

How do I run a philosophy session with my class?

(to support the activities in section: 'Philosophy STARS—how can we think about answers to big questions?' in Inspiring RE: *Big Questions*)

Before you begin

Go through the philosophical enquiry rules.

Example rules

When somebody is talking, we look at them and listen to them.

If we want to say something, we put our thumbs up.






We all try to make contributions to our discussion.

When it is our turn to speak, we start off by talking about the point that the last person made.

We are always polite to others, even if we disagree with them.

Structure of a session

Use the STARS framework below. This sets out the structure of a philosophical enquiry. It can be shared with pupils in a simple form.

Stage	Action	Explanation
1	Set the scene 	Philosophical enquiries are held with all participants sitting in a circle. It is good to start with some warm-up activities. These could be general thinking games, or activities based on developing skills or those that are linked to the content of the session.
2	Take a look 	Present a stimulus to the pupils. This might be a picture, story or piece of music, an artefact, a newspaper article or anything else linked to their learning in RE.
3	Ask and choose 	Pupils devise their own philosophical questions inspired by the stimulus. Alternatively, teachers can allow pupils to discuss and choose from a range of given philosophical questions.
4	Reflect and discuss 	This is the enquiry proper and should be the longest part of the session. Pupils should be invited to reflect upon the question and discuss their thoughts about it and its answer.
5	Sum up 	Final thoughts – written or expressed individually if there's time. This could be related to the content of the 'Reflect and discuss' section of the lesson or it could be a chance for pupils to review their contributions. Note: if the rules of philosophy sessions reviewing, now is a good time to do so.

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Help to further your pupils' enquiries by encouraging them to use these sentence-starters

Displaying discussion sentence-starters in the classroom during philosophy sessions or permanently can help pupils to focus and formulate statements for their contributions to discussions. Here are some helpful sentence-starters:

I agree with ... because ...

I disagree with ... because ...

... made a really good point that I hadn't thought about, and I agree with it because ...

... made a really good point that I hadn't thought about, but I don't agree with it because ...

...'s point interested me because ...

I think that ... was correct and would like to add ...

I would like to ask ... to clarify ...

My view is different because ...

I can't make up my mind because ...

Out of all the things that I have heard so far, I most agree with ... because ...

I have changed my mind because ...