



A Facilitator's Guide to Philosophy for Children

1. **Thinking Game:** if possible link the thinking game to the enquiry, for example, if you are using a piece of artwork, try to choose a thinking game based on art. A few examples:

Questioning an object: put a familiar object in the middle of the circle and everybody in turn asks the object a question. This is a good game for groups new to P4C, who may need to practise phrasing questions.

Random words: each child says a word unconnected to the last word spoken. Anybody who spots a connection between two consecutive words calls out 'challenge!' and must explain the link.

Domino tower: which group can build the highest tower, then look at each others groups and try again, improving their way of working together

Sitting down: ask the children to all go from standing to sitting, but if anyone goes to sit down at the same time as someone else, everyone has to stand again. The answer is to sit down one at a time going round in a circle

Gallery task: give children a selection of pictures or postcards and then give them three words to curate an exhibition for – being able to have 3 or 4 images in their gallery

Postcards: How are you feeling today? Choose a card and explain to others in a group or as a class

Postcards: Can you choose two images that have a connection between them?

2. **Setting Ground Rules:** Ask the children what they need to have a good discussion. It's a good idea to record and display the rules agreed by the group. They might include:
Don't talk when someone else is talking, look at the person talking and listen until they finish, don't laugh at other people's ideas, etc...
3. **Introducing the Stimulus:** schools are full of books, objects, images and music that will stimulate rich enquiries. Anything that raises questions with you is bound to raise questions for children. You may decide to set up a philosophy box including picture books (*Not Now, Bernard, Elmer, Voices in the park, A Country Far Away, etc...*), poetry, news items, visual art (abstract and surreal images from calendars, cards and magazines are particularly inspiring including, Andy Goldsworthy, Salvador Dali, Keith Haring, etc...) and music and sound (Carnival of the Animals works well, as does John Cage's silent piece 4'33")
4. **Thinking Time:** Encourage the children to take a minute of silent thinking time before volunteering questions in response to the stimulus.
5. **Generating and Choosing Questions:** Children could put their hands up to volunteer questions which the teacher writes on the whiteboard. Another way to generate questions is to ask pairs to share their ideas and agree on a question they feel will lead to an interesting enquiry. The next step is to ask whether any questions link together. This encourages children to practise the conceptual skills of connecting ideas. Finally, the teacher asks the children to choose a question, usually by majority vote. Generally the facilitator should resist steering the group towards a particular question, trusting that over time the children will learn to pick out the less literal, more open questions that make for stimulating enquiries. Occasionally, however, the facilitator may influence the choice.

- 6. Facilitating the Enquiry:** A good way to begin is to invite the child/children who asked the question to say a little bit more about what they were thinking about. As others begin to contribute, the facilitator keeps track of the developing strands of enquiry, asking speakers to clarify points that seem unclear and encouraging them to link their contributions with what others have said. Asking if they agree or disagree with previous speakers and probing for examples or reasons are good ways of helping children sharpen their capacity to think critically and build on each others thoughts.

Deciding when and how much to intervene is the real skill of the facilitator. Groups just starting P4C may need more intervention to sustain an enquiry, or to encourage contributions from less confident children. If an enquiry seems to be going round in circles, it is perfectly valid to bring the children back to their original question, or to point out a deeper issue arising from the discussion.

Some useful things to say to facilitate the enquiry:

- How do you respond to that?
- Do you agree or disagree with what you have just heard?
- Can I ask you to clarify what you mean?
- What I think you are saying is... Is that right?
- Can you give an example to support your argument?
- Can you justify what you have just said with a reason or an example?

- 7. Final Round:** finishing with a final round allows everybody in the circle a chance for a last word, either adding to what has been said about the question or commenting on how the session went. You may decide to pass an object round the circle. Often children who have made little or no contribution to the session, take this opportunity to contribute.