Oracy for the future

helping students speak, listen and learn

TOPSY PAGE

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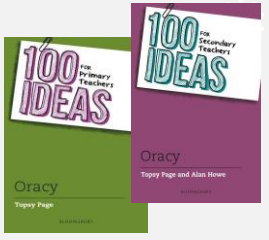
About me

Topsy Page

Oracy
oracy workshops, talk audits, live classroom coaching for oracy
Oracy Cambridge

P4C - Philosophy for Children
trainer and practitioner

www.topsypage.com



2

What is oracy, and why does it matter?



3

Oracy

the ability to use the skills of speaking, listening and nonverbal communication for a wide range of purposes.



4

Is oracy important? Why?

5

Is oracy important? Why?

Jot your thoughts in the CHAT

6

The amount and quality of the conversation children experience at home:

(a) varies enormously

(b) is a good predictor of eventual academic attainment.

Roy, Chiat & Dodd (2014)
Law et al. (2017)



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8

We're losing those micro-moments of belonging.

Dr Matthias Mehl
Professor of Psychology, University of Arizona, September 2026

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Speech and Language UK, 2023

Speech and Language UK

1 in 5

Children who struggle to talk and understand words are:
six times more likely to fail English tests at age 11,
eleven times less likely to pass maths,
twice as likely to have a mental health problem, and
twice as likely to be unemployed as an adult.

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Oracy

the ability to use the skills of speaking, listening and nonverbal communication for a wide range of purposes.



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Oracy is not...

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Three aspects of oracy in education

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Three aspects of oracy in education

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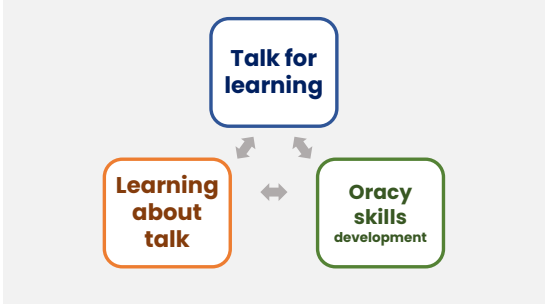
Talk for learning

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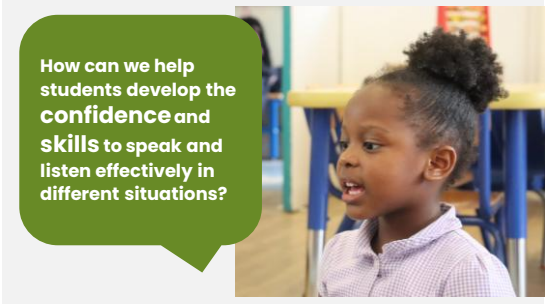
Talk for learning

Oracy skills development

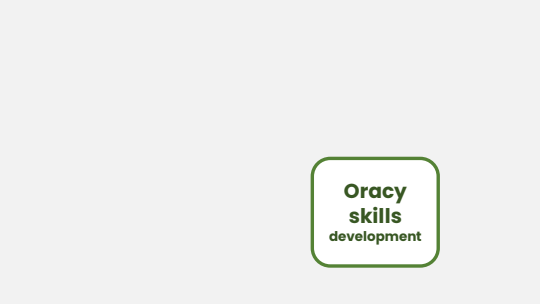
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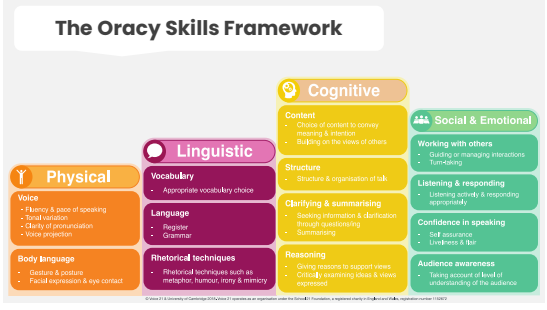
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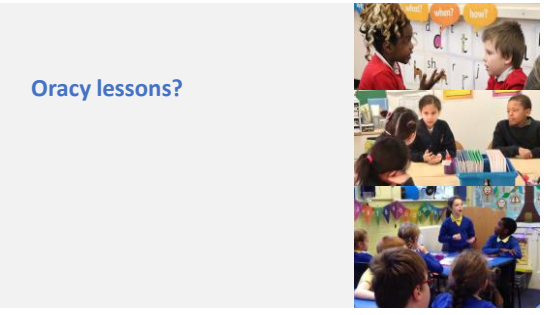
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Oracy lessons?

Talking Tuesdays really helped me grow my confidence because I was anxious about speaking in front of the class but now, with lots of practice, I'm not! Age 8



25

Oracy objectives?



26

Oracy objectives?

Remember, our oracy objective for this lesson is to use a loud voice so everyone can hear our ideas.

Remember, our oracy objective this week is giving reasons and justifying our thinking.



27

I'm kind of shy, but ever since we've been practising the skills of voice projection and expression, I've started to gain confidence and can now stand up and talk in front of everyone!

age 9

28

I feel like I'm getting more eye contact, more projective – my voice is getting louder and more confident.

age 12

29

It's helped me listen to people and respect people.

age 13

30

opportunities
listening

31

opportunities
listening
high expectations

32

What sometimes stops students from talking in your classrooms?

33

What sometimes stops students from talking in your classrooms?

Jot your thoughts in the CHAT

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35

Me: *How was the lesson?*

Lily Mae: *Good!*

Me: *Why?*

Lily Mae: *Because I don't usually get picked, but today I did, and I got to speak!*

Me: *How do you feel when you talk to your class?*

Lily Mae: *Sometimes I feel nervous speaking in front of the whole class, but today I felt braver! I've got used to it. When we first started doing oracy I was really nervous but today I was ok.* [smiling]

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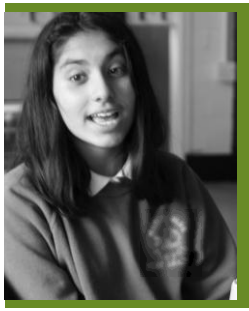
Me:	***You look happy.***
Lily Mae:	***Yes – today I wasn't nervous in oracy. I feel happy!***
Me:	***Why do you do oracy in your reading lessons?***
Lily Mae:	***We do it to see what everyone thinks. When it's explained by other people I understand it more. You can change your answer by people persuading you!***
Me:	***Is there anything your teacher could do which would help you?***
Lily Mae:	***More talk! I will not be as nervous and I will get braver and braver every time.***

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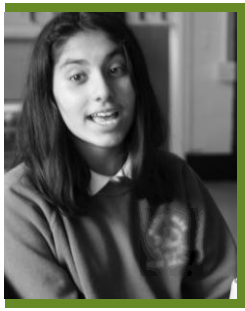


I will get braver and braver.

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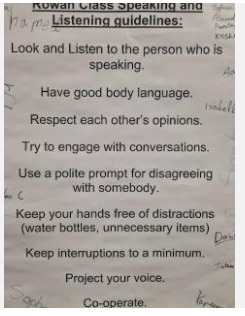
1. Introduce and embed oracy ground rules

40

Ground rules

1. We all participate.
2. We consider everyone's ideas carefully.
3. We ask each other for clarification.
4. We challenge each other to think deeper.

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42



2. Provide talk prompts

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It is my opinion that...

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On the other hand...

45

It could be argued...

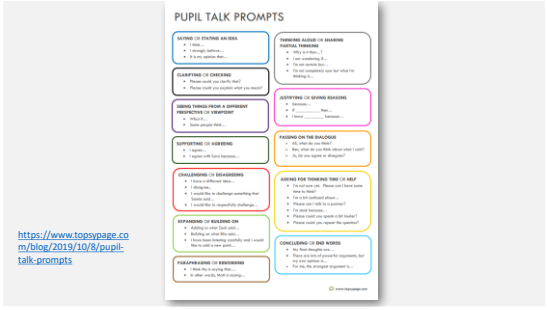
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I would like to respectfully challenge...

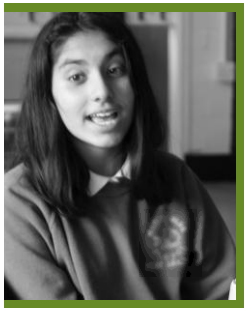
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I can see both sides of the argument, however...

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49



3. Ask children about **their opinions**

50

Would you rather look after a puppy or a kitten?





51

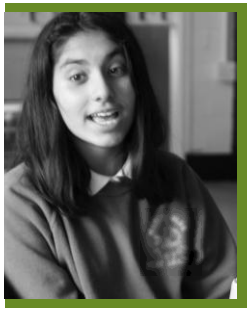


52

Would you rather make one person very happy, or 15 people a bit happy?



53



4. Provide **opportunities to speak to different people**

54

I want to change sometimes, because the partner I have is a bit silly. He listens and then he repeats what I say! And I feel a bit annoyed. But I still like him.

age 6

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It would be nice to change more, to have the opportunity to make new friends.

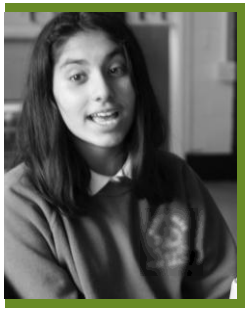
age 8

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If you're with the same partner forever, you're stuck with the same mindset forever.
But if you change partners frequently you can get different thoughts and different emotions.

age 10

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5. Use talking objects

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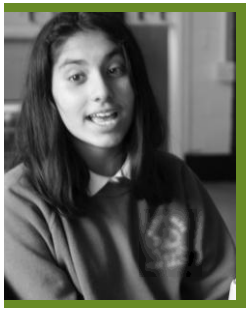
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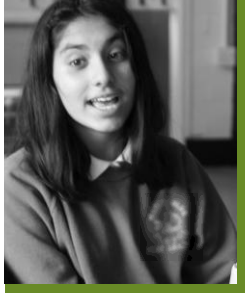


6. Organise who's first

62



63



7. Teach and practise listening

64

What does good listening look like?

65

What does good listening look like?

Jot your thoughts in the CHAT

66

Language of negotiation and consensus-building

I agree with part of what you're saying, but...
I'm willing to accept that...
I understand your point of view, however have you thought about...
Let's figure out what we all agree on...

67

How can oracy enhance learning across the curriculum?



68

Personally, I learn a lot better if I'm talking and being active, not just writing. I find it easier. I pick it up – it's forcing me to pick it up! If the teachers are just talking, I don't pick it up.

age 14

69

Talking helps me understand it. I can connect the dots better. If I just listen, I don't always understand it.

age 15

70

When you talk about learning, it allows you to consolidate learning.

age 16

71

Sometimes when you listen, you think you understand, but then when you start to talk about it you realise what you're not understanding.

age 17

72

Of course our teachers are very good at explaining – they have explained it lots of times to many different classes!

But, if your peer is trying to explain something they are doing that for the first time – this means that you hear their thought processes. You can take things from that.

age 18

73

Cambridge Classroom Dialogue research project

Howe, C., Hennessy, S., Mercer, N. Vrikki, M. & Wheatley, L. (2019)

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Cambridge Classroom Dialogue research project

72 teachers in 48 schools

whole-class talk

Howe, C., Hennessy, S., Mercer, N. Vrikki, M. & Wheatley, L. (2019)

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Cambridge Classroom Dialogue research project

72 teachers in 48 schools

1. participation
2. elaboration
3. challenge

whole-class talk

Howe, C., Hennessy, S., Mercer, N. Vrikki, M. & Wheatley, L. (2019)

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Cambridge Classroom Dialogue research project

72 teachers in 48 schools

1. participation
2. elaboration
3. challenge

Are you getting everyone involved? How? (What systems are you using?)

Do your students give full responses? (reasons, examples etc.)

Do your students question each other?

whole-class talk

Howe, C., Hennessy, S., Mercer, N. Vrikki, M. & Wheatley, L. (2019)

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Which of the three elements do you need to focus on?

1. participation
2. elaboration
3. challenge

Are you getting everyone involved? How? (What systems are you using?)

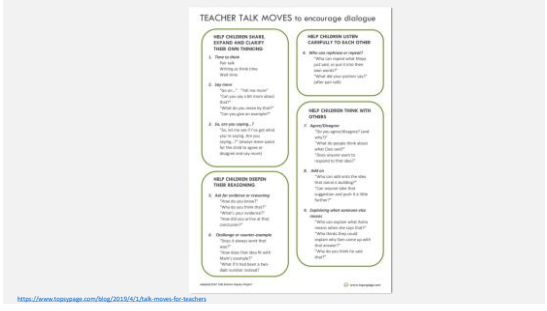
Do your students give full responses? (reasons, examples etc.)

Do your students question each other?

Jot your thoughts in the CHAT

whole-class talk

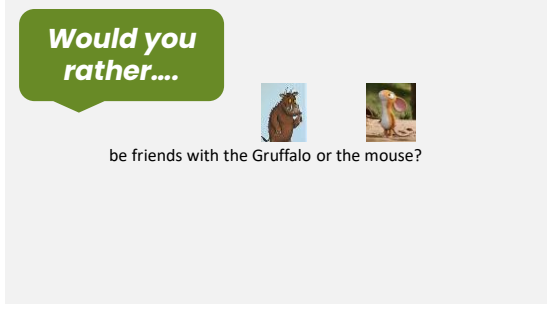
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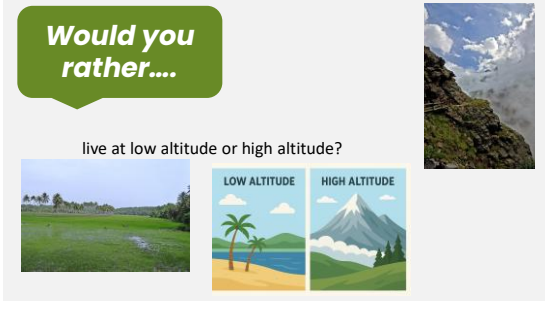
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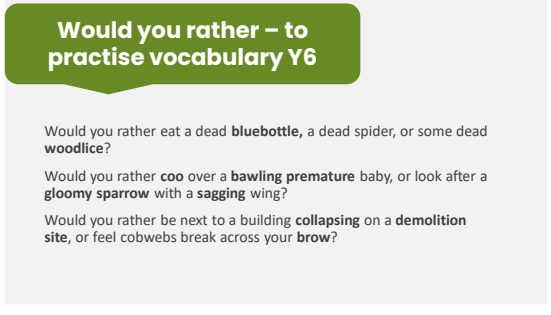
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FIND SOMEONE WHO…

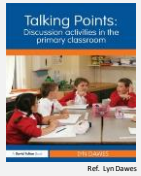
can tell you which character they most empathise with and why	can tell you which character they would most like to meet and why	can tell you which character they would least like to meet and why

85

Talking points

- statements not questions
- provocative and interesting
- can be used across the curriculum

More examples:
https://thinkingtogether.educ.cam.ac.uk/resources/



Ref. Lyn Dawes

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Talking Points – statements not questions

We should always eat healthy food.

Do you agree or disagree? What does your partner think?

Everything is art.

Do you agree or disagree with this statement? Find out what others in your group think, and why.

87

Talking points – PE

What does your group think about these ideas? Can you reach agreement?

1. Physical education should be optional after a certain age.
2. Students should have the right to choose what physical activities they want to do in PE.
3. Physical activity should be integrated into every subject, not just PE class.
4. Teamwork is more important than individual talent.
5. Conflict in teams can be healthy.

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Talking points – Mathematics

What does your group think about these ideas? Can you reach agreement?

1. Zero is the most important number in mathematics.
2. All prime numbers are odd.
3. Multiplying always makes a number bigger.
4. Division is the opposite of multiplication.
5. Decimals are more accurate than fractions.
6. Area and perimeter always increase together.
7. An estimate should always be close to the exact answer.

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Talking points - History

1. History is the diary of the winners.
2. Studying history helps us avoid repeating the mistakes of the past.
3. Empires did more harm than good.
4. Historical heroes should not be judged by modern standards.
5. Preserving historical monuments and traditions is essential, even when they represent a painful past.

90

Talking points – novels

Literary characters should not be judged by the moral standards of the modern world.

A novel's meaning depends more on the reader's interpretation than on the author's intentions.

Classic novels deserve their place in the curriculum, even when their language and values seem outdated.

Things Fall Apart — Chinua Achebe
A culture should not be judged by outsiders who do not understand its values.

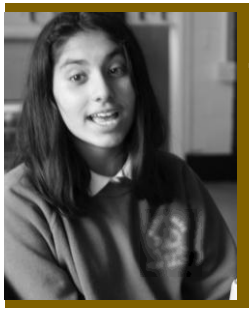
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Talking points – your students

Thinking about upcoming lessons, write some for your students

- statements not questions
- provocative and interesting

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2. Create tailored talk prompts

93



Specific talk prompt starters

Something I am wondering about volcanoes is…
Something I like about volcanoes is…
Something that worries me about volcanoes is…
Something I want to know about volcanoes is…
Something interesting about volcanoes is….

94

Something I can tell you about volcanoes is…
Something I know about volcanoes is…
Something that is scary about volcanoes is…
Something I want to know about volcanoes is…
Something interesting about volcanoes is….

target vocabulary:

erupt	conical	tremor
eruption	crater	active
lava	dormant	vapour
ash	extinct	magma



95

Talk prompts to reflect and review

Something interesting in the lesson was….
Something I am wondering is…
Something I need to think about more is…
Something I need to practise more is…
Something I want to know is…
Something I don't understand is…
Something I am worried about is…
Something I am finding challenging is…

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Example talk prompts - Science

- One possible explanation is…
- Having thought about our results, we think…
- Our data indicates that…
- My hypothesis is that ___, based on my knowledge that…
- A pattern in the data is…
- Despite some anomalies, the data suggests…
- This conclusion is supported by the data because…
- This links to the scientific idea that…
- I observed that when ___ was changed, ___ happened.
- We ensured our method was precise by…

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Example talk prompts - Geography

- A key feature of this region is…
- As a consequence…
- This, in turn, causes…
- This impacts the environment by…
- The relationship between ___ and ____ is…
- A possible cause of this issue is…
- The combined effect of ___, ____ and ___ is…
- This change occurred due to…

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Talk for learning strategies

- Would you rather
- Talking points (statements to discuss)
- Prompts

What are the benefits?
Which might you use with your students?

99



1. **Ground rules**
2. **Participation, elaboration, challenge**
3. **Participation systems**
4. **Talk moves**
5. **Talk prompts**
6. **Who's first**

100

It has allowed me to see misconceptions in learning much more easily through listening to their discussions. Their talk is allowing them to challenge each other's thinking rather than me guide them to a conclusion. They remember things better when they discuss and challenge each other's ideas.

Helen, Y4 teacher

101

Something I will adjust in my practice is…
Something I found useful was…

Jot your thoughts in the CHAT

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