

Audio 1.3

In everyday situations people work alongside, speak and listen to others and see what they do and how they do it. This is how people learn. As we talk to others, we discover new ideas and information. In classrooms, if everything is centred on the teacher, then most learners do not get enough time to try out or demonstrate their learning or to ask questions. Some learners may only give short answers; and some may say nothing at all. In large classes, the situation is even worse, with only a small proportion of learners having the chance to say anything at all.

But if you use pair work, this gives learners the chance to think and try out ideas and new language. It can provide a comfortable way for learners to work through new skills and concepts; and works well in large classes. Pair work is suitable for all ages and subjects and it is especially useful in multilingual and multi-grade classes, because pairs can be arranged to help each other. Once routines for pair work are set up, you will find that learners enjoy learning this way.

Audio 1.4

Pair work is about involving everyone and can be done successfully with a large class. But pairs need to be managed so that everyone knows what they have to do, what they are learning and what your expectations as the teacher are. To establish pair work routines in your classroom, you should do the following:

- Manage the pairs that the learners work in. So sometimes they can work in friendship pairs; sometimes they will not. Make sure they understand that it is you who will decide the pairs in order to help them maximise their learning.
- Sometimes you could pair learners of mixed ability together so that they can help each other; and at other times pair learners working at the same level.
- Keep records so that you know your learners' abilities and can pair them together accordingly.
- At the start, explain the benefits of pair work to your class, using examples from family and community contexts where people collaborate.
- Model the task at the front with 2 learners, or with you and a learner, so that everyone is clear on what they have to do.
- Keep initial tasks brief and clear; and monitor the learner pairs to make sure that they are working as you want.
- Make sure that learners can also turn or move easily to sit and face each other.

During pair work, tell learners how much time they have for each task and give regular time checks. Praise pairs who help each other and stay on task. Most learners enjoy the atmosphere of everyone talking and working. As you move around the class observing and listening, make notes of who is working well together, be alert to anyone who is not involved and note any common errors, good ideas or summary points for you to share with the class.

Audio 2.5

Martin, a grade 6 teacher, taught his Grade 6 learners about keeping money safe. His lesson lasted 40 minutes and he planned 4 activities.

For the first activity Martin used a full class brainstorm to find out what learners already knew. He followed this with an explanation of different methods of keeping money safe reinforcing those learners had mentioned and adding some additional methods. During this activity he asked a range of different types of questions to elicit some of the advantages of each method. He made a table on the chalkboard with three columns: method, advantages and disadvantages. He filled in the 'method' column.

After this full class activity, Martin put learners in pairs. He asked them to copy the table and to work together to fill it in, based on the whole class discussion. To ensure all the methods were discussed he asked the pairs in the front half of the class to start working from the top of the list, and the pairs in the back to start from the bottom of the list. As the learners were working, he moved around the pairs and talked to them, asked some individual questions, noticed who was doing well or struggling. There was a little bit of noise, but this was good as Martin could see learners were really interested in the topic. To finish this activity, he returned to the list on the chalkboard and asked some pairs the advantages and disadvantages they had identified for each method, writing these in the table on the chalkboard. He asked learners to listen carefully as they could not repeat anything someone had already said.

For the third activity, Martin worked again with the full class and he told a short story about two people who borrow some money to buy something. One uses a bank and one uses a local unofficial person. In the bank the interest rate is fixed, whereas the local person keeps putting up the interest rate. Martin wrote on the board 5 questions related to interest rates. He divided the class in 5 groups and asked each group to discuss the questions for a few minutes.

To finish the lesson, Martin returned to the table on the board showing methods of saving money/keeping it safe followed by the 5 questions on interest rates. He asked the learners to add any advantages or disadvantages they had not thought of, to their own table and to work in pairs to answer the questions.

As the learners were working in pairs, Martin noticed that although learners had been confident identifying advantages and disadvantages of the different methods, they found it more difficult to answer the interest rates questions. After the lesson Martin decided to talk to the numeracy teacher and ask them to revise percentages in the next numeracy lesson, using real examples involving money.

Audio 3.6

Geoffrey is working on proper fractions with his Grade 3 class. He wants to ensure that they all understand proper fractions and can explain their understanding of the topic. Geoffrey begins the lesson by taking a banana out of his bag. He tells the students that he wants to give an equal part of the banana to five of his friends and asks them to tell him how he can do that. Several students put their hands up and Geoffrey elicits the response that they will cut the banana to make 5 equal parts. Each one is a fifth. He writes $\frac{1}{5}$ on the chalkboard.

Geoffrey tells the students they are going to work in pairs and asks them all to point to their partner. He then gives them four tasks to do around dividing bananas into equal parts or fractions. He asks them to divide an imaginary banana into 4, 6, 8 and 9 parts. For each one he asks them to write down the fraction.

As the students are working through the tasks, Geoffrey circulates around the classroom monitoring the students and asks them to explain how they reached their answers. He avoids telling them the answer but waits for them to find it and encourages pairs to help each other. In this way he is able to identify where there are problems of understanding.

When all the learners have completed the tasks, Geoffrey asks for volunteers to write each answer on the chalkboard. He then writes up two more fractions: $\frac{1}{3}$ and $\frac{1}{10}$. He asks them to say which one represents the smallest piece of a banana; which one represents the largest; and how they know. At the end, he helps them to deduce that the larger the number on the bottom of the fraction, the smaller the piece of banana.

Audio 5.2

Rita teaches Social studies in Grade 6. She was teaching '6.5.1: Elements of weather and climate' and noticed that learners had difficulties with weather words they were not very familiar with. She selected some words they were familiar with and others which were causing problems for learners.

She wrote the words and their definitions on separate pieces of paper. She asked the learners to form pairs with the person next to them. This meant that they worked with a friend and often high attainers were together and lower attainers were together. She gave each pair 10 words and 10 definitions and asked them to match the words and definitions. When they had done their words and she had checked them, they swapped their words and definitions with another pair.

Some pairs completed it very quickly, but some found it very difficult and needed a great deal of help, so it was difficult to organise. She discussed the experience with her friend who taught grade 4.

She decided to keep the pairs how they were but gave them different sets of words. The high attainers had longer more complex words, including some they had never met before and had to guess the meaning of, and the low attainers had shorter, common words.

She found it worked well. The low-attainers gained confidence and learned some common words which would help them in the future, and the high-attainers were challenged to try and read and understand new words.