

Breaking The Ice Practice Activities

For the past four years, Sarah and her family have lived at Camp Pendleton in San Diego, where her father, a Marine, is stationed. Recently, her father accepted a transfer to Camp Lejeune in North Carolina. Sarah remembers how difficult it was to make friends during the previous move to San Diego. Now she is nervous about moving to a new school and being the “new kid” all over again. In an effort to help, Sarah’s teacher has advised her to watch the Making Sense video, “Breaking the Ice” and then role-play a few of the public speaking strategies highlighted with her family at home.

First, practice by having a conversation with someone in your family about your day. Surprise them by asking “wh” questions about their day (who, what, where, when, why) or by giving complete answers when they ask, “How was your day?” Avoid one-word answers such as “good” or “OK” or “fine.”

Next, try a role-playing activity. Think through a possible conversation you may have with a new friend, teacher, or coach. Ask someone to pretend to be the other person and help you role-play a short conversation. Again, see how much information you can remember after you are finished talking.

Finally, go to the following websites to learn more about ways to improve your communication skills:

<http://www.livestrong.com/article/515387-five-tips-on-conversation-skills-for-kids>

The authors of this article promote that children can learn language skills and better understand the basics of social interaction when parents help them to recognize conversation and interaction opportunities. They also discuss five conversational skills that will help children improve their social skills.

http://www.helpguide.org/mental/eq6_nonverbal_communication.htm

At this website you will be able to read a “Help Guide” that will give you a definition of non-verbal communication and body language, specific types of non-verbal communication and body language, and an understanding of why non-verbal communication is important. There is also a list of tips to help you read and evaluate non-verbal signals in other people.

Whether you're starting a new job, entering a new school, or joining a new team, meeting new people can be challenging and stressful. To help, we've offered a number of communication strategies that will lead you through the basics of good conversation.

Conducting background research before meeting new people or groups

- Before meeting new people, use resources such as posters, flyers, webpages, and other printed items to help you gather information.
- Ask questions to get background information.
- Listen to others to gather the information you need.
- Think of questions to ask to help you learn more about the subject

Using good non-verbal and verbal communication

- A person's tone of voice can help give information about their attitude about a topic. If they are excited they may talk quicker or louder, or they may pause often if they are uncertain.
- Pay attention to the body language of the person with whom you are speaking.
- Look for facial reactions from other speakers.
- Be sure that the verbal and non-verbal messages you are sending support your attitude and interest.
- Different cultures do use different non-verbal cues—be sensitive to differences in background as you communicate with others.

Beginning with one-on-one conversations when initially meeting a new person

- Look the person that you are talking to in the eye.
- Pause and listen to their points and ideas.
- In order to keep the conversation going, use questions that can't be answered in just one word.

In order to continue preparing for the move to the new school, Sarah spent time practicing good conversational skills with her mom. While role-playing, she attempted to ask open-ended and "wh" questions in order to make connections with the other person, and to try to find out what they had in common. Sarah knew, from listening to her teacher, that these types of questions are better because they don't just require yes or no answers.

Sarah also spent time going online to her new school's website. This allowed Sarah to learn a lot of background information such as the different activities they offer. Sarah hopes that by doing this research she will be better prepared to talk to others when she gets to school for the first time.

To begin read through the following two examples of role-playing conversations that Sarah practiced with her mom. Sarah believed the first example was a negative conversation and the second one much more positive. Check them out to find out why:

Negative Example:

Sarah: Hi, my name is Sarah. What is your name?

Maria: My name is Maria. Are you a new student?

Sarah: Yes.

Maria: Did you just move here?

Sarah: Yes.

Maria: Have you gotten involved in any activities?

Sarah: No. Do you do activities?

Maria: I am in two groups.

Sarah: I see.

After talking with her mom, Sarah came to see that this conversation did not offer much information, so it was hard to build a strong conversation. Sarah understood that without asking open-ended questions, it would be hard for both people to maintain a conversation very long. This would not allow Sarah to find out what she had in common with Maria or what they both could learn from each other. To correct this situation, Sarah and her mom tried again. This time, Sarah used many more open questions in order to build on the information she learned as the conversation developed.

Positive Example:

Sarah: Hi, my name is Sarah, and I think that we are in the same science class.

Maria: Yes, you're right. I'm Maria.

Sarah: I'm new here. How about you? How long have you gone to school here?

Maria: I've been here for two years. My family and I moved here from Camp Butler in Okinawa, Japan.

Sarah: That's cool. We moved here when my dad was transferred from Camp Pendleton in San Diego. What advice do you have for a new kid?

Maria: Well, this is a great school. I would suggest getting involved in an activity to get to know people. What types of things did you like to do in your old school?

Sarah: At my old school, I was a member of the debate team, and I also ran cross-country. What activities do you do?

Maria: I also run cross-country, and I am a part of a mentoring group that works with younger students.

Sarah: Wow! Could you tell me about what the cross-country team is like? I wonder how it compares to my team in San Diego.

Maria: Sure

After reading the above examples, spend time over the next week, watching a talk show or news program on television. Listen to the types of questions that are asked in interviews or news stories. Think about the positive strategies that the host is trying to use in order to move the conversation forward.

Also, when you are reading, pay attention to strong examples of good dialogue and conversations between characters. Think about how these conversations help you learn about the characters in your books.