

TIPS FOR COLLABORATIVE STORIES VOLUNTEERS: GROUP FACILITATION



YOUNG STORY TELLERS

MENTOR / SMALL GROUP STRATEGIES:

1. "WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?" IS REALLY BROAD.

Try to use bite-sized questions to prompt nuance and detail in the story.

- Examples:**
- "What color is the room?"
 - "What is the character wearing?"
 - "How does this character speak?"

2. TRY HAVING THE MEMBERS OF THE GROUP TAKE TURNS.

Be explicit about whose turn it is either by cold-calling or going in a circle. When you switch turns, you can give the option to answer a new specific question or add to the previous students' response.

- Example:**
- "Great idea for an obstacle, Amy. Martha, do you want to add some details to that obstacle or do you have an idea for another obstacle?"

3. Recap previous work and when asking students a question, give them the group's workbook to reference.

4. GIVE STUDENTS TIME TO JOT DOWN IDEAS BEFORE SHARING.

- Example:**
- "Alright today we're going to be brainstorming obstacles. Remember, in our Divide a Story, we said our story is about [RECAP]. Let's take 1 minute to jot down obstacles that the protagonist might have to overcome in our story and then we'll share out."

- ### 5.
- Allow shy students or visual learners to draw the settings or characters first, then have them explain/help them explain to the group.

6. BUILD IN TIME FOR A WEEKLY CHECK-IN WITH THE SMALL GROUP (SEE GAMES AND CHECK-IN QUESTIONS ON PAGES 4 & 5).

Small group check-ins and warm ups provide students with relevant and low-stakes opportunities for meaningful peer engagement, community building, and social and emotional learning.

7. ASSIGN OR HAVE STUDENTS CHOOSE A FOCUS FOR THE DAY.

- Example:**
- One student is in charge of describing details of the setting while others describe the details of various characters.

8. UTILIZE BOTH GROUP AND INDIVIDUAL FEEDBACK.

INDIVIDUAL FEEDBACK:

"Hey, you've got great ideas about setting but let's let other people speak so we can hear their ideas as well."

GROUP FEEDBACK:

"This group is really good at making fun characters, but we all need to think about what these characters are all trying to accomplish. Does anyone have ideas?"

9. PUSH FOR POSITIVE INTERDEPENDENCE BY ASSIGNING OR HAVING STUDENTS CHOOSE ROLES SUCH AS:

QUESTIONER: Asks the Essential Questions to the group.

SUMMARIZER: Summarizes ideas for the day and/or from the previous session.

CLARIFIER: Asks follow up questions to lock down details and story elements.

FACILITATOR: Makes sure group completes all tasks for the day (you can even give them a checklist of things to check off as the group completes them).

NOTE-TAKER: Writes down ideas.

REPORTER: Shares out to the class.

Roles are assigned or chosen, or you can divide parts of the assignment amongst students so they must rely on each other.

RESPONDING TO BEHAVIOR:

1. PRE-CORRECTION: PREVENT MISBEHAVIOR BEFORE IT HAS THE CHANCE TO MANIFEST.

Don't let two "talkers" sit next to each other. Build webs of communication by placing mentors or other students between two students who may be inclined to talk to or distract each other.

2. DEFINE EXPECTATIONS FOR STUDENTS AT THE BEGINNING OF EACH GROUP SESSION USING DO'S AND DON'T'S (COMMUNITY AGREEMENTS)

Example: "We agree to include everyone's ideas, to speak respectfully, and to come ready to work. That means, we combine our ideas, don't call anyone's suggestions dumb, and everyone gives at least 3 ideas each session."

3. PRAISE THOSE WHO ARE ON TASK WHILE TEACHING THE WHOLE GROUP.

Examples: "I appreciate how much you're sharing with the group. Good job!"
"Thank you for raising your hand and waiting until I was done talking to share."

4. ENCOURAGE RATHER THAN PUNISH BY REDIRECTING ENERGY TO HELP THE GROUP.

Examples: "It seems like you have a lot of energy. Do you think you could act out what your character Buzzy the Busy Bee would do at this point in your story?"

5. USE GENTLE VERBAL REMINDERS.

Example: "Hey bud, remember our agreement not to interrupt each other."

6. BE IN CLOSE PROXIMITY TO YOUR WRITERS (AS COMFORTABLE).

Getting close shows you've noticed their bid for attention.

7. DIRECT ONLY THE ENERGY NECESSARY TOWARD MISBEHAVIOR; ADDRESS MINOR MISBEHAVIOR AND MOVE ON.

Examples: "Hey, I don't think she finished sharing her idea," and *direct your attention to the speaker.*
"Hey, we're not doing that right now," and *continue facilitating the task.*
"This is your last warning before I bring [Head Mentor / Teacher] over. Let's focus on ____."

8. QUIETLY AND FIRMLY TELL THEM WHY THE BEHAVIOR IS INAPPROPRIATE.

- Examples:**
- “When you put down people’s ideas, it makes it harder to share, and we agreed to make this a safe space to share ideas.”
 - “When you’re not paying attention to the task at hand, it makes it difficult for me to facilitate the activities and we might fall behind in writing our story.”

9. ENGAGE STUDENTS IN 30-60 SECONDS OF QUIET.

You can incorporate some mindfulness activities as well.

- Examples:**
- 3-5 deep breaths together
 - Counting to 8-10 as a group
 - Placing feet on the floor and hands on laps

10. GIVE A NON-EXCLUSIONARY TIME-OUT.

- Example:**
- “You’ve been disrespectful to your peers’ ideas, so let’s let them tell the story for 5 minutes and then you can contribute again.”

11. GIVE AN EXCLUSIONARY TIME OUT.

- Example:**
- “You’ve been really disrespectful to me and your peers, so I’m going to ask you to talk to [Head Mentor / Teacher] for 5 minutes.”

12. USE THIRD-PARTY SANCTIONS.

- Example:**
- “Your Head Mentor and I are going to talk to your teacher / principal / your parents about this.”

HEAD MENTOR / LARGE GROUP STRATEGIES:

GROUP THINK — These can be used if cold-calling or asking for volunteers is difficult. It can be particularly helpful for activities like Divide A Story, the Obstacle Game, and the McDonald’s Game which has clear steps that you can break up and assign to different groups of students.

TURN-AND-TALK:

Pairs or trios briefly share responses to a prompt. The instructor then elicits responses from the whole class, calling on various groups.

THINK-PAIR-SHARE:

Individuals write in response to an instructor’s prompt, then share those responses in pairs; the instructor then facilitates report-outs from some pairs.

JIGSAW:

Class is divided into several teams, with each team preparing separate but related assignments. When all team members are prepared, the class is re-divided into mixed groups, with one member from each team in each group.

Each person in the group teaches the rest of the group what he/she knows, and the group then tackles an assignment that pulls all of the pieces together to form the full picture.

CHECK FOR UNDERSTANDING

UNDERSTANDING SCALE:

Ask for a thumbs up / thumbs down or number 1-5 on their hand on understanding as a visual aid after explaining a concept. This can be used after teaching story elements in Session 2, expanding on outline elements in Session 3, or screenplay elements in Session 4.

PEER INSTRUCTION:

Poll the class on understanding of a concept. *If some students seem confused*, ask a student who seems to understand the concept to explain / reiterate it.

STUDENT EXEMPLARS:

Poll the class on understanding of a concept. *If they seem to understand*, confirm by asking for some small examples.

- Examples:**
- “Yes, a setting is where and when a story takes place. Do you have an example of a location and time period?”
 - “For example, has anyone seen [MOVIE / TV SHOW]? Where and when does that story take place?”

GAMES:

YS GAMES APPENDIX:

<https://bit.ly/cstipsheet>

IMPROV:

Assign each student a character and have them improvise a scene given a relationship and objective. Mentors should write down pertinent dialogue and plot points for discussion. Have them switch roles to stress the importance of character in creating dialogue.

“YES, AND...”

You or a writer starts by sharing an expository sentence. Taking turns, each person shares a new sentence to add on, but they start with “Yes, and...” to build on the previous person’s sentence.

AND THAT’S THE STORY:

Form participants into a circle and give each a ‘theme’ (a unique object, animal, action, or whatever else you like) either verbally or on a piece of paper. You begin a story that incorporates your theme. The next person continues the story, incorporating their theme, and so on.

COOPERATIVE COUNTING:

The objective of the game is to count to 20 (or whatever number you decide - or you can let the students decide) as a group. Someone must start by saying the number one, then someone else will say number two and so on in no assigned order. However, if more than one person speaks at the same time then the game must start over at the beginning.

WORST CASE SCENARIO:

Fabricate a scenario in which students would need to work together and solve problems to succeed, like being stranded on a deserted island or getting lost at sea. Ask them to work together to concoct a solution that ensures everyone arrives safely. You might ask them to come up with a list of 10 must-have items that would help them most, or a creative passage to safety. Encourage them to vote — everyone must agree to the final solution.

GOOD NEWS / BAD NEWS:

Have someone announce something positive or negative, prefacing it with “Good news...” or “Bad news...” The next person has to say the opposite (“Bad news...” or “Good news...”) and say something that resulted from the previous announcement, switching the positivity / negativity. Keep going and switching until everyone has gone (but we recommend ending on good news).

- Examples:**
- “Bad news! I stubbed my toe.” “Good news! I was right outside a hospital so I saw a doctor really quickly.”
 - “Bad news! The doctor says it’s broken.” “Good news! Now I don’t have to take the P.E. test I’ve been dreading.” “
 - Bad news! My P.E. teacher thinks I’m faking it.” “Good news! Everyone wants to sign my cast.”

5 WORD STORY:

The object of the game is to build upon the story, but the catch is that you can only say five words. Start the story and hold up your hand and raise one finger for each word. Then, cue the student who is next to continue the story.

CHECK-IN QUESTIONS:

Tell me how are you feeling today on a scale from 1 - 10.

What is your weather report today and why?

THESE ARE CHECK-IN QUESTIONS THAT CAN HELP PROVIDE SOOTHING THOUGHTS BEFORE YOU START:

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What is a sound that you find soothing?
.....

.....
What is a smell that you really love?
.....

.....
Close your eyes and imagine a place that you find relaxing, what do you see?
.....

.....
If you had a secret bookshelf, what would we find behind the bookshelf? (You give an example of stuff that relaxes you, 20 kittens, a purple light, dozens of pillows, etc.)
.....

ACTION!

.....
What is a superpower that you would love to have?
.....

.....
If you were part robot? What part would you make robotic?
.....

.....
If you can combine two animals to make a new animal, what two animals would you combine? (Example: Dolphin and hamster! A Holphin? Dolphster?)
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FEELINGS, FEELINGS, FEELINGS

.....
Can you describe your feelings in the shape of a cloud?
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.....
Tell us how are you feeling, using different types of weather?
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.....
What ice cream flavor are you feeling like today?
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Invent a name for a color to describe how you feel! Example (Mellow yellow, energetic green slushie, etc.)
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GET TO KNOW THEM

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Do you have any stickers? On your water bottle, room, dresser at home?
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What was a past Halloween costume? (Seasonal questions)
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What is a subject that you wish they taught in school?
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.....
What is a dish that you love to eat when it's piping hot?
.....

GET THEM TO THINK ABOUT POSITIVE QUALITIES

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How do you be a good friend?
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.....
What is something you are good at around the house? (Solving tech problems, organizing your desk, etc.)
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