

FISH BOWL

INSIDE • OUTSIDE • CIRCLE

PURPOSE:

Designed to engage students in carefully-constructed discussion, FISH BOWL requires effective listening skills. It works well in many types of classrooms, including classes that include students with a wide range of skills and experiences because it draws on personal knowledge and opinions.

PROCEDURE:

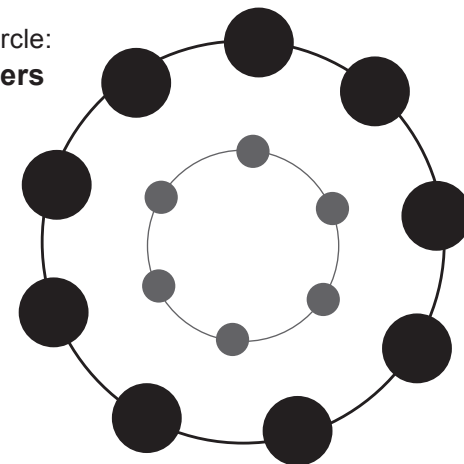
1. **Write down several open-ended questions.** Place these questions in a fish bowl or other container. Students in the “inner circle” (described below) will pick a question to begin their discussion.
2. **Arrange five to eight students in a small circle.** These students will be the initial discussants in the inner circle.
3. **Arrange a second circle of five to eight students to sit around the inner circle.** These students may be tagged by a member of the inner circle (only) after he or she has contributed to the discussion. Once tagged, that outer circle student joins the inner circle to participate in the discussion.
4. Tell students who are in neither circle that they will have a chance to discuss other questions later in class. In the meantime, they are assigned the role of “active observer” and should be prepared to answer the following questions when the fish bowl discussion ends and the large class discussion begins.

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- What did you hear that was important?
 - What did you want to say that was not discussed?
 - Which arguments discussed were most persuasive? Why?
 - What questions do you still have about the discussion?
5. After one discussion topic or question has been fully explored and the larger class discussion about that topic has concluded, ask students to switch places. For the next question, students who were observers become members of either the inner or outer circle. Continue following the same procedures until all questions have been explored and all students have had an opportunity to join the inner or outer circle.

Inner Circle:
Speakers



Outer Circle:
Supporters