

Chatter Topics is a collaborative strategy involving both speaking and listening, where students experience a range of practical oral skills that will help them develop greater self-confidence.

### Learning Outcomes

**Main:** OL1

**Supplementary:** OL2, OL4, OL5, OL7, OL11, OL12, OL13

### Key Skills

Communicating  
 Working with Others  
 Staying Well  
 Being Creative  
 Managing Myself

### Print Outs

Chatter Topic prompt sheets

### Materials / Technology

Lap-top to play clip for students to commentate on (optional)

### Student Friendly Learning Intentions: Students will...

Communicate with each other  
 Speak with confidence  
 Develop listening skills  
 Use their imaginations  
 Reflect on their own learning

### Preparation

Prepare one Chatter Topic sheet per student (You may duplicate some of these as there are only three students in each group)

Organise students into triads (groups of three)

### Instructions

1. Introduce the activity:  
*'We're going to use these interesting Chatter Topics to work on our speaking and listening skills. We'll work in groups of three. Decide among yourselves who will be Student A, Student B and Student C. The first thing you'll do is spend a full minute thinking about your Chatter Topic, then one person will speak about his/her topic for between 30 and 45 seconds. It's very important that the other two students listen to the speaker; don't zone out and just think about what you're going to say when it's your turn! To keep you listening, I'll give each of you a job. While Student A speaks, Student B and Student C should listen carefully and then Student B should come up with a question to check how carefully Student C was listening!'*
2. Hand out the Chatter Topics; give students 60 seconds to think about their topic.  
*'You have 60 seconds to think about what you plan to say during your 45 seconds talking time. You may jot down some notes, but you cannot write more than five words.'*
3. Ring a bell after 45 seconds. At this stage Student B should ask Student C a question.  
*'Ask a challenging question. Check if he/she was really listening!'*
4. Repeat the process two more times.
  - *'Now we will do the whole process again. Student B will speak and Student C will ask a question to assess how carefully Student A was listening.'*
  - *'This time Student C will speak and Student A will ask a question to assess how carefully Student B was listening.'*
5. Ask students to turn over their sheets to see which oral skill they were using.  
*'Is that a skill that you're already good at? Would you find someone else's topic easier? We all have strengths and weaknesses and preferences when it comes to speaking style. The ones we tend to avoid are the ones we most need to work on!'*
6. Reflection: In groups ask students to think about the following questions. Allow some silent thinking time, followed by a group discussion and then ask students to feed back to the entire class.
  - Did you enjoy being the speaker? Which speaking style am I best at / which could I improve?
  - What could you do to improve your performance as the speaker?
  - Was I a good listener? Why / why not?
  - When it was my turn, did I ask the best possible question?
  - What did you learn from doing that exercise?
  - What elements of the key skills did you use?

### Assessment

Self-assessment, peer assessment, student reflection on their learning, teacher observation, teacher questioning

### Extension Activities

This could easily be developed into writing activities with the following outcomes in mind: W3, W12

References: *Oral Language and Vocabulary Development: Reading First National Conference 2008 / www.tes.co.uk*

# Chatter Topics: Checklist for Observer

## A good interviewee...

- uses appropriate eye-contact
- exhibits positive body language
- speaks clearly and at an appropriate volume
- has good listening skills
- is a good story-teller
- speaks in an interesting and engaging manner
- knows their topic well



## A good interviewer...

- uses appropriate eye-contact
- exhibits positive body language
- speaks clearly and at an appropriate volume
- asks lots of open questions
- is good listener
- researches their topic in advance
- can think on their feet

# Explaining/Imagining

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Junior **CYCLE**  
for teachers



**You can  
save only  
three  
things  
from your  
burning**

**house. Excluding people  
or pets, what would you  
save and why?**

# Persuading

An tSraith Shóisearach do Mhúinteoirí  
JuniorCYCLE  
for teachers

**Your class may invite a  
celebrity to give a speech  
at your awards  
ceremony.**

**Persuade your  
classmates to  
invite your  
favourite  
celebrity.**



# Speculating

An tSraith Shóisearach do Mhúinteoirí

JuniorCYCLE

for teachers

**Every household in your town has been given €1,000,000.**

**How would it change life in your town?**





# Imagining / Informing / Speculating

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JuniorCYCLE

for teachers



**You find a  
message in a  
bottle. What  
does the  
message say?**

# **Arguing / Stating an opinion**

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**JuniorCYCLE**

for teachers

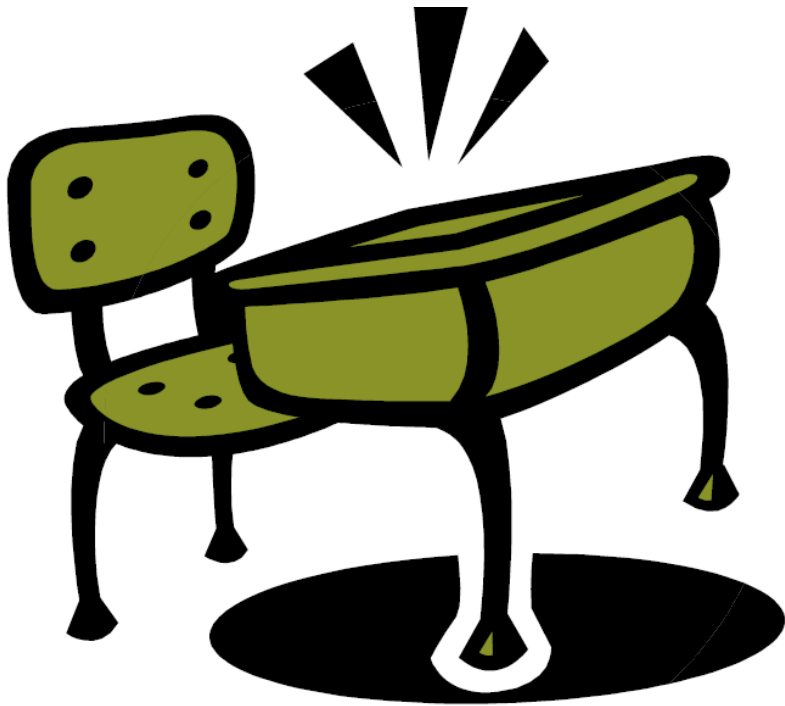
**Look at this  
animal. Is it cruel  
to keep him  
locked up in a  
zoo?**



# Speculating / Imagining

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**JuniorCYCLE**  
for teachers

**You arrive in your  
classroom to discover it is  
the year  
2099.**

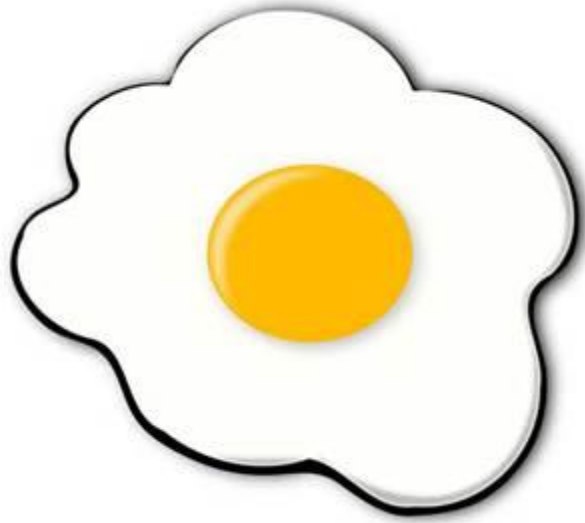


**What  
differences**

**might there be?**

# Describing a process

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**Describe the  
process of frying an  
egg.**



# Narrating

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**Describe what happened on the day that you woke up and discovered that your cat / dog could speak.**

# Asking for information

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for teachers



**You've ordered  
a dress online  
and it hasn't  
arrived. Ring  
customer  
services to find out the  
status of your order.**

# Describing a Process

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**Describe the process of uploading a photograph onto a social network site.**



# Imagining

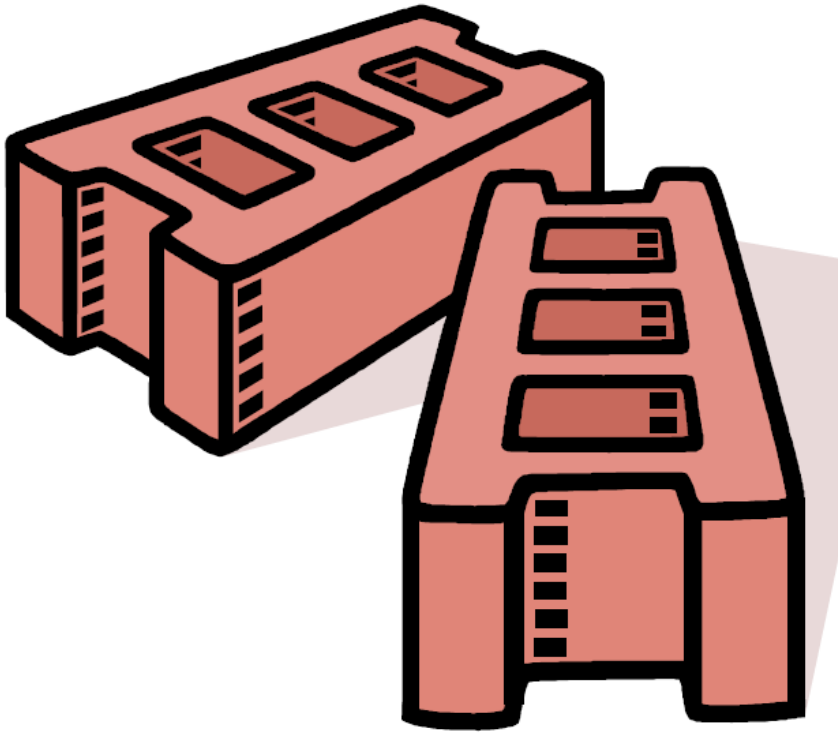
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**10 things you could do**

**with one  
brick.**





# Commentating

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# Commentate on a fashion show



# Commentating

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# Commentate a GAA match – scoring a goal



# **Narrating / Speculating / Imagining**

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**“Help!” squeaked the tiny voice. Who was it? Where did it come from? What was happening?**

# Criticising

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for teachers

**You've just spent  
€80 on a musical  
and you are not  
impressed with  
anything.**





# Criticising

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Junior **CYCLE**  
for teachers

**You are a new  
presenter on ‘Top  
Gear’ and have  
been asked to  
review your  
favourite car.**



# Criticising

An tSraith Shóisearach do Mhúinteoirí

Junior**CYCLE**

for teachers

# **You've just gotten a new phone. Critique it.**



**Prompts: Usability**

**How it looks**

**Special features**