or follow-up questions. You can then share your comments and feedback directly on the screen without interrupting the flow of the lesson.



In the case of an unexpected events, for example when the network goes down, **make sure you know who in the school to contact for support**. Tell the school's IT department when the exchange is taking place so they are aware and can easily be contacted in case of IT emergencies!



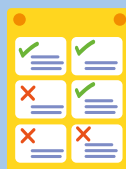
Instruct learners who are joining from home to have the link and their login details ready. Tell them to create a memorable or fun password for the platform and to never share it with anyone, except possibly their parents/guardians and you. Keep a list of your learners' log-in details in a safe place. Teach learners how to keep passwords safe and what to do in case they forget them.

How to keep your students safe and secure

The challenges of keeping learners safe while they are online are arguably greater than face-to-face. **Students require a protective learning environment and digital security should be a top priority for everyone in the process:** the schools, teachers, students, and their parents or legal guardians. As there may be different attitudes and legal requirements to safety and security, both teachers in the virtual exchange must arrive at a common understanding and expectations of what is required to keep all learners safe.

1 Safe from the start

Familiarise yourself with your **school's digital policy** which should explain clearly what technology teachers and students can use and where/when/how they can use it, and should be shared with parents so that they are aware of the contents including any responsibilities they might have.



Help students to create a **Keeping Yourself Safe poster** with rules about using technology safely. Focus students' attention in a positive direction, by emphasizing appropriate use of what they can and should do online, rather than what is not acceptable or the consequences for misusing technology.



For inspiration regarding **digital safety**, there are many educational websites which provide guidance. Onestopenglish.com has an article for teachers about 'Online education: Online Safety' and a downloadable worksheet for teenagers. See also Childnet International's Digizen® website and the British Council's LearnEnglish Kids® and LearnEnglish Teens® websites for activities and quizzes about online safety, cyberbullying and responsible digital citizenship.

2 Keeping it safe

Some videoconference tools have **password protection invitations** to enter a live class; a **waiting room** to hold learners before the class so you can see who you are allowing into the lesson and a **virtual classroom lock** once the lesson has started so nobody can enter without permission. And remember to always **download the latest safety features and updates** for any tools you are using.



Use safe search mode when using a search engine and an **ad-blocking program** when using video sites so that inappropriate content and images do not appear on the screen



Limit the amount of personal information that is shared online. Students should join their online lessons using only their first name (plus possibly the initial of their last name). When joining the class from home, students should be in a kitchen or living-room, where they can be seen by other members of their household.

Plan carefully before putting students into Break Out Rooms (BORs) and limit the amount of time they spend in them. **Set rules in advance** of what they can/cannot do and how they should behave.



3 Student wellbeing

Be aware of the home surroundings when students are studying remotely. Think carefully before asking them to move around or perform tasks, as other members of the house may be nearby and it might not be appropriate. Remind students to remove cabled headphones before undertaking a task that requires them to stand, to avoid pulling out the connection lead or causing their device to fall.



If something goes wrong (for example, a lost internet connection) or students have concerns (such as online bullying), make sure that they know *what* they can do, *how* they can report it or *who* they can contact. Prepare a **backup communications channel** (email or phone number) so you can get in touch when something does not go according to plan.



Respect students' privacy and online data. Broadcasting, recording, sharing and storing content that contains students' images and/or other personal data usually requires signed permission from the student's parent or legal guardian.

Your quick guide to collaborative projects

Projects are opportunities for classes to use English for meaningful communication and learn about each other by collaborating and sharing ideas, opinions and culture. These projects **integrate language skills and help to develop 21st century global skills including creativity, autonomy, digital literacy, the ability to work collaboratively, self-reflection, and intercultural awareness**. Teachers set up the project, offer guidance and support throughout, and provide constructive criticism when reviewing contributions.

1 Working together



Vary each project

by grouping students differently (pairs, groups, whole class) and sometimes asking them to work apart in Break Out

Rooms (BORs). Plan some activities to be done in real time and others recorded and viewed offline. Give students opportunities to constructively review each other's work to encourage shared learning.



Create a **chain story**: one class writes the first part as a narrative or dialogue and sends it to the other class to continue with the same characters and then send back. This 'write – read – write' continues until the classes agree on an ending.



Each class reads half a text and answers the corresponding comprehension questions. Both classes then meet and explain their half of the **jigsaw reading**, answering any questions to gain solid understanding of the entire text. For longer texts, divide the class into smaller groups and allocate smaller sections of the text.

Assign each class different parts of a **shared project** to research using an online noticeboard like Padlet or Jamboard® during the preparation stage to collect and share notes, information, questions and images.



2 Sparking curiosity

Students play **Who am I?** by sending images, texts or videos about themselves for the other class to make deductions from. These clues could relate to the students, their school or their town and/or country. Both classes then meet up to share, confirm or correct their guesses.



Groups of students deliver a written or recorded **book, film or game review** that they have enjoyed and recommend that the other class try. A written or oral response can then be given. This activity is also suitable for a class reader or a non-fiction text that both classes can read and comment on.



Each class sends a **Welcome guide** for imaginary visitors to their area or country, with texts, photos and videos. The other class plans an imaginary trip based on this guide and share their itinerary or responds with a report on the similarities and differences with their own area or country.

3 Setting challenges

Send a 'challenge' for the other class to complete based on general knowledge and/or on English. They can prepare a **quiz** with a wide range of questions or a narrower focus (for example, research a famous historical place in my country). Follow this up with a session where the question setters check and feedback on the answers.



Set a **web quest** for the other class with a task to complete. The topic should be authentic and of interest to the age group (for example, decide which sport should be added to the school curriculum). The learners design a series of smaller questions to guide their research and provide links to websites that help answer their questions. Findings and opinions can be presented, synchronously or asynchronously.

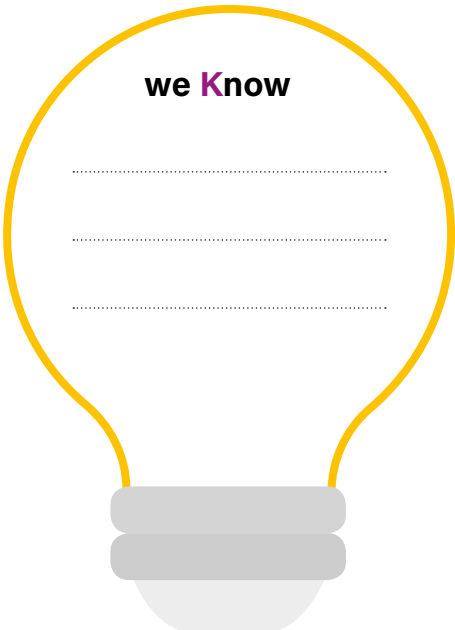
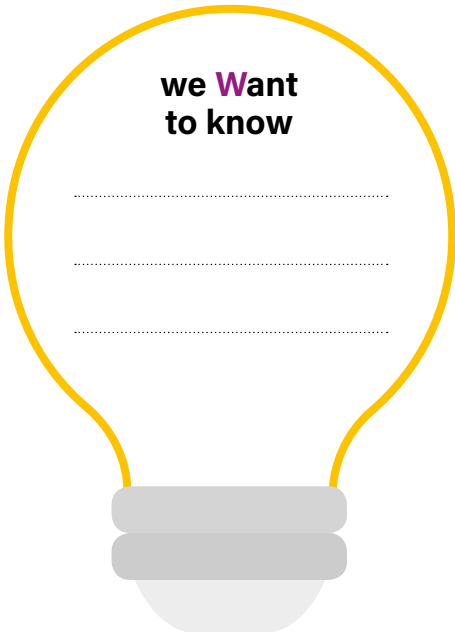
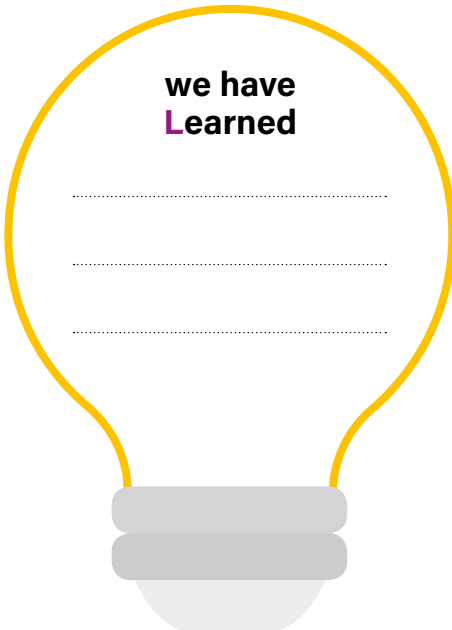


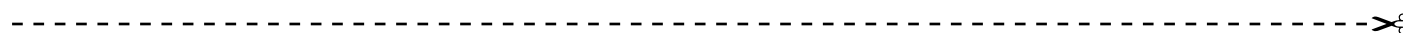
Write **dialogue or script** for the other class to act out.

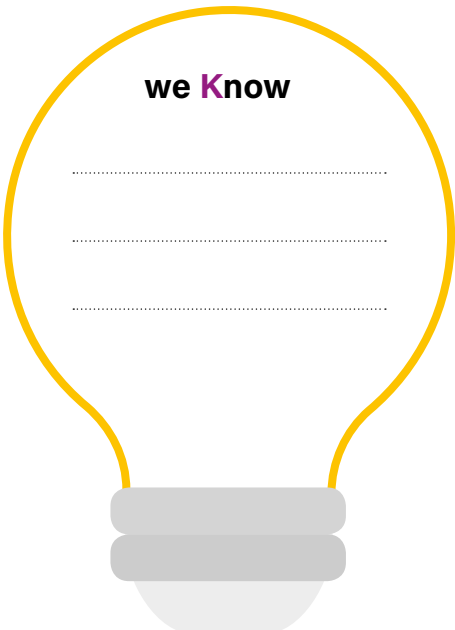
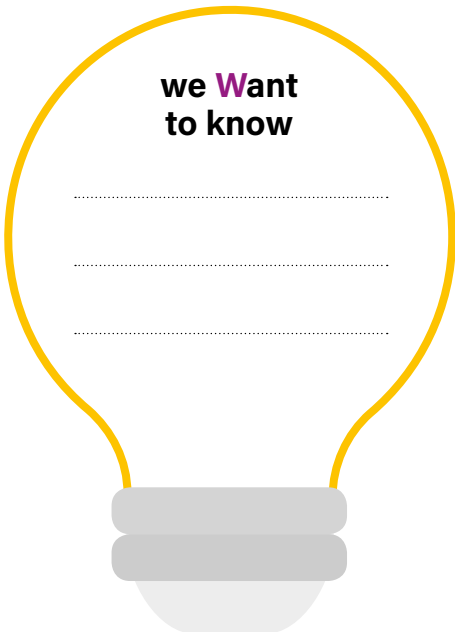
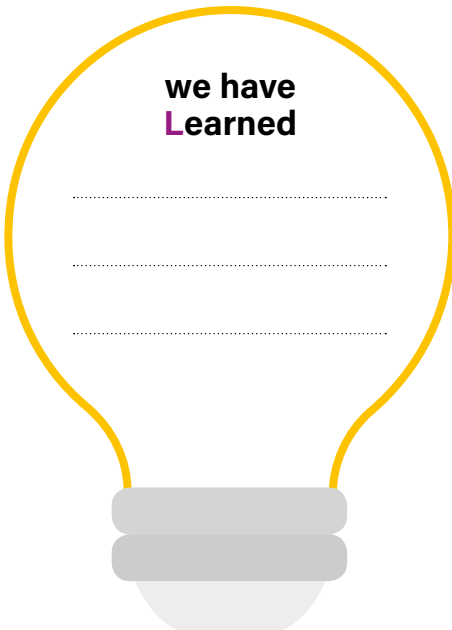
The teachers

can provide guidance and suggest corrections but the scripts should primarily be the students' own work. To extend this activity, the other class could write the next stage of the dialogue or script or change the ending.

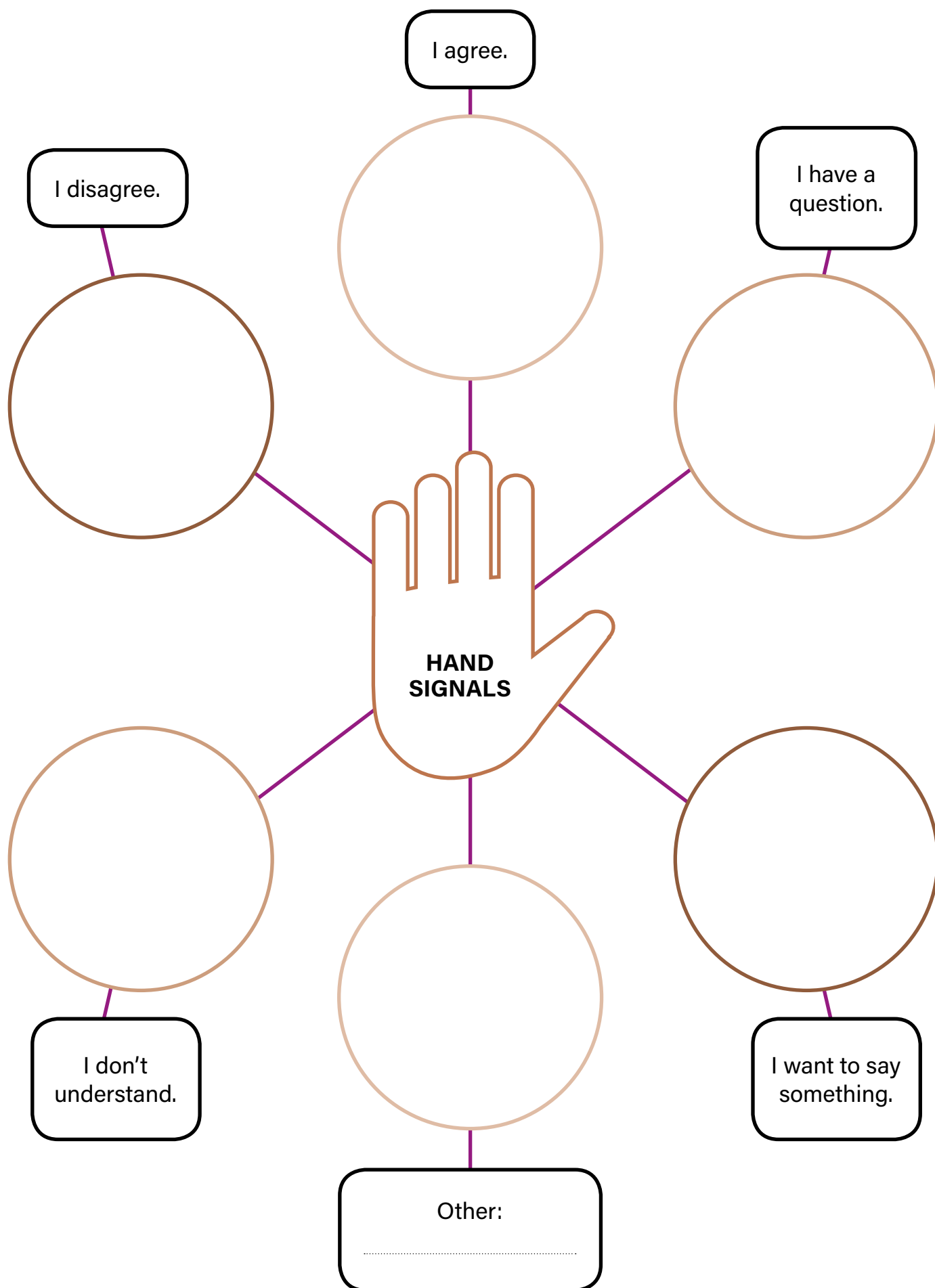
1 KWL information lightbulbs

 <p>we Know</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p>	 <p>we Want to know</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p>	 <p>we have Learned</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p>
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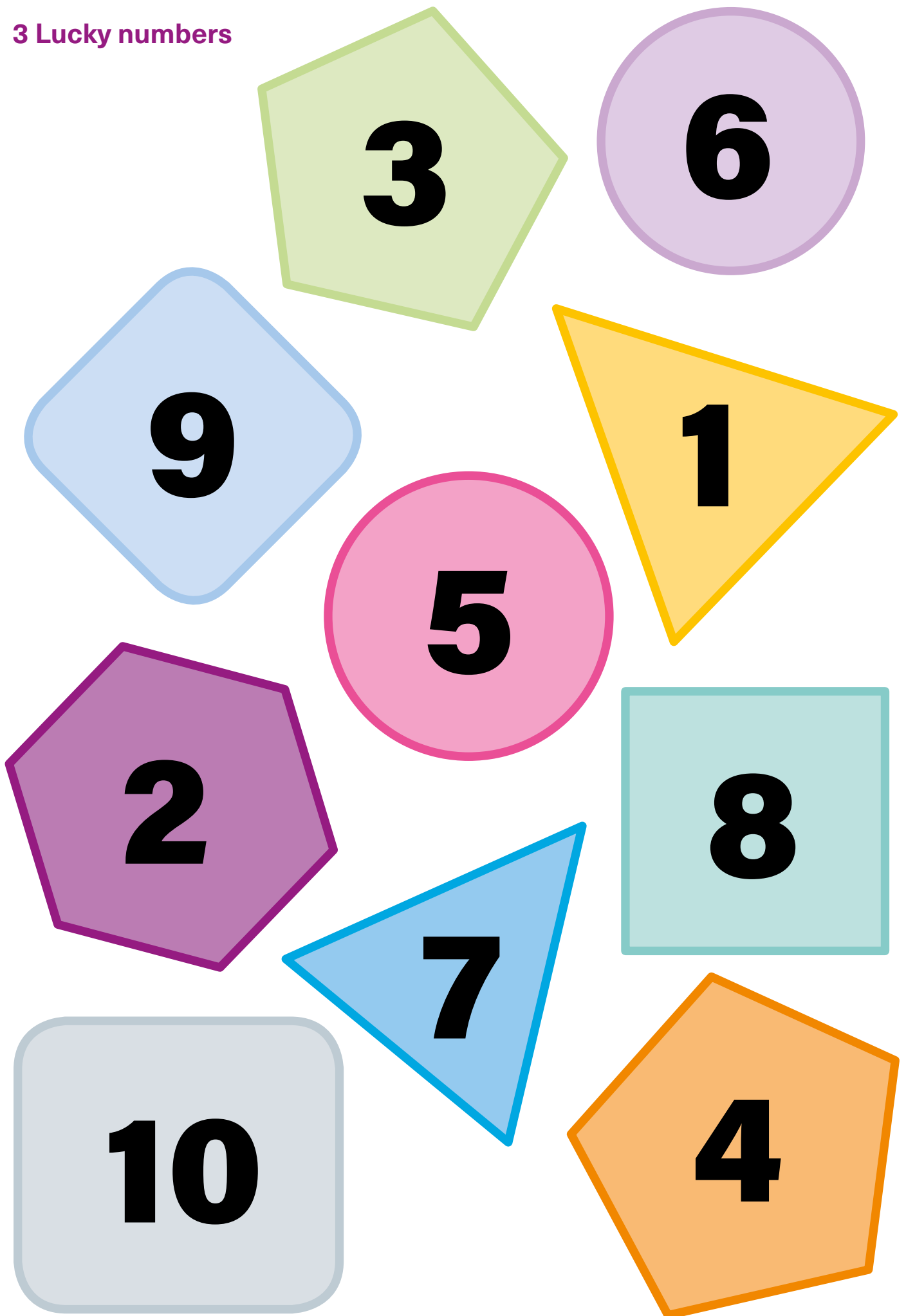


 <p>we Know</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p>	 <p>we Want to know</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p>	 <p>we have Learned</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p>
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2 Hand signals

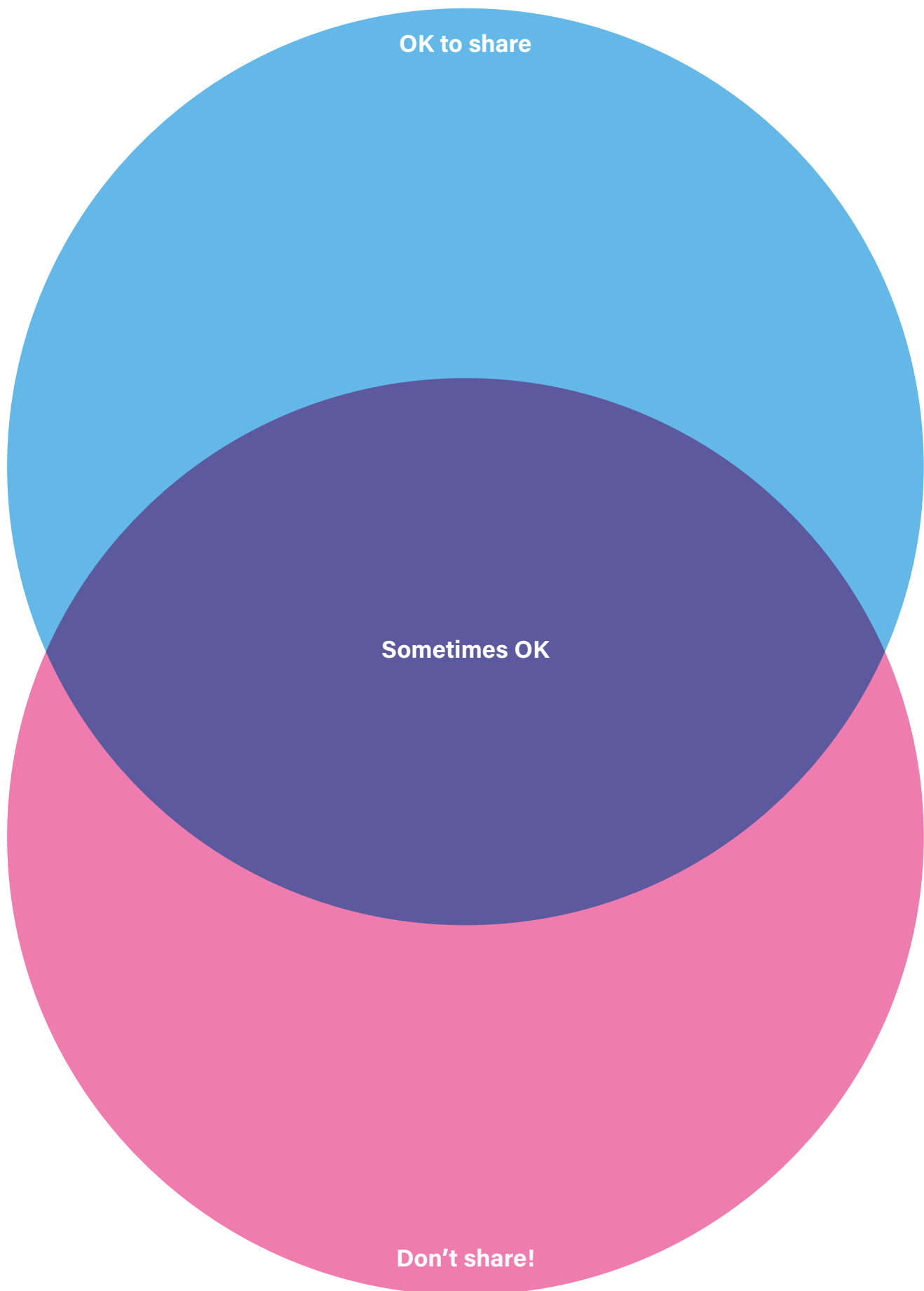


3 Lucky numbers



4 Safety first!

Information you can share online



5 Over to you!

1 We can ask questions.			
2 We can answer questions.			
3 We can talk about my			
4 I can listen and take notes.			
5 My opinion of this activity.			
6			

6 Tag it!

[illegible]

1 KWL information lightbulbs

The *KWL information lightbulbs* (page 13) can be used to record what students already **Know** about the other school and its culture, what they **Want** to know and what they have **Learned**.

Type: class-based

When: before, during and after the exchange

Age range: all

Note: this activity can lead to a debate about cultural preconceptions

Instructions

Before the exchange

Project or copy the *KWL information lightbulbs* on the board and look at the *We know* and *We want to know* sections. Depending on your class's level, complete the different parts of them. If students find this difficult, provide the following prompts:

City: size, location

Country: population, neighbouring countries

Culture: language spoken, clothing (at school, at home)

Note: Take a screengrab or photograph or copy the completed lightbulbs to use during and after the exchange. Do not correct any incorrect information at this stage.

During the exchange

If you have any students who are less confident about participating actively in the exchange, give them a copy of the information the class added to the lightbulbs before the exchange and ask them to check and correct anything that is incorrect.

After the exchange

Show the lightbulbs with the comments made before the exchange and the corrections made during the class. Together, correct any incorrect information. Depending on your class's level, you could ask them if there were any surprises and if their thoughts about the other school's city, country and culture have changed or not.

2 Hand signals

The *Hand signals* bubble map (page 14) can be used to improve non-verbal communication during the exchange, for example for students to indicate that they agree or disagree, or want to ask a question. This will help to allow all learners to be actively involved in the exchange whilst managing the communication.

Some hand signals which are innocent in some cultures can have different meanings or be offensive in others, so both teachers should approve the signals that are chosen

Type: class-based

When: before and during and after the exchange

Age range: all

Note: this activity can lead to a debate about culturally appropriate body language

Instructions

Before the exchange

Ask students to think of how they use their hands to communicate without speaking. Remind them that sometimes you can use one hand, or both hands, with or without movements. Show an example that you use in your culture, for example, for saying 'OK'.

Explain that they are going to create hand signals for communicating on screen with the other class.

Project or copy the *Hand signals* bubble map (page 14) on the board. Ask your class to think of five appropriate hand signals for the interactions mentioned. Ask them to think of another interaction we might have during the exchange to complete the sixth bubble (for example *Can you repeat, please?* or *We can't hear you.*)

With the other teacher, select three hand signals from each class to use. Alternatively, you can get each class think of three of the signals.

Draw the hand signals into the bubbles and take a screengrab or photograph of the completed bubble map to print and hang on the wall for during the exchange.

During the exchange

Remind learners at the start of the exchange to use the hand signals.

After the exchange

After the first exchange ask learners if they used the hand signals and if they were useful. Then ask if they need any other signals to manage their participation in the exchange. Discuss their feedback with the other teacher and agree and adapt the *Hand signals* bubble map as needed.

3 Lucky numbers

The *Lucky numbers* game (page 15) can be used to quiz students from both classes on any topic, involving all students and inserting an element of luck and friendly competitive spirit into the lesson.

Type: class-based

When: During and after the exchange

Age range: All (depending on questions asked)

Note: Behind two 'lucky' numbers, there should be no question – just a free pass! The other seven numbers (for a nine-number grid) require questions that can be answered by both classes. Teachers should have copies of these questions with answers.

Instructions

Before the exchange

In consultation with the other teacher, design eight general knowledge questions which students in both schools can answer, for example:

What's the capital of (the other school's country)?

Who's the President of (the other school's country)?

Name one river and one mountain in (the other school's country).

How many official languages are there in (the other school's country)?

Assign numbers from 1–10 to these eight questions. The remaining two numbers are 'Lucky numbers' with no corresponding questions.

During the exchange

Project or copy *Lucky numbers* on the board and explain the rules:

- Decide which class goes first (for example, toss a coin).
- Classes take turns to choose a number.
- Their teacher will read out the question for that number.
- A correctly answered question earns one point. An incorrect answer means the same question can be given to the other team to answer and win a point.
- When one of the two lucky numbers is selected, the team gets a point and chooses another number. The team with most points at the end wins.

Advise teams, before presenting their answer, to go on mute while they discuss possible answers together. Set a time limit and allow only one answer to be given.

Cross off each number when correctly answered so that students can see which numbers remain to be answered.

Keep a record of points.

After the exchange

Go through with everybody any questions that were difficult to answer or that raised further questions.

4 Safety first!

Use the *Safety first!* Venn diagram (page 16) to teach students how to protect their personal information.

Type: class activity or set for homework with feedback in class

When: before students undertake any online work

Age range: all

Notes: phrases should be adapted for age group

Instructions

Before the exchange

Brainstorm with students a few examples of what kind of information is suitable for sharing strangers and what kind of information they should never share.

Project or copy the *Safety first!* Venn diagram on the board. Explain that in a Venn diagram, each circle represents a logical set with common elements between sets being represented by the intersection of the circles. Ask students to copy the diagram in their notebooks.

Tell students they are going to classify information they should or should not share in digital environments.

Depending on the level, read out the following items for students to classify in their Venn diagrams.

1. sports you like, 2. the name of your school, 3. your email address, 4. your favourite pop group, 5. your mother's maiden name, 6. photo of palm of hand, 7. your date of birth, 8. your home address, 9. your parent's name / your brother's name, 10. your favourite colour, 11. your favourite TV programme or movie, 12. your age, 13. your first name, 14. complaints about people, 15. your gender, 16. your hobbies, 17. abusive or inappropriate language and comments, 18. your holiday dates, 19. your mother's work address, 20. food you like, 21. your pet's name, 22. your phone number

Possible answer key

OK to share: 1, 4, 10, 11, 16, 20.

Sometimes: 3 (at certain ages only with your parents' permission), 13 (but better to use an alias), 15 (your name probably reveals this).

Don't share!: 2 (people could look for you there), 5 (often a security question), 6 (people can scan your fingerprints), 7 (often a security question), 8, 9, 12, 14 (they might read them), 17 (future employers might see them), 18 (shows when the home is empty), 19, 21 (often a security question), 22

Check answers with students and discuss why it is OK or not to share. Make students aware that putting personal information (for example, year of birth) as part of a username or password is also not appropriate (easy to break the password). Warn them that if anyone asks for personal information, they should immediately inform a responsible adult.

5 Over to you!

Use the *Over to you!* self-assessment chart (page 17) for younger learners to reflect on and review their progress over the exchange. Remind students that in peer review, the emphasis during feedback should mostly be on what went well and providing constructive, specific advice for what could be improved.

Type: class-based

When: before and after the exchange

Age range: younger learners

Instructions

Before the exchange

Decide how to complete the third Can do statement on the *Over to you!* chart: *I can talk about my* This will be one of the topics that you will discuss with the other class during the virtual classroom exchange, for example, 'my family/school/town/project'.

Then decide what to use as the sixth Can do statements. This could be based on digital skills or social and emotional learning skills, for example.

Project or copy the *Over to you!* self-assessment chart on the board. Tell students that after the exchange they will be evaluating how well they did. Make sure they understand the statements.

After the exchange

Project or copy the *Over to you!* Self-assessment chart on the board or hand out photocopies. Tell the students to score the entire class's progress for statements 1–3 and themselves for statements 4–5 and either the class or themselves for statement 6.

When they are finished, ask the entire class what they scored for the different statements and encourage debate to see how they could do better next time.

6 Tag it!

Use the *Tag it!* feedback chart (page 18) for peers to reflect on and review their progress over the exchange. Remind students that in peer review, the emphasis during feedback should mostly be on what went well and providing constructive, specific advice for what could be improved.

Type: pairs, small groups or whole class

When: before, during after the exchange

Age range: all

Instructions

Before the assessment

Project or copy the *Tag it!* feedback chart on the board and remind students of the learning objectives of the exchange.

Explain that TAG feedback is used to give constructive criticism. Brainstorm typical phrases they could use to Tell someone what they did well and write a few in the T section of the chart. Some possible sentences are, depending on your students' level:

I liked the ...

I liked how you ...

I think you ... very well.

I enjoyed your ... because ...

Then brainstorm typical questions they could use to Ask for motives or additional information and add them to the A section. For example:

Why did you ...?

Can you tell me more about ...?

Did you consider ...?

What did you mean by ...?

Finally brainstorm typical phrases they could use to Give a suggestion for improvement and add them to the G section. For example:

You might want to ...

I strongly suggest ...

I wonder how you could ...

Group students as needed (pairs, small groups or between the two classes to give peer assessment).

During the assessment

Monitor the class or break-out rooms to ensure students are on task. If students find it difficult, provide prompts:

Tell the other(s) what you liked / what they did really well / what they can do better next time

Ask a question about... / how they did ... / how they feel about ...

Give advice on what can help your friend improve / What actions can he or she take next?

After the assessment:

Conduct feedback and collate the overall ideas.

Highlight what students did well and reiterate what can still improve and they could go about this.