Interaction in an Instant

What is it?

A set of pairing and grouping techniques that can be used on the fly to engage students in talking to and learning from their classmates

What are the benefits of using this tool?

Not all group-learning activities need to be formal processes; sometimes teachers just need simple ways to get students talking to, interacting with, and learning from one another. Interaction in an Instant provides seven simple-to-implement techniques that create energy in the classroom and promote positive interactions among students. The techniques do more than ask students to talk to one another; they get students engaged in the learning-by-talking process, and they keep students focused on important content. The Interaction in an Instant techniques also help ensure that students talk to and learn from many different students, not just close friends or students who sit near them.

What are the basic steps?

1. Familiarize yourself with the Interaction in an Instant techniques described on pages 76–78.
2. Select the technique that best meets your instructional objectives.
3. Review the technique with students to make sure they are clear about their roles.
4. Implement the technique in the classroom. Monitor students as they work to ensure that they're staying on task and participating productively.
5. Invite students to share what they learned about the content as well as their reactions to the selected technique.

How is this tool used in the classroom?

- ✔ To enhance student learning via the use of well-designed pairing and grouping techniques
- ✔ To foster interaction and collaboration in the classroom
- ✔ To increase the sense of community among students

Interaction in an Instant Techniques

Think-Pair-Share

Think-Pair-Share (Lyman, 1981) allows students to test and refine their ideas with a partner before sharing them with the class or committing them to paper. To use the technique, simply pose a question, prompt, or problem and instruct students to

THINK through a response or solution on their own

PAIR up with another student to discuss, compare, and refine their ideas

SHARE their responses with the class or summarize their responses in writing

Think-Pair-Share is very versatile in the sense that it can be used at any stage of the instructional process (before, during, or after a lesson/unit) and for a variety of different purposes, including activating prior knowledge, reviewing critical content and skills, defining essential attributes, and prompting original or analytical thinking. The sample prompts below reflect these and other uses.

- What do you know about dinosaurs?
- What makes something "art"?
- Was the Civil War inevitable? Why or why not?
- Which of these two math problems is solved incorrectly? How can you tell?
- What do you think the poet was trying to say here? How would you interpret these lines?
- How many ways can you color in exactly half of a ten-by-ten grid?
- What do you predict will happen if we raise the height of this ramp?
- What do you believe were the three most important events in Helen Keller's life? Why?
- What conclusions can you draw from this data table?

Give One, Get One

Give One, Get One encourages the free flow of ideas and the generation of multiple responses through a rapid series of student-student interactions. Use the technique when you want students to think divergently or come up with many valid responses to a single question/prompt. For example:

- What are the attributes of a good friend?
- Why are plants important to us and our world?
- What are some reasons that people move from one place to another?
- Where are fractions used in the real world?
- What could someone do to improve his or her cardiovascular health?
- Can you name at least seven different styles of music?
- What are some effective strategies for promoting student engagement?

Tell students how many total responses you want them to gather, and give them time to generate two or three on their own. Then, instruct them to meet with another student, *give one* of their responses to their partner, and *get one* in return. Clarify that students shouldn't huddle in groups (pairs only!) or share multiple responses. Instead, they should get only one response from each partner and meet with as many partners as it takes to collect the required number of responses. (If two paired students have identical responses, they should work together to generate a new one.) Conclude by helping students share, summarize, or further explore the responses they collect.

Physical Barometer

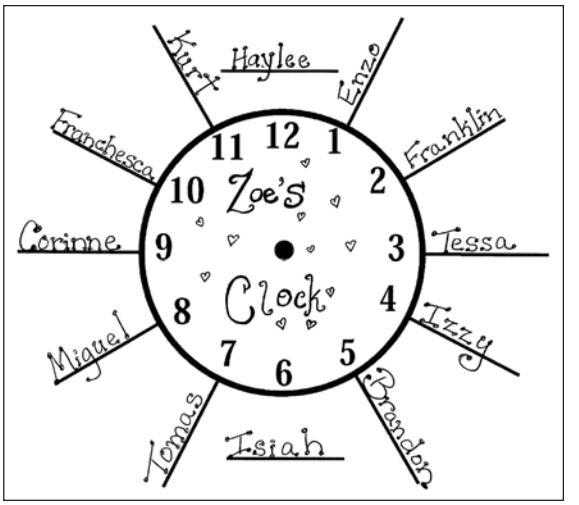
Physical Barometer creates instant interactions by requiring students to take positions on multisided issues, discuss and refine those positions with like-minded classmates, and attempt to win over classmates who hold different positions. To use this technique, pose a question or statement that allows students to select from three or more possible positions. For example:

- Where do you stand on the issue of using animals for scientific research? Do you strongly support it, support it, disapprove of it, or strongly disapprove of it?
- We have learned the critical attributes of tall tales, and we have read three different tall tales. Which of the tales we read do you believe would be the best one for teaching a younger student the critical attributes of a tall tale?
- What is your position on the controversy surrounding the proposal to build a big-box store where the Northvale Farm used to be? Do you support the development of the store, oppose it, or are you not sure?

Once the varying positions that students can take are clear, ask students to go to a physical space that represents their position. For example, the front of the room could represent "support," the back of the room could represent "oppose," and the middle could represent "not sure." Instruct students to work with classmates who share their position to develop and fine-tune a defense of that position. Students in each group should get a chance to make their case and to try to sway members from other groups to change positions and join their group. Students who switch groups should explain what convinced them to change their minds.

Clock Partners

This technique makes the student-pairing process quick and easy, while also ensuring that students do not gravitate to the same learning partners over and over again. To use the technique, distribute copies of the Clock Partners sheet on page 79 and ask students to "make appointments" with twelve different students—one for each hour on the clock. When two students agree to make an appointment with each other, they must both fill in each other's names on their Clock Partners sheet at the agreed-upon hour. For example, in Zoe's Clock Partners sheet (shown at the right), Zoe made an appointment with Enzo to be her one o'clock partner; consequently, Enzo wrote Zoe in as his one o'clock partner (not shown).



Once students complete their Clock Partners sheets, they can attach their sheets to the inside of their notebooks for safekeeping and ease of access. Then, whenever it comes time for students to pair up, all you need to do is tell them which clock partner to work with, and they can pair up immediately. ("For this activity, you'll be working with your five o'clock partner. Find your partner and get to work!") By rotating around the clock, you can ensure that students work with many different partners instead of always pairing up with the same close friends or neighbors.

Numbered Heads Together

This well-known technique (Kagan & Kagan, 2015) uses a simple grouping structure to ensure that each member of a group understands the content that has been taught. To use the technique, number the students in each group, up to four. (If one group is smaller than the others, have number three answer for number four as well.) Ask students a recall or comprehension question, or present a problem to solve. Provide time for students to write their responses individually and then discuss as a group. Remind students that every member of the group must be able to answer the question / solve the problem. If you call out number two, for example, then student two from each group responds. Repeat with additional questions/problems.

Mix-Pair-Share

This technique (Kagan & Kagan, 2015) is a great way to get students up and moving as they are processing new information. Pose a question and call, "Mix!" Students walk quietly around the room until you say, "Pair!" Students stop where they are and pair up with the closest student. Student pairs then share their responses to the question. Students can meet and share responses with new partners each time you call out "Mix!" and "Pair!"

A variation on this technique is Inside-Outside Circle (Kagan & Kagan, 2015), in which students face each other in two concentric circles, each with an equal number of students. Students on the inside circle face a partner on the outside circle. When asked to share a response or an idea, inside students share first, then outside students share. With each new question or prompt, the inside circle rotates so that a new set of partners is formed. On each successive rotation, the student who shares first (inside/outside) should be reversed.

Talking Chips

This protocol (Kagan & Kagan, 2015) ensures that all students in a group participate during group discussions. It also develops students' ability to listen to one another and respond thoughtfully during these discussions. To use this technique, divide students into groups of four or five. Each student should get one or two chips or counters (poker chips work well). The groups are given a prompt or question to discuss. To contribute to the discussion, a student must use a chip. When students run out of chips, they are no longer allowed to speak until the other members have used all their chips. If there is more to discuss, students should collect their chips and continue using them to contribute to the discussion.

Name: Date:

Clock Partners