



Talking Tokens

What Are Talking Tokens?

Talking tokens are physical objects (for example, cards, chips, counters, laminated shapes) which represent a child's opportunity to speak during direct teaching, a class discussion or group activity.

Why Use Them?

Some children find whole class teaching situations difficult to manage and often call out or interrupt lessons with their answers or thoughts. They can struggle with impulse control, putting their hands up to answer a question, waiting their turn or coping with not being picked to speak. This can lead to feelings of frustration and further lessen their ability to control their impulses to not call out.

Providing a child with Talking Tokens can help by:

- Providing a physical representation that communicates that a child or young person has permission to speak, which can lessen the stressful feelings associated with not having their voice heard and having to take turns to speak.
- Promotes listening skills, which further develop the control of impulses and particularly when all tokens have been used up.
- Decreasing the chances of a child or young person calling out and, therefore, creates a quieter learning space.
- Ensuring all children and young people have a turn to speak.
- Develops skills in waiting, turn taking and impulse control. This may take a while to develop, but in time, as Talking Tokens are used, they create a platform for processing and a dialogue between a child and a teacher which facilitates skills in waiting.



For example, if a child shouts out, a teacher can remove a token and provide a reminder. This can initially feel frustrating to a child, but in time, aids the process of considering whether they should use a token or not. This creates moments of impulsive control and increases moments of processing. The teacher can further build upon this when a child controls their impulse to shout out and puts their hand up by asking, "Are you sure you want to use a token?"

How to use Talking Tokens

1. Explain the purpose of the Talking Tokens before they are used. Explain how they are about adults proving children with lots of permissions to speak, ensuring they feel heard and have a chance to share their thoughts and answer questions. Explain how they are also used to practice waiting skills and can help children to stop and think before shouting out, which is an important skill called 'impulse control'.
2. Provide a child with a set number of Talking Tokens at the beginning of the activity or direct teaching (maybe between two to seven tokens), considering the length of the lesson and the degree to which a child can control their impulses. This may mean providing more tokens to begin with and decreasing the number in time, and in response to a child developing the ability to wait and not shout out.
3. Place the tokens somewhere visual, where the child can see, but in reach of the teacher, such as near the board or on their desk.
4. Take down or post in a container the tokens as a child speaks or when they call out, providing continual reminders, questions and praise such as, "I am sorry you have called out and used a token" or "Are you sure you want to use a token?" or "Well done for using your Talking Token".

Note: In the first instance and when tokens are being introduced, it may be essential for teachers to enable a child to speak immediately as they put their hands up. This is because the transition from shouting out to putting a hand up is significant in the first instance of controlling an impulse to call out. A child may not



be able to hold their hand up for long before they just shout out. By the teacher immediately noticing their hand is up and the child or young person being instantly asked to speak, creates instant feelings of success in waiting and using a Talking Token. As a child puts their hand up more frequently, the time expected to wait before speaking or take a turn in speaking (enabling another child to go first) can be extended. To further support this, it may be helpful for teachers to verbalise praise in a child having their hand up and saying when they will be asked to speak. For example, "Well done X, I can see your hand is it, I am going to ask Y to speak and then you next".

5. Once a child has used all their tokens, the focus becomes on practicing listening skills.

6. New tokens are provided each lesson and the process starts again.

Note: The success of using Talking Tokens is when a child infers them in a positive way and feels they are using them to help develop their skills, whilst having chances to speak. If a child infers the tokens are being used to stop them from speaking or to constantly correct them, they will reject them and get frustrated. Therefore, it is recommended for teachers to attune to the responses of a child and provide some flexibility in how they are initially used. For example, if a child is struggling and has used their tokens up, the teacher could communicate, "I know you are struggling so I am going to give you two more tokens....", "Keep trying to put your hand up". Equally, if a child is very engaged in the lesson and has used all their tokens through waiting, a teacher could give them more tokens to facilitate their continued engagement and the practice of putting their hand up and waiting.