

# THE IMPORTANCE OF THINK, PAIR, SHARE (AND HOW TO DO IT PROPERLY)

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Think, Pair, Share is becoming more and more popular in classrooms to foster collaboration and communication amongst students. If done well, it can be a great vehicle for Retrieval Practice as well. This article explores what Think, Pair, Share is, and how to implement it effectively.

## WHAT IS THINK, PAIR, SHARE?

Before we dive into the practical applications, let's take a look at what Think, Pair, Share actually is. Developed by Frank Lyman in the 1990s, this teaching method gets students to go through the following three steps to address a question posed by their teacher:

1. **Think** – Each student thinks about the question individually and is encouraged to take notes.
2. **Pair** – Students pair up to exchange and discuss their ideas.
3. **Share** – Students share their validated and maybe extended ideas with the whole class.

## WHY USE THINK, PAIR, SHARE?

Using the Think, Pair, Share strategy in your classroom has numerous benefits. These include:

### 1. *Developing a new perspective*

[Research suggests](#) if students are working with others, they are more likely to experiment with different techniques when solving



a problem. This suggests that the phrase “two heads are better than one” certainly has some merit. Students can learn by discussing each other’s opinions and reasoning, as this allows them to develop different perspectives of the same task or concept.

## **2. Increasing student participation**

[Research has found](#) that Think, Pair, Share can improve students’ in-class participation. The combined effect of individual preparation and receiving validation of their ideas from their partner increases students’ self-confidence, making them more likely to speak up. This is especially applicable to shy students, as lack of confidence is often their underlying reason for low participation.

## **3. Learning to take accountability**

When students verbalise their ideas to their peers during the Pair and Share stages, they learn to take responsibility for what they say as they become involved in the learning process of their partners and the whole class.

## **HOW TO EFFECTIVELY IMPLEMENT THINK, PAIR, SHARE IN YOUR CLASSROOM**

So, integrating Think, Pair, Share into your normal classroom routine can have a great effect on students. But what does this look like in action? We at InnerDrive think educator, [Jamie Clark’s](#) tips and suggestion really helps crystallise this (and we are incredibly grateful for him allowing us to tweak [his original design](#)). Here are three things that stood out the most to us, with one for each stage of “Think, Pair, Share”.

### ***The “Thinking” Stage – What to think about***

In order to maximise the Retrieval Practice aspect of Think, Pair, Share, this stage is key. The natural tendency for some students may be to rush to give their initial thoughts to their partner. This

could be unintentionally magnified with the language we use in the instruction we give them, i.e., “turn to the person next to you and tell them...”.

By reflecting and thinking about what they already know, which ideas do they need to consider and which approach would work provides an initial checklist of what to think about.

Without this, when students recall in their pairs, then it is easy for the loudest or the quickest to dominate, which would hinder the potential benefit of retrieval.

### ***The “Pairing” Stage – Ensure both students get sufficient time to speak when pairing***


Really encourage students to listen attentively to their partners during the pairing stage, so that the speaker feels acknowledged and understood. A way to do this is to inform students that they will be asked to report back to the class what their partner said (more on this in the next section).

Helping students develop their questioning skills will help with this, as it can help facilitate richer and more nuanced conversation between the pairs.

### ***The “Sharing” Stage – Share Your Partners Answers***

We love one of the key points that Jamie shared in his original graphic, which is having students ask themselves “What are my partner’s main points?”. Sharing your partner’s answer, instead of your own, has several benefits. These include:

- ***Reducing the fear of failure*** – For reluctant students, this can help as they feel less spotlighted.
- ***Enhanced memory*** – It is a sneaky way to add another layer of retrieval into the process, as students have to recall the main points from their partners answer.



By sharing your partner's answers, instead of their own answer, it helps them avoid simply repeating the same point that they made only a few minutes ago. This can help them develop the quality and range of their previous ideas.

## **FINAL THOUGHTS**

Think, Pair, Share offers a range of potential benefits that could be applied across a broad range of classrooms and or topics. They can help build on traditional classroom questioning and help facilitate an open and warm environment.

Just as we scaffold student learning, it may be wise to consider scaffolding their ability to do Think, Pair, Share. By providing some of the prompts detailed in the graphic, we give our students a foundation from which to work from.

Turn the page for a graphic on how to use Think, Pair, Share in your classroom.

# How to Think, Pair, Share

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