

Listen to this talk by a teacher trainer about pair work activities.

Optional activity:

While you listen, decide whether the following sentences are true or false.

Sentence	True or false?
1. Pairing the students randomly is a good idea.	
2. The teacher should decide who goes first in pair work.	
3. Teachers can sometimes spend too much time organising an activity.	
4. Students should never be allowed speak their own language in class.	
5. Asking students to monitor each other to ensure they are speaking English is a good idea.	

TT = Teacher Trainer

TT: Right, I've come to the end of my talk but we still have some time left for questions. Does anyone have anything they'd like to ask me about pair work?

(pause)

TT: Yes? Sandra?

Sandra: Well, I like the idea of doing pair work, but sometimes it's difficult knowing how to organise it, who to put with whom.

TT: Yes. This is very true. But there are lots of ways to deal with this. The best way is to choose pairs at random. So, let's imagine you have 14 students in your class. First you get them all to stand up. Then you walk around, pointing and giving students a number. Say things like "you're number one", "Anna, you're number two". When each student has a number – they sit down. You do this until you have given out the numbers one to seven. Then start again. So, you end up with two number ones, two number twos – and then you just say "find your partner" – that'll be the person with the same number.

Janet: And what about who goes first? When I do pair work activities, nobody ever wants to start – to be first.

TT: Yes. This is typical too. But again, there are tricks/techniques that you can use. For example, "The person with the longest hair goes first" or "The person with most letters in their name" – it doesn't matter what category you use. What's important is that YOU tell them who should go first. And do it straight away. We sometimes waste a lot of time setting up an activity and then don't have enough time to actually do it!

(pause)

TT: Any more questions? Joe?

Joe: Yes. I was wondering what we could do about the students who just won't speak in English. Because sometimes my students just start speaking in their first language.

TT: (laughing) Well Joe –you are certainly not alone in this. It's only natural for students to speak in their first language. But again – there are some tricks that we can use.

Joe: For example?

TT: Well, one thing that I usually find works, is to tell your students that you are going to give them a mark for their speaking – and that if you don't hear them speaking English then you'll have to give them a zero! Another trick is to choose a couple of students to be the "English monitors" and to tell you when somebody isn't speaking in English.

Sandra: And I have heard of some teachers who give their class five minutes of L1 time at the beginning of the class

TT: So they can get it out of their system!

Sandra: Exactly.

TT: Yes. You can try any of these tricks – just find the one that works for you – or for your students, I should say.

TT: Now, if there are no more questions, I really think it's time to finish.

(Applauding)

Answer key:

1. False. 2. True. 3. True. 4. False. 5. True