



# Increasing Opportunities for Oral Language in All Subjects

Session Handout

# Instructional Strategies to Encourage Oral Language

Oral language: the spoken language students use in school to learn, speak, and write about academic subjects

## Paired and Peer-to-Peer Conversations

Students think alongside a partner to form, clarify, and corroborate understandings.

Strategy/Routine	Description	Example	Resources
<b>Think, Turn and Talk</b>	A “Think, Turn, and Talk” is a structured routine in which students apply their content knowledge in a conversation with a peer. Students are provided with a short prompt to think about, then they turn and talk to their predetermined partner about the prompt while the partner listens. Partners switch.	<p>Example 1: Choose one math tool or manipulative we have used this year and explain to your partner why it's important and what it can be used for.</p> <p>Example 2: If you had encountered the same problem as the character, what would you have done? Explain your reasons.</p>	<p><a href="#">Turn and Talk - The Teacher Toolkit</a></p> <p><a href="#">Turn and Talk: An Evidence-Based Practice Teacher’s Guide</a></p> <p><a href="#">Turn and Talk prompts   Model Teaching</a></p>
<b>Write, Pair, Share</b>	Students are asked to write their thoughts about a prompt, pair up and share their thoughts. Students have the opportunity to intentionally develop their ideas before sharing as students are writing their thoughts down prior to discussing them. Write, Pair, Share works well when students have been asked to identify evidence from a text or show their thinking in solving a problem. They have something concrete to reference in their discussion.	<p>Think about what you know about earthquakes.</p> <p>What causes them?</p> <p>How are they measured?</p> <p>Who is affected?</p> <p>What else might you know?</p> <p><b>Record your thinking.</b> Then, with your partner, take turns discussing your ideas.</p>	<p><a href="#">Write Pair Share Video – Hameray Publishing</a></p> <p><a href="#">Introducing Think-Pair-Share and Think-Write-Pair-Share</a></p>

<p><b>Talk, Read, Talk, Write</b></p>	<p>Students engage with an open ended conversation related to the content. This could be a peer-to-peer conversation or a guided, whole group discussion. Students then read about the concept or content. Students then have a second opportunity to discuss the content and process new information. They then write about their new understandings.</p>	<p>Procedure:          Talk 1: Respond to an image, quote, song. Ask a polarizing or thought provoking question.          Read: Have students read the target text.          Talk 2: Students talk about a targeted or strategic portion of the writing task.          Write: Students demonstrate knowledge through an on-demand writing prompt.</p>	<p><a href="#">Talk-Read-Talk-Write</a>  <a href="#">TRTW Graphic</a>  <a href="#">Talk, Read, Talk, Write - Language Magazine</a>  <a href="#">Talk Read Talk Write</a>  <a href="#">Oral Language Examples</a></p>
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## Coherent Conversations

Students connect pieces of information to gain meaning and form a coherent understanding.

Strategy/ Routine	Description	Example	Resources
<p><b>Conversation Starters and Sentence Stems</b></p>	<p>Conversation starters provide an opportunity for students to focus their thinking. Conversation and sentence stems set a tone and purpose for the conversation and allow students a way to begin their discussion. Ensure the conversation starter focuses on the objective of the lesson.</p>	<p>Use the following sentence stems to guide your discussion:  <i>I think that these arrows on this diagram mean ... because ...</i>  <i>I think that they could also mean ...</i></p>	<p><a href="#">Session Materials: Sentence Stems</a>  <a href="#">Session Materials: Conversation Sentence Stems</a>  <a href="#">Oral Language Examples</a></p>
<p><b>Open-Ended Questions</b></p>	<p>Open-ended questions have a level of complexity that encourages multiple answers. Students are asked a question that encourages insightful responses on contextualized (subject specific) and decontextualized</p>	<p>Would you rather have the profit from:          A downtown hotel with 122 guest rooms and an average price of \$239/night.          OR</p>	<p><a href="#">Would You Rather Questions for Middle School Kids</a>  <a href="#">Oral Language Examples</a></p>

	(general) levels.	A rural beachside villa with 62 guest units and an average price of \$499/night?	
<b>Strive for Five</b>	The Strive for Five strategy encourages students to have five back-and-forth exchanges between student and teacher (or student and student).	<p>Teacher: What do you think Rainsford will do next?</p> <p>Student: <i>Set a trap.</i></p> <p>Teacher: How does he know to do that?</p> <p>Student: <i>He's seen it before and knows it might work.</i></p> <p>Teacher: I wonder if it will work in this situation.</p>	<p><a href="#">Oracy in the Classroom; Strategies for Effective Talk</a> -</p> <p><a href="#">Video 3: Engaging in Multi Turn Conversations (REL Southeast)</a></p> <p><a href="#">Text Features That Support Strive-for-Five Conversations</a></p>

### Elaborative Conversations

Students deepen understanding by integrating information within and across texts and experiences.

Strategy/ Routine	Description	Example	Resources
<b>Interactive Read Aloud</b>	During an interactive read aloud the teacher reads a story or text passage aloud while students listen. The teacher stops at key points in the text to ask strategic questions that support overall understanding of the text.	<p>“What do we think this character will do now?”</p> <p>“I want to draw your attention to this image here. What is going on here? Why did the illustrator include these details?”</p>	<p><a href="#">Stop and Jot - The Teacher Toolkit</a></p> <p><a href="#">Interactive Read Aloud Lesson Template</a></p> <p><a href="#">Fiction Interactive Read Alouds: Sample Pause Points Through the Lens of a Reader</a></p> <p><a href="#">Nonfiction Interactive Read Alouds: Sample Pause Points Through the Lens of a Reader</a></p>

<p><b>Use Complex Vocabulary</b></p>	<p>Teachers incorporate interesting and complex language into casual talk and explicit classroom instruction. Complex vocabulary supports and deepens students' understanding of subject area (contextualized) content.</p>	<p>Have students discuss and select from a range of word choices - debating their meaning and value. For example:</p> <p><b>Which word is the most powerful? Why?</b></p> <p>Old, classical, mature, ancient, medieval, elderly, antiquated, primeval, archaic, primordial</p>	<p><a href="#">A Matter of Talk by Nonie Lesaux</a>  <a href="#">Instructional Processes: Conferring</a>  <a href="#">Instructional Processes: Sharing Circle</a>  <a href="#">Speaking for Excellence</a></p>
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## Elaborative Conversations

Students deepen understanding by integrating information within and across texts and experiences.

Strategy/ Routine	Description	Example	Resources
<p><b>Picture Word Inductive Model</b></p>	<p>This strategy uses pictures of objects, actions, or scenes to draw attention to nouns and verbs. It builds vocabulary and background knowledge and supports strategic conversation.</p>	<p>Examine the picture “<a href="#">Visiting Niagara Falls</a>”.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Use the picture to fill in the nouns (in purple)</li> <li>Assign a verb to the noun (blue)</li> <li>And complete the sentence (pink)</li> </ul> <p>Have students use the annotated picture to support an oral or written conversation.</p>	<p><a href="#">Using the Picture Word Inductive Model to Teach English Vocabulary</a>  <a href="#">Blog Post: Picture-Word Inductive Model</a> -  <a href="#">Picture-Word Inductive Model</a>  <a href="#">Oral Language Examples</a></p>
<p><b>Visual Thinking Strategies</b></p>	<p>Visual thinking strategies support students in analyzing, interpreting, and describing visual images. Visual thinking strategies encourage collaborative discussion and develop critical thinking skills.</p>	<p>Example 1: Examine the picture “<a href="#">Let’s Play Football</a>”.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What do you think of this setting?</li> <li>Who has the advantage?</li> <li>How could the game be equalized?</li> <li>In what ways is this picture</li> </ul>	<p><a href="#">The Inference Collection - Once Upon a Picture</a>  <a href="#">The Learning Network - The New York Times Canada</a>  <a href="#">Turner’s Graph of the Week</a>  <a href="#">Oral Language Examples</a></p>

metaphorical?

- What social issues could this picture be commenting on?

# Reading Strategies to Encourage Oral Language

## Pre-Reading Strategies

Pre-reading strategies focus on providing learners with appropriate background knowledge necessary to make meaning of the text

### Strategy #1: Support Background Knowledge and Vocabulary

Teachers could:

- Introduce concepts in text
  - Identify academic and disciplinary vocabulary and define them in relation to content in text
  - Encourage students to think about how concepts are defined (vocabulary) and how the definitions typify and characterize the concept
- Relate concepts to prior learning (text and experience based learning)

### Strategy #2: Support Oral Language Structures and Verbal Reasoning

Teachers could:

- Introduce students to what they will be learning and explain its importance in the overall learning arc
- Model how to organize information schematically and conceptually

### Strategy #3: Support Literacy Knowledge

Teachers could:

- Discuss features of text (eg. title, headings, layout, tables, graphs)
- Explicitly teach text structure. This differs based on the type of text:
  - For narratives, discuss story elements: character, setting, problem, actions, climax, resolution
  - For expository texts discuss the structure the text (how it is organized) and what to expect while reading (eg, keywords associated with that text structure)
    - compare/contrast: however, but, similarly, likewise, in addition to, conversely
    - cause/effect: if/then, because of, as a result of, initially, since, consequently
    - problem/solution: (watch for the language of narrative: problem, antagonism, solution, solve, issues, resolve, resolution, justice, etc)
    - chronology/sequence: on, first, before, after, next, later, then, following, also

## During-Reading Strategies

During-reading strategies focus on predicting, making connections, and deepening ongoing comprehension of text

### Strategy #1: Support Background Knowledge and Vocabulary

Teachers could:

- Summarize and monitor comprehension by asking, “what was that part about?”, “how was this word used?”
- Do a morphological analysis of complex vocabulary words
- Explore related vocabulary

### Strategy #2: Support Oral Language Structures and Verbal Reasoning

Use complex vocabulary and syntax. Teachers could:

- Use mental state verbs (eg, think, know, hope, wonder) which leads to more complex syntax and cognitive investment than action words.

Mental state words	Sample phrase
Try	Let’s <b>try</b> to find evidence
Know	I <b>know</b> this is true because ...
Think	What do you <b>think</b> is happening?
Wonder	I <b>wonder</b> why this occurred?
Remember	<b>Remember</b> how this was solved.
Understand	What helps you <b>understand</b> this?
Forget	What will happen if you <b>forget</b> ...?

### Strategy #3: Support Literacy Knowledge

Generate oral summaries in which:

- Teachers could:
  - Ask quality questions
  - Provide think time along with oral comprehension check
  - Repeat and expand
  - Use complex vocabulary
- Students should:
  - Use complex vocabulary
  - Use contextualized language
  - Use decontextualized language

Use visual summaries to support discussion:

- compare/contrast, Venn diagram, other heuristics
- cause/effect and problem/solution and hierarchical conceptual organizers
- timeline organizer
- description webs and semantic mapping

## Post-Reading Strategies

Post-reading strategies encourage readers to synthesize ideas across texts and experiences

### Strategy #1: Support Background Knowledge and Vocabulary

Teachers and students could:

- Explicitly explain how new learning from text 'links in' to what they had already known.
- Explicitly point out and discuss how their understanding of concepts has changed or developed as a result of engaging with the text.

### Strategy #2: Support Oral Language Structures and Verbal Reasoning

Teachers and students could:

- Use sentence starters that help students speak about, listen to and expand upon their own ideas and the contributions of others:

Synthesize by	Sentence Starter
Repeating another student's words	"I think you're saying ..."
Adding on	"I can add to that ..." "Adding on to what ____ said ..."
Clarifying	"Let me see if I understand what you're saying ..." "I think I can summarize/rephrase what has been said ..." "Can you say more about that?"
Agreeing/Disagreeing	"I agree with ...." "I respectfully disagree because ..."

### Strategy #3: Support Literacy Knowledge

Teachers and students could:

- **T:** take turns talking, ie: "Strive for Five"
- **A:** ask open-ended questions, ie: refer to anchor charts or sentence stems
- **L:** listen to responses and extend them
- **K:** keep track of significant conversations

# Oral Language - Commit to Try

Choose one of the strategies discussed today and commit to try it in your teaching. Here's a planning page:

<b>Grade: Subject:</b>	<b>Date (anticipated):</b>	<b>Curriculum Outcome(s)</b>	<b>Assessment</b>
<b>Oral Language Strategy/Routine:</b>			
<b>Instructional Considerations</b>			
<b>Rationale</b>	<b>Methods/Procedures</b>	<b>Resources</b>	<b>Comments</b>
<b>Possible Pedagogical Considerations</b>			
<p><b>Building Conversation</b></p> <p>What kinds of dialogue (teacher/student, student/student, student/self/text) are you hoping to support and create?</p> <p>What kinds of engagement are you encouraging? (cognitive, emotional)</p> <p>What kinds of connections will you encourage? (text connections, curricular)</p> <p>How will you support students in engaging with oral language?</p> <p>What kinds of sentence or conversation starters will you use?</p>	<p><b>Building Comprehension</b></p> <p>What instructional scaffolds will you use?</p> <p>How will you present this strategy?</p> <p>What kinds of modelling will you do?</p> <p>What specific things do you want students to understand?</p> <p>How will you know if students comprehend the concept?</p> <p>How do you want students to think when engaging with the oral language task? (objectively, subjectively, critically, analytically, with an eye to interpreting</p>	<p><b>Assessment Considerations</b></p> <p>What will you accept as evidence of engagement with the oral language strategy?</p> <p>What will you accept as evidence of learning?</p>	<p><b>Transfer</b></p> <p>What will you do with this?</p> <p>What will you ask students to do with this?</p>

	or seeing an argument, etc)		
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## Strategy: Talk, Read, Talk, Write

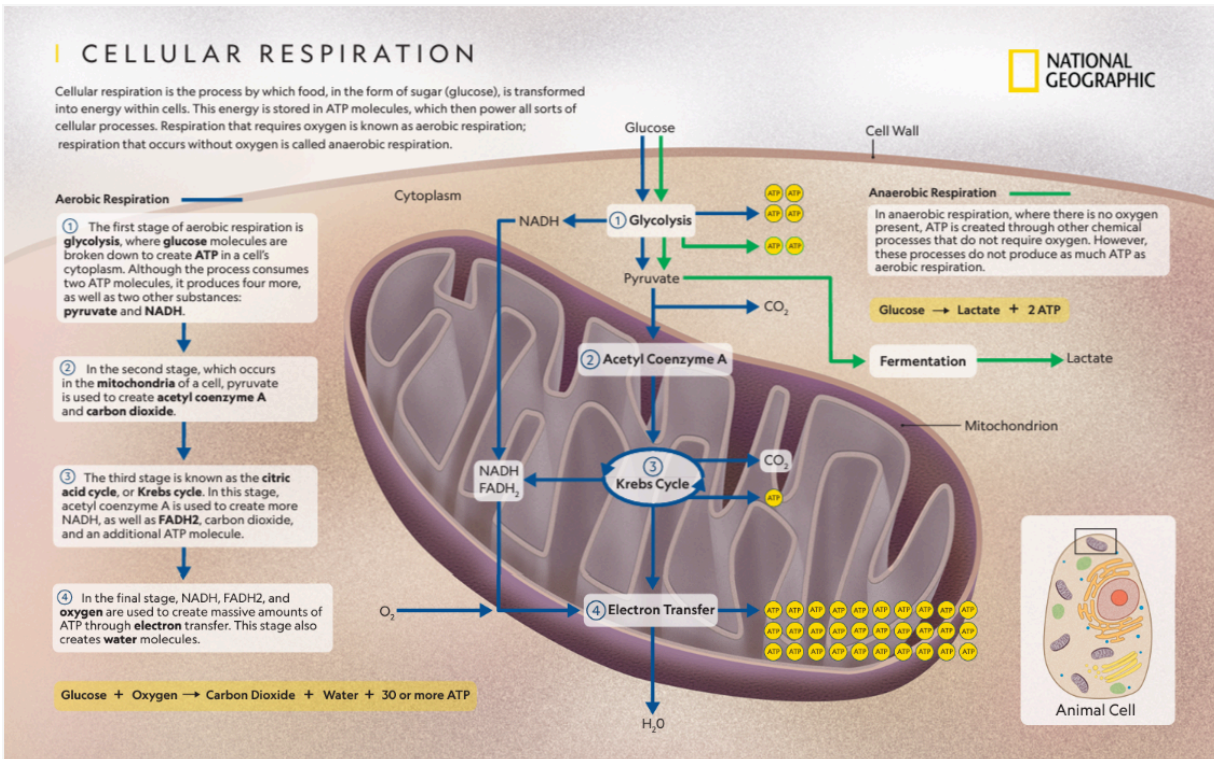
Students engage with an open ended conversation related to the content. This could be a peer-to-peer conversation or a guided, whole group discussion. Students then read about the concept or content. Students have a second opportunity to discuss the content and process new information. They then write about their new understandings

Talk Read Talk Write allows teachers to set an objective for students, prepare an end goal, and make strategic decisions about how to get students to talk, read, and write in order to learn.

Here's how you plan for a TRTW lesson.

	Procedure / Explanation	Prompts / Stems	Planning order
<b>TALK #1</b>	Open your class with a polarizing or thought-provoking question that introduces, foreshadows or foregrounds the concept.	Respond to an image, a quote, a song. Respond to a "would you rather" dilemma.  What if ...? Do you think ...? Is it possible to ...?	<b>4</b>
<b>READ</b>	What text will your students read in order to learn?	Support students in knowing what to be intentional about noting as they read	<b>2</b>
<b>TALK #2</b>	What will you have them talk about to bridge the gap <i>after</i> they read & before they write?	Ask students to talk about something they noted.  Have them talk about a portion of the writing task.	<b>3</b>
<b>WRITE</b>	What do you want your students to write about? This will be linked directly to your intended outcome or purpose. Assessment lives here.	Explain how ___ impacts ____. Determine whether ___ or ____. If ___ happened, what might be the result?	<b>1</b>

## Strategy: Conversation Starters and Sentence Stems

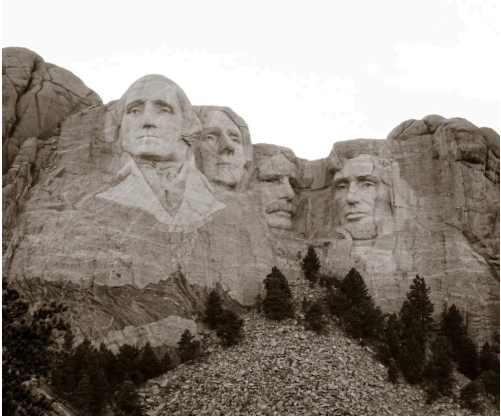


- Why do you think there are different colours of arrows?  
I think the different colours of arrows ...
- Consider the yellow circles with ATP in it. Do you think the amounts of ATP circles in each phase are relevant? What conclusion might you draw from this?  
I think the yellow circles with varying amounts of ATP in each phase indicates...  
I think I can conclude that ...
- In the yellow highlighted text boxes, what do you think the + and -> symbols mean?  
I think the + and -> symbols mean ...
- What do the blue circled numbers mean?  
I think the blue circled numbers represent/mean/indicate ...
- What does the smaller image in the bottom right indicate? What are we looking at?  
The smaller image in the bottom indicates ... because we are looking at ...

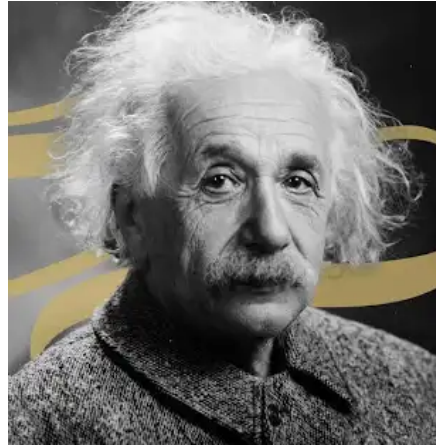
## Strategy: Open-Ended Questions

Open-ended questions have a level of complexity that encourages multiple answers. Students are asked a question that encourages insightful responses on contextualized (subject specific) and decontextualized (general) levels.

Would you rather:



OR



Be a famous leader.

Be a famous scientist.

- Would you rather be a famous leader or a famous scientist?  
I would rather be a famous ... because ...  
I feel that being famous for my ... would be more satisfying than being known for my ...

## Strategy: Picture Word Inductive Model

The Picture Word Inductive Model is a strategy that uses pictures of objects, actions, or scenes to draw attention to nouns and verbs.

It builds vocabulary and background knowledge and supports strategic conversation.



### Examine the picture, “Visiting Niagara Falls”

Why do the tourists stand on the observation deck?

The tourists stand on the observation deck because ...

The boat is in the basin. Why do you think it travels there?

The boat travels along the basin because ...

It's a beautiful day. Why does the rainbow stretch across the sky ?

The rainbow stretches across the sky because ...

## Strategy: Visual Thinking Strategies

Visual thinking strategies support students in analyzing, interpreting, and describing visual images. Visual thinking strategies encourage collaborative discussion and develop critical thinking skills.

“Let’s Play Football”



### Examine the picture, “Let’s Play Football.”

- What do you think of this setting?  
I think the setting is ...
- Who has the advantage?  
I think the advantage would go to ... because ...
- How could the game be equalized?  
I think the game could be equalized by ... and ... because ...
- In what ways is this picture metaphorical?  
I think the picture is metaphorical because ... and ...
- What social issues could this picture be commenting on?  
I think the picture is commenting on the social issue of ... because ...

## “Bedtime Story”



### Examine the picture, “Bedtime Story.”

- Whose bedroom is this?  
I think the bedroom is ... because ...
- What can you tell about his personality and interests?  
I think he's interested in ... because ...  
I think that ... shows that he is ...
- How old do you think the little boy mouse is?  
I think the little boy mouse is ... because ...
- What fairytale do you think they have been reading?  
I think they've been reading ... because ...
- Do they read every night before bed?  
I think they read ...

# Increasing Opportunities for Oral Language in All Subjects

**Task:** Read over the document. Discuss the following questions with your group members.

1. What stands out for you? Why?
2. Did anything surprise you?
3. In what ways is this document significant for teachers?
4. How might this inform your practice?

Choose one person to report out to the whole group.

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## Speaking for Excellence: Language Competencies for Effective Teaching Practice

Council of Ministers of Education, Canada (CMEC), 2013

### Teachers and Language Use

Teachers use formal language patterns and terms that are valued in school settings. These expand the meanings of familiar words and provide access to abstract ideas and complex concepts. Teachers introduce students to the formal language of schooling and help students acquire the language necessary for academic success.

Teachers introduce students to formal academic language through modelling, presentations, and demonstrations that illustrates the vocabulary, language structures, rules of interaction, and ways of acting, thinking and communicating in formal learning contexts. Teachers use academic idioms to facilitate activities and describe procedures, tasks, and cognitive processes.

Teachers also require fluent informal language and literacy skills so they can communicate effectively and make personal connections with students and with parents, colleagues, and community members outside the classroom.

**Language proficiency is the most important characteristic of quality teachers.** Teachers' **effective use of spoken language** requires the following:

- Knowledge and appropriate usage of the language, such as the proper use of pronouns and the construction of plural forms (Harel, 1996)
- Knowledge of the appropriate modes of address to be used with students (Duchesne, 2010)
- Use of oral language to promote the comparison, sharing, and clarification of concepts and notions (Cormier, 2010)
- Identification, modulation, and adjustment of speech according to the elements of an oral communication situation
- Ability to provide a clear and economical explanation of their own knowledge and ideas
- Timely and strategic use of oral language for classroom and student behaviour management
- Ability to distinguish between explanation, argumentation, interaction, correction, refutation, and feedback and use them appropriately
- Emphasis on questions as a tool of communication and as a tool of reflective communicational practice (Lafontaine, 2006)
- Use of vocabulary suited to different communication situations, and use of appropriately lengthy and complex sentences with suitable prosody (Armand, 2009)
- Knowledge of phonetic, morphosyntactic, grammatical and lexical rules (Nachbauer, Prefontaine, 2000)
- Knowledge of how to consider their audience, how to evaluate the level of knowledge of listeners, how to provide clarity about new terms and to summarize main ideas, and how to make explicit their intended plan for communication (Plessis-Belair, 2004)