

## Circling Strategies

When we first learn to "circle" we learn that we can stay on one question/statement and get over a dozen ways to ask questions on that one question/statement. When we practice, we practice using that statement all of those different ways. It helps us to get familiar with all of the different options for asking questions/making statements and recycling one simple structure.

That is 'CIRCLING PRACTICE' and I'm afraid that as trainers, we don't make that clear. Teachers leave thinking that storyasking in the classroom looks like circling one statement twelve ways and then moving on to the next statement twelve ways and the next and the next and so on.

Then, when they do that in the classroom, students' eyes glaze over and the teachers feel as if they aren't doing it right.

So what is the "right" way? Whatever works with your students. Granted, we can have twelve ways to recycle a statement/question. But as you already figured out, using all of them in a row over and over doesn't work.

Do you know anything about woodworking? Think of it like sanding. If you only sand in one place, in the same direction, you end up with a groove...exactly the opposite of what you want! Sanding needs to take place repeatedly, but over various places, and sometimes, depending on your goal in circles. Then you step back, look at how it's going, find a place that needs a little more work and start over there.....sanding and smoothing and blending until you have the effect that you want. You may even change the types of sandpaper that you want to a finer grit as you get closer and closer to your goal.

You can use the "circling training" process when you, and/or your students, are new to the process. It helps them, and/or you, get used to the thought process. Now that you all are used to that, here are some strategies that you can use to make circling seem fresh.

GO SLOWLY, especially at first, but once they have the circling idea, these will work beautifully.

Here's a sentence to work with: Ethan saw the wallet.

Strategy #1: Remind students that they are to 'see the story in their head/visualize.' Number one important skill for students!!!! This allows you to ask students to occasionally close their eyes and visualize as you ask the questions.

Strategy # 2: Ask these questions as if they ARE THE MOST IMPORTANT QUESTIONS ON EARTH. Your tone of voice can completely change circling!! How?

a. Add pauses. Class.....did Ethan.....or Jay-Z see the wallet? Right.....Jay-Z did not .....see the wallet. Ethan.....saw the wallet.

b. Adopt a "thinking pose". Before, during or after a question stop and pose....as if the question deserves your entire body's attention to figure out. You can be natural or overly dramatic..either works!

c. Pause and point. Or, have a student point. Or have a student hold up the phrase on a card as you use it.

d. React facially to the students' response. Raise your eyebrows, shake your head, look confused or relieved, nod knowingly. When students answer a question, they need to know that you are LISTENING, not just waiting for a sound.

e. Add short, natural phrases that are comprehensible to your circling: It's obvious, Yes, I had no idea, It's the truth, Who knew? Do this slowly and put a phrase on the board if necessary, but this is very fun. "No?!! Seriously? Ethan saw the wallet? Who knew?"

Strategy # 3. Ask the individual opinions of several students. "In your opinion Marcos, who saw the wallet first? Really? Interesting, class, Marcos said that Ethan saw the wallet first. Ale, in your opinion, who saw the wallet first? Oh...class Ale also said that Ethan saw the wallet first. Who said that Ethan saw the wallet first? Marcos and Ale both said that Ethan saw the wallet first (give Marcos and Ale a high five). Who said FIRST that Ethan saw the wallet first? Yes! Marcos. Why did Ale and Marcos say that Ethan found the wallet first? Because it's the truth!! Ethan found the wallet first!!"

Strategy #4 Add at least one extra piece of information to the statements other than the Subject+Verb+Complement. This gives you more to circle. Instead of "Ethan saw the wallet. " Consider: "Ethan the elephant saw the wallet." Or "Ethan saw the wallet first." This is of particular use if you have a variety of "processors" in your room. The faster processors love hearing/knowing/remember the extra information. This also makes visualization easier...more details. Be careful not to add too much.

Strategy #5: Get that information from the students. Fish, Fish, Fish. Keep adding details so that they can visualize, so that you can reuse the structure, so that it stays interesting. IT DOESN'T

MATTER HOW FAR YOU GET IN THE STORY IF YOU ARE USING A STRUCTURE. Was Ethan a big elephant or a gigantic elephant? (get the opinion of three or four students...then have the class vote.) "According to the popular vote, Ethan, a gigantic elephant saw the wallet first!! Yes!! So, Ethan, a gigantic elephant saw the wallet first.....wait.....what kind of wallet did Ethan see? "

Strategy #6 :Say two statements then circle, rather than circling after every sentence. So say your statement is "Ethan the elephant saw the wallet first." Add a second statement before "circling" "Ethan the elephant saw the wallet first. The wallet was in the garbage." This gives you more information to "circle" and will keep them more alert to the questions that you are asking. "Did Ethan the elephant or Morgan the snake see the wallet first? Ah yes, Morgan didn't see the wallet first, Ethan saw the wallet first. Where did he see the wallet? He saw the wallet in the garbage?? Really?? Did he see the wallet in the toilet? No? He didn't see it in the toilet ? Ok so he didn't see it in the toilet, he saw it in the garbage.

Strategy #7: Go back in the story. You've established that Ethan the elephant saw the wallet first. You've established that he saw the wallet in the garbage. You've found out that it was inside of a Mountain Dew cup on top of one half of a sandwich. Ok class....let's go back a minute and remember how this started. Who saw the wallet first? Did Ethan or Morgan see the wallet first? Ask 2 or 3 questions and get back to where you left off. Don't beat it to death, but go back for a short time.

Strategy #8: Go back in the story and add a detail. Who saw the wallet first? Where was the wallet? What did Ethan do when he saw the wallet? (did he yell when he saw the wallet? did he pick up the wallet when he saw the wallet? did he eat the 1/2 sandwich when he saw the wallet? Did he pick up the wallet before he ate the sandwich or after he ate the sandwich?)

Strategy #9: Incorporate a gesture. Create or class-create a gesture for saw. EVERY time you say "saw" in your narration/circling, the students show you the gesture. Use this judiciously. It can get old. Another option is to put two "gesturers" in the front of the class to gesture for the class every time you use the phrase.

Strategy #10/11: Interview the actors (if you are using actors....or...ADD actors...Class...oooo...let's really SEE this scene...then you have to go back and review the story with the actors) Ethan, did you see the sandwich first? Yes. Class, did Ethan say that he saw the sandwich first? Yes class, Ethan says that he saw the sandwich first. Marcos, did you see the sandwich first? Yes. Class, did Marcos say that he found the sandwich first? Yes, Marcos also says that he saw the sandwich first. Hmmm Did Ethan or Marcos really see the sandwich first? What is your opinion?

DO NOT TRY ALL OF THESE STRATEGIES AT ONCE. My guess is that you are already, naturally incorporating some of them. Make note of that first. Improve on what you are already naturally doing!! Then pick one and integrate it until you are comfortable...then add another.

The more advanced your students are, the more of these strategies you will eventually want to incorporate.

These are some of the "skills" that bring "practice circling" to the level of "natural circling"!!

with love,

Laurie

Hi Keri!

It's so wonderful to read about the fun and joy happening in your class!! Your question about circling is a good one...and confusion about circling is often at the heart of why people feel successful, or don't.

When we first learn to "circle" we learn that we can stay on one question/statement and get over a dozen ways to ask questions on that one question/statement. When we practice, we practice using that statement all of those different ways. It helps us to get familiar with all of the different options for asking questions/making statements and recycling one simple structure.

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Strategy #1: Say two statements then circle. So say your statement is "Ethan the elephant saw the wallet." Add a second statement before "circling" "Ethan the elephant saw the wallet. The wallet was in the garbage." This gives you more information to "circle" and will keep them more alert to the questions that you are asking. You are following in your instincts with circling and keeping track of reps. That is perfect. When a student wasn't getting it, you went back and revamped. Exactly what you need to do. Ask these questions as if they ARE THE MOST IMPORTANT QUESTIONS ON EARTH. Your tone of voice can completely change circling!! How?

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