

# It's good to talk:

## oracy lesson plan

# Why oracy matters

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“The things we say and how we say them can inform, influence, inspire and motivate others and express our empathy, understanding and creativity. It is our ability to communicate that enables us to build positive relationships, collaborate for common purpose, deliberate and share our ideas as citizens.”

**Beccy Earnshaw, Director, Voice 21 & Peter Hyman, Executive Headteacher, School 21, in Will Millard and Loic Menzies ‘The State of Speaking in Our Schools’**

## Introduction and background information

The Commonwealth Charter sets out sixteen core beliefs that all Commonwealth countries agree to uphold. These include a commitment to peaceful, open dialogue (Value 5) and recognition of the positive and active role and contributions of young people. (Value 13)

In 2018, the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) will be hosted by the UK. The summit aims to build links between countries and give young people a voice on key issues such as democracy, human rights and the rule of law. To make their voices heard clearly and effectively, it is vital that young people across the Commonwealth develop the knowledge and skills they need to become confident, effective communicators who can articulate their thoughts, reach consensus in a variety of situations and become inspirational future leaders.

Talk happens in all classrooms around the Commonwealth, but there are not always specific guidelines or structures in place to support pupils to develop their speaking and listening skills.

**School 21** is a school in East London for children aged 4 to 18 which prides itself in nurturing a whole-school culture of oracy. In 2014 they worked with the University of Cambridge to develop an oracy curriculum for schools together with a set of assessment tools under the title Voice 21.

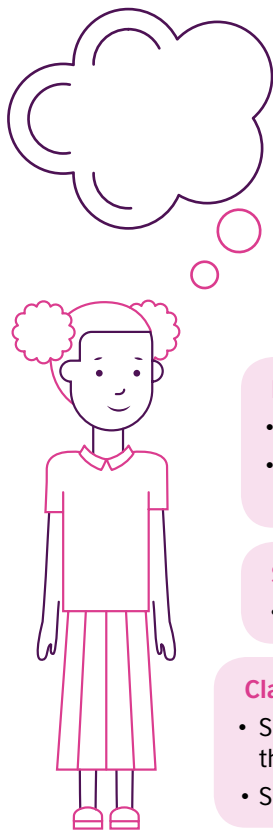
Voice 21 sets out four strands of oracy - **Physical, Linguistic, Cognitive and Social and Emotional**. The ‘physical’ includes elements such as voice projection, using eye contact and gesture. ‘Linguistic’ involves using appropriate vocabulary and choosing the right language for different occasions; ‘cognitive’ is about organising the content of your speech and ‘social and emotional’ includes working with others, taking turns and developing confidence in speaking.

The activities in this resource are adapted from resources developed by Voice 21 to help young people become successful, confident communicators.

**Learning objectives:** To share practical ideas developed by Voice 21 to help pupils to develop their speaking and listening skills and become confident, articulate speakers.

**Curriculum Links:** English, Personal, Social and Health Education, Citizenship.

**Commonwealth Values 5 and 13:** Freedom of Expression and Importance of Young People in the Commonwealth.



## Cognitive

### Content

- Choice of content to convey meaning & intention
- Building on the views of others

### Reasoning

- Giving reasons to support views
- Critically examining ideas & views expressed

### Structure

- Structure & organisation of talk

### Clarifying & summarising

- Seeking information & clarification through questioning
- Summarising

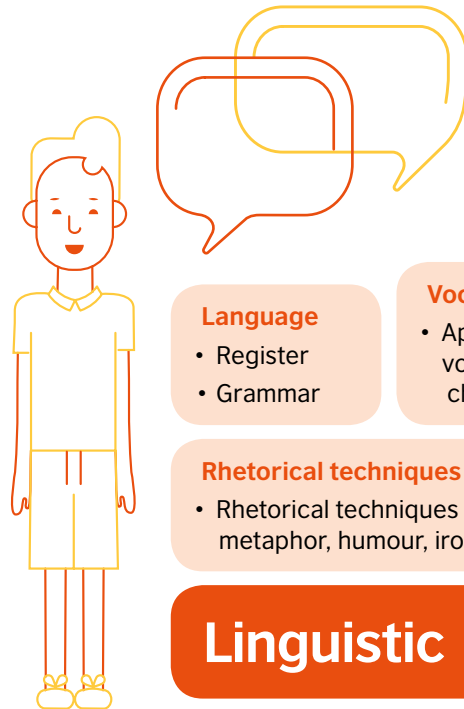
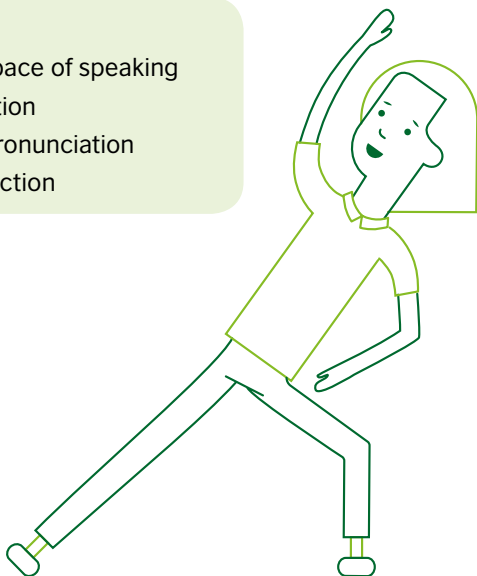
### Body language

- Gesture & posture
- Facial expression & eye contact

## Physical

### Voice

- Fluency & pace of speaking
- Tonal variation
- Clarity of pronunciation
- Voice projection



### Language

- Register
- Grammar

### Vocabulary

- Appropriate vocabulary choice

### Rhetorical techniques

- Rhetorical techniques such as metaphor, humour, irony & mimicry

## Linguistic

### Audience awareness

- Taking account of level of understanding of the audience

### Confidence in speaking

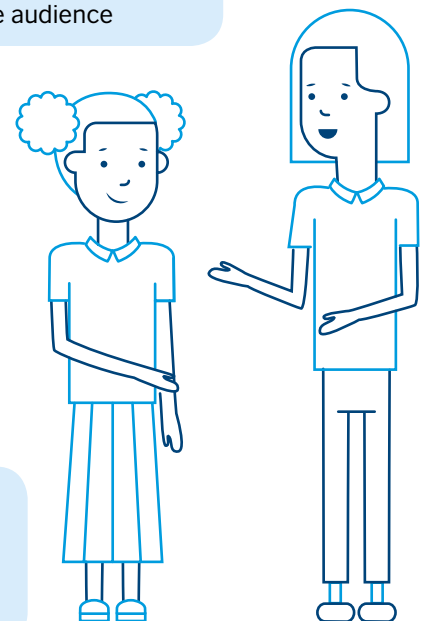
- Self-assurance
- Liveliness & flair

### Listening & responding

- Listening actively & responding appropriately

### Working with others

- Guiding or managing interactions
- Turn-taking



## Social & Emotional



# 1. Create discussion guidelines

Before starting, it is very useful for your pupils to develop a set of class discussion guidelines. Once they are aware of the conventions of good discussion, they can regulate their own, leading to more productive speaking and listening and deeper thinking.

To begin, set up a role-play or create a short film with other adults or students to show a particularly poor discussion. Ask your pupils to think about how the progress and outcomes of this discussion could be improved by creating a set of guidelines. Try starting with the stem we will ... and see what your class comes up with, and then narrow these down to 5 or 6 guidelines that everyone agrees with.

The following guidelines were developed using this procedure, by primary pupils at School 21.

We will:

- always respect each other's ideas
- be prepared to change our minds
- come to a shared agreement
- clarify, challenge, summarise, and build on each other's ideas
- invite someone to contribute by asking a question
- show proof that we have listened.

Once created, your class guidelines should be displayed and celebrated and referred to before discussions or debates across different curriculum areas.



## 2. Develop Talk Roles and Sentence Stems

Using specific talking roles and sentence stems can also help to develop the quality and structure of discussions and encourage student participation.

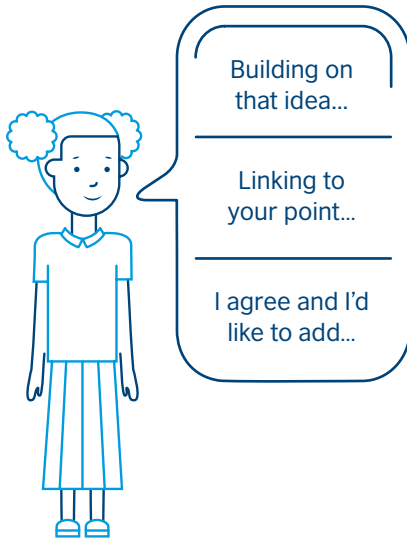
Print off the Activity Sheet overleaf showing the Voice 21 Talking Roles. They are the **Instigator**, the **Builder**, the **Challenger**, the **Clarifier**, the **Prober** and the **Summariser**. Explain the roles that these might play in a discussion or debate and model the sorts of language or phrases these characters might use to make their points clearly and politely. For example, the Instigator might open a discussion by saying 'I would like to start by saying' or 'To begin with, let's talk about...'. In order to make a counter argument, a Challenger might take a different stance stating in an encouraging and constructive manner, 'I hear what you're saying, but what about...'

At first, you might want to start with a couple of roles, for instance the Builder and the Challenger. You can then introduce students gradually to the other roles as they become more confident using them.

Try creating your own list of useful sentence stems to use in discussions. You could also cut out and laminate the six Talking Roles and ask members of the class to try using some of these roles and sentence stems in the next class discussion or debate.

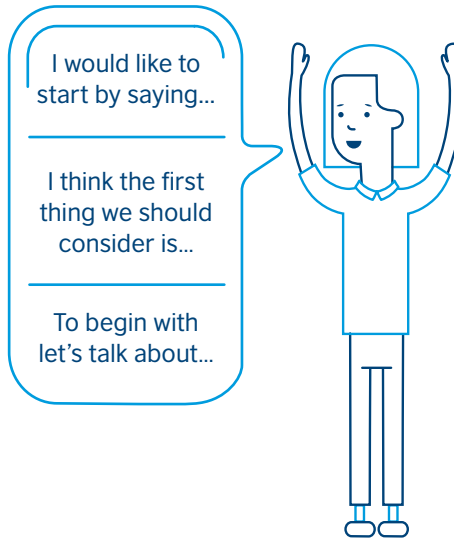


# Talking roles



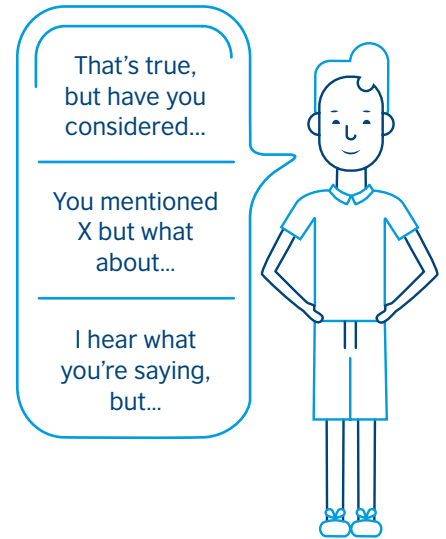
## Builder

Develops, adds to or runs with an idea



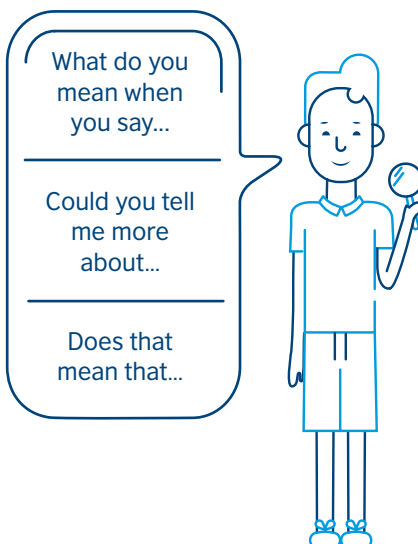
## Instigator

The person who starts the discussion



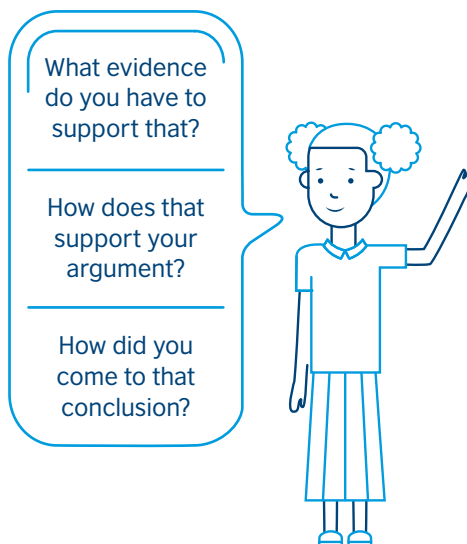
## Challenger

Disagrees with or presents an alternative argument



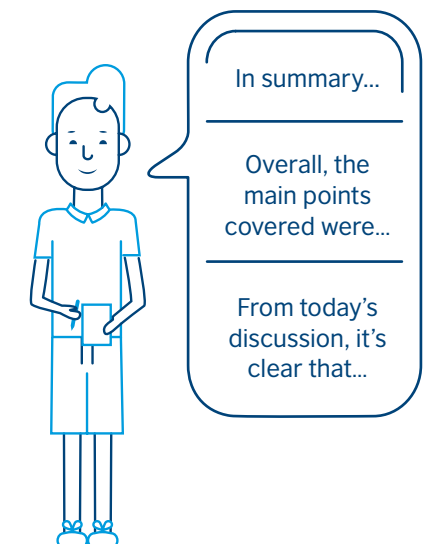
## Clarifier

Makes things clearer and simplifies ideas by asking questions



## Prober

Digs deeper into the argument, asks for evidence or justification of ideas



## Summariser

Presents reflections on the discussion. May offer a conclusion or balanced assessment of the main points



### 3. Use Talk Groupings

Different sorts of groupings are suited to various types of spoken activity.

Think about the types of conversations you want your pupils to have and try out some of the different grouping strategies illustrated. Trios for example, might be effective for carrying out a problem solving investigation such as designing and making a floating garden for the

Commonwealth Science Class unit **Global Food Security**, whereas Traverse might be a technique that could be used for sharing ideas about promoting gender equality.

Let students know that it's ok to change their mind and remind them to be mindful of the guidelines they produced. Encourage them to use the talk sentence stems, listen to each other and try to reach a shared agreement.

#### Nest

Students stand apart and whisper their ideas to themselves



#### Pairs

Two students talking together



#### Trios

Three students talking with each other. Two students have a discussion while the third observes then summarises and critiques



#### Circle (of 6 to 12 students)

A group of six students face each other in a circle. Pupils step inside the circle individually and speak to the group, considering their audience, maintaining good eye contact and using appropriate body language



#### Traverse

Pupils stand in two parallel lines opposite a speaking partner



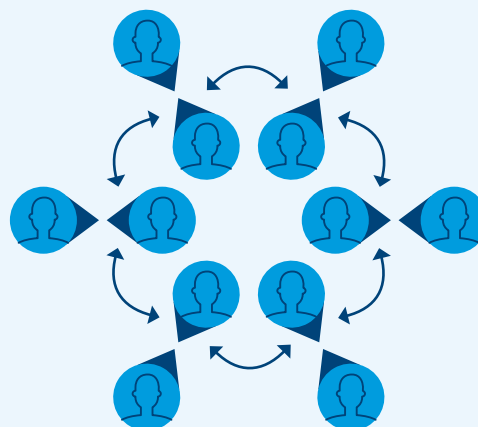
#### Onion

Students form an inner and outer circle. Up to six pupils stand back-to-back in the inner circle, with each facing a partner on the outer circle



#### Coaching Onion/ Fishbowl

A coaching onion is a useful tool for switching discussion partners as pupils on the inner circle can rotate to face someone new. It also allows students to contribute ideas to a larger group without worrying



## 4. Harkness discussions

You could also try a Harkness discussion. These are round table talks designed to develop understanding of a topic in an encouraging environment, with minimal teacher intervention. The teacher or an observer may note the discussion contributions to make sure that everyone has the opportunity to speak. This technique could be used to discuss big questions linked to Commonwealth Values such as: do you think freedom of expression is a human right? (Value 5) Or how can young people contribute effectively to the Commonwealth? (Value 13)

Why not also use the **Down the Line** activity from the **Commonwealth Education Pack**. Move classroom furniture or work outside so that you have a large space. Use masking tape or chalk to create a line running across the space with a sign saying 'Strongly agree' at one end, and 'Strongly disagree' at the other. Read out a statement linked to a Commonwealth Value and ask pupils to move to a point on the line that best represents their view on the statement. This could be:

- the Commonwealth should be more inclusive of young people (Value 13) or
- the main focus of the Commonwealth should be gender equality rather than protecting the environment. (Values 12 and 10)

Once pupils have stopped moving, ask some of them to explain why they have chosen that position. Give them a chance to change their minds and move up or down the line if they are convinced by other pupils' ideas. Repeat the activity for the other statements. Ask different pupils to explain their decision each time.

Talk with them about the flexibility of their opinions – even if they form an opinion today, with more evidence, further dialogue and changing circumstances it is fine to change your view and that this is an important part of being an astute, open-minded individual.

## Make Talk Visible

Pupils sometimes struggle to analyse and reflect on talk in the classroom because they can't 'see' it. Try out these activities to help your students reflect on their discussions and ensure that everyone makes a contribution.

### Talk tokens

Provide students with 'talk tokens' to help them to manage their contributions during discussions on a question such as "What does belonging mean to you?" Give each pupil a set number of tokens to 'spend' during this discussion. Once their tokens have run out they cannot make any more contributions. This helps to regulate students that tend to dominate a discussion whilst providing quieter students with an incentive to join in.

### Lego bricks

Lego bricks can help pupils to visualise the concept of building on someone's idea in a discussion. Younger children in particular can struggle to understand that their contributions to a discussion should link to the previous person's idea. Each pupil in a discussion contributes a brick to a tower when they correctly build on someone else's idea. New lines of enquiry are

represented by new towers. Reflecting on the height and number of towers is a useful tool to analyse a discussion.

### Wool

Wool is another excellent tool to help students follow the thread of a conversation or discussion. The instigator of the discussion holds onto the initial strand and passes the ball to the next person when they speak, who then holds onto a section of the wool before passing it on again. This provides students with a handy visual map of their discussion so they can monitor how the discussion progressed, as well as who made the most and least contributions.



## 5. Reflect on talk

Encourage your pupils to reflect on their own participation in oracy sessions, as well as providing feedback on what they say and how they say it. In their recent book *Talk Box*, Lyn Daws and Claire Sams suggest that young children could complete a Talk Diary recording their responses over a period of time to statements such as:

- I talked in a group today
- I talked to the whole class
- I found it hard to talk
- we decided together
- we could not agree.

### Talk Detectives

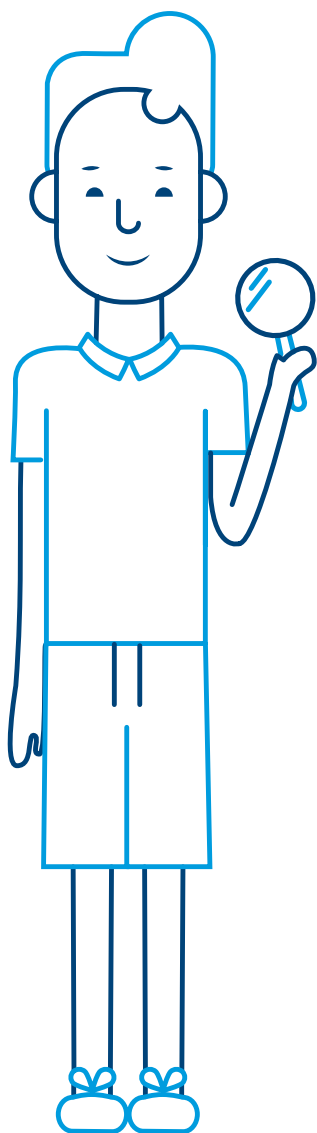
Talk detectives can also be used to support students reflecting on talk activities in class using the four strands of oracy and talk guidelines to structure their feedback.

For example, during an activity, one or two students could observe their peers talking in groups and use a prompt sheet like the one on Activity Sheet B to highlight positive behaviours.



# Talk Detectives

**Mystery to solve: what does good oracy look like?**



	Person or group name
Invited someone else to contribute	
Challenged a group member	
Summarised a group member's ideas	
Clarified somebody in their group's ideas	
Built on somebody else's ideas	
Changed their mind	
Came to a shared agreement	

## 6. Present your views

Recently the Commonwealth Youth Parliament provided access for young people across the Commonwealth to make speeches and debate Climate Change in the House of Lords Chamber in the UK. This was only the fourth time that the chamber was used for anything other than official business.

If your pupils were to make a speech in your Parliamentary chamber about an issue related to one of the Commonwealth Values what would they choose? They might choose to talk about protecting the environment (Value 10) or why it is important to accept, respect and understand different cultures. (Value 4)

You can find more about the Commonwealth Values here <https://schoolsonline.britishcouncil.org/about-schools-online/about-programmes/commonwealth-class/values>

Encourage them to research and make a short individual presentation of approximately 60 seconds as though they were speaking 'to a camera.' They should be given time to prepare their talk. They could make notes, drawings or diagrams, but when they carry out their presentation, they should only use a card containing 'prompt' words to use as headings to remind them of what they want to say. Allow students to choose how they want to present (standing up, sitting down or walking around.) If they run out of things to say before 1 minute is up, then they can stop, although if they are very short you may wish to give some prompt questions.



**If you are working with a partner school you could:**

- share your discussion guidelines with each other
- choose an issue or question linked to a Commonwealth Value and have an online or Skype debate using your sentence stems
- exchange films of your presentations.

## Find Out More

To find out more about the research and resources produced by Voice 21 go to:

<https://www.voice21resources.org/>

Watch films made by Edutopia to show how these resources are being used in the classroom using the following links: support talk in class , public speaking opportunities and talk detectives.

Other ideas for developing oracy can be found at:

<https://thinkingtogether.educ.cam.ac.uk/>

<https://www.educ.cam.ac.uk/research/projects/oracytoolkit/>

Talk Box: Activities for Teaching Oracy with Children Aged 4–8 by Lyn Dawes and Claire Sams published by Routledge contains oracy activities for younger children.

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