

Buzz Groups



The learners are divided into small groups, usually twos or threes. These small groups meet for a short period to consider a simple question or problem. The ideas, thus exchanged, may then be presented to the other participants by each of the small groups in turn, so promoting further discussion.

Aim: To consult all the members of a group, or to settle a conflict within a group, or to produce fresh ideas on a topic or a problem.

The discussion leader poses a simple question or problem. This is discussed by the small groups for a limited period (up to three minutes) without any time for preparation or reflection.

Should smoking be allowed during the sessions on this course?

A representative of each small group then reports briefly to the other participants.

This method has many uses.

It can be used to consult all the members of a group on a precise question such as;

What is the role of a particular committee?

Or it can be used to settle a conflict between members of a group by reflecting more accurately the feelings of all concerned:

Should all shops be allowed to open on Sunday?

Or it can be used to produce fresh ideas on a topic or a problem (but more quickly than is the case with brainstorming);

How can we ensure that the safety rules are kept?

In all these cases, it can be used within a group which is already discussing a topic, or is about to discuss a topic.

On the other hand, it can be used with a much larger group at the beginning, or during a talk.

In such a case, the participants simply turn to face one another, making small groups of two or three people, without too much disturbance, or rearrangement of the chairs. After the discussion, they turn to face the speaker and report their findings.

It is worth noting that a similar method (known in French as 'Six Six') involves larger groups of up to six people, discussing a topic for up to six minutes (hence the title). This can also be used at the beginning of, or during a talk.