

Using the Think-Pair-Share Method

The Purpose of the Think-Pair-Share Method

Frank Lyman, EdD, a former professor of education at the University of Maryland, developed the think-pair-share method to engage all students in reflection on a question before holding a class discussion. First, the teacher asks the students to think about a question independently, either in writing or through quiet reflection. Then the students pair up and share their thoughts with each other. Finally, the students discuss the question as a class.

Lyman's method addresses two issues that teachers commonly encounter. The first is that some students rarely raise their hands to answer a question, while others regularly raise their hands before the majority of students have had enough time to think about the question. Think-pair-share provides all students with time to think about the question both individually and with a peer before offering their thoughts to the whole class.

The second issue teachers often face is that some students feel much more comfortable than others sharing their ideas with the whole class. The think-pair-share method allows students to share their ideas with a peer before the class discussion. The practice of sharing their thoughts one-on-one may make students more comfortable discussing their ideas with the whole class.

The Think-Pair-Share Method in Steps

1. Explain the think-pair-share method ahead of time if the students are unfamiliar with it.
2. Ask the students a question, writing it on the board if necessary, and give them a time frame for considering it. Allow about 30 to 60 seconds for this step; provide a longer time period if the students will be writing down their thoughts.
3. Arrange the students in pairs and direct them to explain their thinking to each other. Give them several minutes to complete this step. Remind the students to be respectful speakers and listeners during the process.
4. Bring the students' attention back to the larger class. Repeat the original question and invite the students to share their responses. Give as many pairs as possible the chance to share their thoughts. After the pairs are done sharing, continue discussing the question as a class.

