

## Inside/Outside Circles or Circle Conversation

Inside/Outside Circles (idea by Spencer Kagan, 1994) is an activity that involves all students in the class. Inside/Outside Circles are particularly useful for: differentiation, kinesthetic learners, conversation practice, and community-building in the classroom. This activity can be a great warm up as well as a useful way to change things up and get students moving during a long class.

### Method:

1. Form two circles containing the same number of students- one outside the other. Try numbering the students with odd numbers forming the inside and even numbers forming the outside circle.
2. Students in the inside circle face a partner standing in the outside circle.
3. Students from the inside circle, answer a teacher posed question by sharing with their outside circle partner. Other ideas may be summarizing a reading, or content review with questions/answers.
4. Students reverse roles. The students on the outside circle share with or quiz their partners.
5. The teacher then instructs the inside circle to rotate a few spaces. The students face their new partners. Repeat steps 2 and 3.

### Variations:

- For high beginning or intermediate students, vary the amount of time with each partner. Three minutes with the first partner, two minutes with the second partner and one minute with the third partner. With each retelling, students are able to communicate with greater fluency.
- Change the conversation topic when students switch roles from listener to speaker. This way the listening partners actively listen instead of planning what they want to say.
- For beginners, the task would be well controlled. After being taught how to ask and answer questions using the continuous tense, the Inside-Outside Circles can be used to practice. For example, students on the inside of the circle hold a picture such as a woman driving a car, children playing or a man singing. The partner on the outside asks, "What is she doing?" The student with the picture responds, "She is driving." Students switch partners and practice the questions and answers two or more times. Students can exchange pictures for more practice.
- Can also be done with two parallel lines instead of circles

Reference: Kagan, S. (1994). *Cooperative learning*. San Clemente, CA: Kagan Publishing.

### Benefit to Students:

- Students participate at their own level
- Can be used with students who have minimal literacy in English
- Involves authentic communication
- It is fun and interactive, and it gets students moving

### Benefit to Teachers:

- Provides assessment of speaking and listening skills
- Can be used to practice language previously taught
- Can be adapted for any level