



# Every Child a Talker

## Making the most of groups 2: different types of groups

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### Starting the session

Do you need a group to start the session? Might it be better to encourage individual children (and their parents) to take their name from a display, and put it in a tray or stick it on a 'Who's in nursery today?' board? This avoids children having to respond to their name being called when taking the register. Singing a 'hello' song at a group time later in the morning is often much more effective and enjoyable than a more formal 'taking of the register'.

### Developing social skills ('Circle Time')

Our aim here is for children to develop social skills, and particularly taking turns, sharing attention and listening to each other. The best groups combine singing, turn-taking games and *some* talk. Circle Time needs more than one adult, and all adults should join in, to help model the right behaviour. 10 is the maximum number of children recommended for an effective circle time. Singing a name or hello song helps settle the children and establishing turn taking. Next pass around a noisy toy; then pass an action such as clapping, stamping feet or wiggling your nose. Then share ideas through talk, and finish with a song.

### Sharing songs and rhymes

Using props, such as rhyme gloves from Puppets by Post, or rhyme and song bags with pictures, song words and other props, add to the fun, and encourage participation. Not a confident singer? Try singing along with the children to nursery rhyme CDs, or music backing tracks. Many practitioners prefer to sit at the front of a group at song time, but circles can be just as effective (as long as there are enough adults).

### Sharing a story

New stories need to be practiced before they are introduced to children, and the best story times have objects and props that children can hold during the story. Build up a bank of stories that children enjoy, and encourage them to join in with acting the story out, using funny voices, actions and songs. You could use music and/or musical instruments at the beginning of storytime or during the story; e.g. scary music for 'the Three Billy Goats Gruff', wooden blocks to knock together as the goats 'trip trap' across the bridge, with a cymbal to crash as the troll falls into the water.

### Reflection and planning

Gill Blowers Nursery have 'Parliament Time' where children sit in a circle and talk about what they have enjoyed and what they would like to do again. A child is chosen to be the 'scribe' and 'writes' or draws pictures of the different suggestions. These ideas are used to plan for the next day.

### To get together at home time

Children are often tired at this time, so think carefully about the type of activities you might expect them to respond to. The more adults who are able to join in, the more participation you can expect. This session requires an effective routine to ensure that children take part. Do you need a group at this time?