



# HIDDEN CONVERSATION

## Purpose

To develop verbal/vocabulary skills and to draw out shy players.

## Materials

None

## Instructions

Ask for two volunteers to start a conversation. Have these two players choose a topic of conversation, known only to them. They begin to discuss the topic as fully as possible in front of the other players, without mentioning it by name.

The two players actively try to mislead the other players without making false statements. Other players may not ask questions, but as they begin to suspect what the topic is, they may join in the conversation. Either of the first two players may challenge the new person if they feel he is incorrect.

If the person is correct he stays in the conversation and may challenge newcomers. If he is wrong he must return to the group, but he may try again as often as he likes. The game continues until all the players are in or out.

## Variation

Have the topic of conversation come from the subject being studied.

## Hints

When referring to the hidden topic try not to use the word "it." Outside players, take a chance. Join in as soon as you think you know what they're talking about. Share your voices.



# LISTEN UP

## Purpose

Develop your active listening skills and your ability to hear the other person's point of view.

## Materials

None

## Group Size

2

## Background

Listening is a skill. Like speaking, it can improve with practice.

There are two kinds of listening - active and passive.

In active listening, you take the time to really listen to the speaker. You try to hear things from their perspective. You listen for content and information and you are tuned-in to the person's feelings. You look at the speaker and nod or smile when it is appropriate.

Passive listening focuses only on the information - just give me the facts man. It does not pay heed to what the speaker is doing, feeling or believing. It just wants the information. Sometimes, passive listeners are barely listening for even the facts because they are already spending their time thinking what they want to say.

Obviously, the speaker likes active listeners. When people put in the energy to really listen, the speaker appreciates it.

Let's engage in an active listening process.

## Activity

1. In your group of two, pick a topic where you both agree to disagree. That is, one of you will take the pro side and the other will take the con side of the topic.

E.g. One loves liver, the other hates liver

One wants school to finish at tenth grade, the other wants school to finish at the normal twelfth grade.

2. Now take a few minutes to prepare two points to support your view.

3. Follow this procedure:

- Number off - person one and person two
- Person One: Give your first point of view - one minute
- Person Two: Paraphrase person one's first point of view (30 seconds) and give



your fast point of view (one minute).

- Person One: Paraphrase person two's fast point of view (30 seconds) and give your second point of view (one minute).
- Person Two: Paraphrase person one's second point of view (30 seconds) and give your second point of view (one min.)

4. Now spend a few minutes debriefing this active listening exercise. See the suggestions below.

### Debrief

- This exercise is a very good one to develop your ability to hear the other person's point of view. How did you do? Were you able to paraphrase effectively?
- What is harder - paraphrasing others or giving your own point of view? Why?



# MUSICAL RIDE

## Purpose

Increase the number of people listening to you and learn how to keep other's attention and interest.

## Materials

None

## Group Size

Pairs

## Background

The human voice is a wonderful musical instrument. Like a piano or guitar, the voice can produce different sounds from high to low. In fact, you probably have the ability to talk in at least one octave - that is produce sounds that span eight notes on the piano.

Good speakers take listeners on a musical ride. They use the pitch of their voice to give high and low sounds. This helps to keep their talk interesting.

You can develop the ability to vary your voice. When you get excited, chances are your voice goes up. When you are in a thinking mood, your voice may go down. And in a speech, there is plenty of opportunity to vary your voice as well.

Let's work on your voice pitch to develop qualities in your voice that will make it attractive to listen to.

## Activity

1. Read each sentence below.
2. When a word goes up, pitch your voice up. When a word goes down, pitch your voice downward. Enjoy the musical ride.
3. Use your partner to help you. Get them to listen to you read out loud. Then get them to look at the sentence to see if what they see is what they heard you say.

## Musical Ride

a. Why                    leave?  
      don't you

b. I                    can't  
      stay!

c. Please            be            diffi  
      cult.

d. I shall            see you            to  
      morrow.



## Debrief

- As you read this sentence, can you hear the change in pitch?
- Practice some more sentences. You can make them up like the ones above or simply read sentences from a book, focusing on pitch change.



# NICKING THE NONWORDS

## Purpose

Avoid nonwords in your speaking and appear more intelligent, in control and assertive.

## Materials

None

## Group Size

4 to 6

## Background

Everyone knows language is made out of words. But did you know language is also made out of nonwords.

Nonwords get in the way of your message.

The most common nonwords are “uhh”, “ahh”, and “umm”. Other nonwords include “so”, “well”, “you know”, “Okay”, “like”, and, “sort of”.

We don't write nonwords. Would you write this: “Well, uhh, my name is, uhh, Joe Smith and uhh I like to sort of talk ahh about effective uhh communication.”

The goal is not to rid ourselves of all nonwords. That's very difficult to do and perhaps a waste of our time. Rather, it's fair to expect you to keep nonwords to a bare minimum. Keep them out of your talking to the point that no one notices you use them.

Nonwords can be distracters. They can interfere with your efforts at trying to communicate clearly and concisely.

Stick with words. They'll be understood!

## Activity

1. In your group, take turns talking for one minute each. As each one speaks, their goal will be to utter as many nonwords as possible while still being understood. If you want, you can have someone count the number of nonwords that you use.
2. Now go around the group again, but this time as each person speaks for about one minute, nick the nonwords. That is, avoid using nonwords. Have someone say your first name if you do use a nonword.
3. Tip: When you are tempted to use a nonword, just pause. That's right, pause and say nothing. By learning to pause, you will be learning to avoid those nasty nonwords.



## Debrief

- When a person uses a lot of nonwords, how do they come across to you? What words would you use to describe a person using many nonwords?
- Now, when a person uses few nonwords, what descriptive words would you use to comment on their talk?



# ONE WORD LETTER WRITING

## Purpose

To develop writing and collaborative skills.

## Materials

Paper and pencils

## Instructions

Divide the group into teams of two people. Each team has one piece of paper and two pencils. Give each team a two-minute time limit to write a single letter, each of them adding only one word at a time. They are to write as quickly as possible, not going back to re-read anything but the last word added.

No attention should be paid to grammar or spelling. Punctuation should be added only as it is needed for the sense of the letter. There is no need to complete the letter. The team should focus on writing one letter to anyone they wish, in any format that emerges. After the two-minute period, each letter is read aloud to the group.

Note: An interesting sequence of events emerges when this game is played more than once. At first the letters tend to be nonsensical. This “scribble stage” should not be discouraged; besides, the abstract sense of the ridiculous can be very entertaining. As the game is played more often, the letters will become more cohesive.



# PAPER AUDIENCE

## Purpose

To learn how to focus your thoughts and be able to read your audience.

## Materials

Post-it notes

## Group Size

Solo or 4 to 6

## Background

Eye contact is your number one visual skill. It ranks first because it has the greatest impact in both one on one communications and in large group communications.

Eye contact literally connects mind to mind since your eyes are the only part of your central nervous system that are in direct contact with another human being.

For effective eye communication, you need to look at one person at a time for about five seconds or the length of time it takes to complete a sentence. Then look at another person for five seconds and so on.

Avoid eye darting where you look at a person for a brief second before going onto another person for another brief second. Avoid staring or looking at one person for longer than ten seconds. Eye darting and staring can make individuals and the audience uncomfortable.

Eyes are an effective means of helping to develop rapport or trust with an audience. They help you connect with your audience. The eyes have it!

## Activity

Note: In this activity you will be asked to stand before a paper audience and give a one-minute talk. You have the option of inviting a few 4-H members to join the paper audience if you wish. Don't worry about what you're going to say. Just give a talk on something that interests you. What is important is how you use your eyes when you talk to the group.

1. Draw happy faces on six or seven post-it notes.
2. Stick these happy faces on the wall of the room where you are going to give a brief one-minute talk. Make sure you stick a few of the post-it notes on the fringes or corners where people will be seated. This is your paper audience.
3. Now stand before your paper audience. Remember you can do this solo with just you and your paper audience or invite a few 4-H members to sit in with the paper audience. Give a one-minute talk. Remember, what is important, is developing good eye contact with the paper audience.



4. As you give your talk, look at the happy faces - the paper audience. Be sure to give at least five seconds with each happy face that you look at. And be sure to include looking at those happy faces on the fringes.

### Debrief

- How did you do? Have you developed the ability to look at one face for about five seconds? It may feel awkward at first, but this skill will go a long way in helping you to connect with your audience.
- If you had some 4-H members in the audience, get them to comment on how effectively you used your eyes to connect with your paper audience.