

Norm Green

Shared Pair Circles (Inside Outside Circle)

This thought-provoking strategy has several benefits. It allows students to work in pairs within larger groups or even in whole class situations. Students are given the opportunity to work with each member of the group on a one to one basis. Among its advantages are that each student is involved and has to contribute, students have to listen as well as talk and all students have to interact with each other, even those who might not normally choose to work together. The strategy can be used as a lead up to small group work, to develop group roles, cooperation and as a variation to the Thinking Aloud Pair Problem Solving approach.

During the drawing together or debriefing stage of the activity, it is important to ask students what they learned, why they think the activity was done this way and what they think were the most interesting points raised. The teacher may also ask the students if there were any problems or any improvements they would suggest if this type of activity was done again. The strategy may lead on to other activities requiring students to examine further the issues raised during the discussion. The teacher could use a concept web so that students can plan what further investigation could be carried out could record results of this whole class sharing.

Step 1.	Divide the class into two groups by having them number off, "one, two, one, two". Have one group stand in a circle facing out. The other group forms a circle round the outside so each faces someone in the inner circle. If there's an odd number, the teacher can participate or two students can work in tandem.
Step 2.	Ask a planned series of questions which the students discuss in their pairs. Depending on the purpose of the activity, the questions may be related or unrelated. If the idea is to focus the student's attention on a particular topic of study or to lead them to form particular generalizations then the questions need to be structured to that end.
Step 3.	After asking a question, allow students a minute or two to discuss it and share their ideas. Tell those in the outer circle to move one place to the right, so they're facing a new partner. Then ask a new question, which the students discuss with their new partner.
Step 4.	Continue until students are back with their original partners or until questions are exhausted. At this point, regroup the class, so they can discuss the results of the activity. The teacher draws together the learning so students benefit from their involvement.