

Turn To Your Partner (TTYTP)

Adapted from the work of David Johnson and Roger Johnson (Johnson, et al., 1991) for use in Project LEA/RN™.

Purpose:

The purpose of a Turn to Your Partner (TTYTP) is to engage the brain of the learners. Typically, during lectures or “whole-class discussions” instructors interact only with those few listeners who volunteer to speak. Other learners may tune out or learn the material incorrectly because of a lack of understanding (Johnson et al., 1991). Carefully planning and using the TTYTP strategy will increase the likelihood that all learners are actively engaging their brains by giving each the opportunity to formulate his or her own response, listen to a partner and engage in deeper thinking about the concept.

Learning theory:

Research is clear that students retain very little of what they passively absorb as listeners to extended lecture (Sousa, 1995). The learner needs to actively engage her/his brain in all lectures and discussions. A well-prepared TTYTP question is designed to do that – and more. It will

- break up a lecture or discussion,
- get *everybody's* brain focused simultaneously for a short time on a particular pertinent question,
- stimulate students to think more deeply about the concepts,
- allow students to practice articulating their thinking and providing reasons for it,
- encourage students to listen to the ideas of others and compare and contrast them with their own thoughts, and
- provide numerous “anchors” via stimulation of different areas of the brain in which learning occurs -- increasing the probability that students will be able to recall the basic ideas, issues and concepts after the class session is over (Johnson et al., 1991).

Time required: 2 – 4 minutes

The ideal time limit for a TTYTP is 2 – 4 minutes, but it may take longer depending on the type of question posed and the experience of the learners. Expect the TTYTP to take longer when first introducing students to the strategy. Time each step to help facilitate the process. It is usually better to cut the time short rather than allow the discussion to go too long.

Instructions for facilitator:

1. Carefully plan the question.
 - Know your purpose.
 - Will the question be visible for the learners? - Power point? Board? Transparency?
2. Plan for partners.
 - TTYTP works best if students are not paired with the same counterpart every time. Only your imagination will limit the numbers of ways to help students find a partner.
 - In the beginning it is probably easiest to have students turn to another who is seated nearby.
 - Eventually, each student should be expected to engage in the activity with anyone else in class.
3. Be sure learners understand and follow the steps. Using a visual until learners know the steps is helpful. Students like to skip the first step. Sometimes requiring written individual response is helpful.
4. Circulate throughout the room and listen to student discussions.

5. Hold students **randomly** accountable. This is crucial. When first using the strategy, deliberately plan for success and create a safe environment. Call on students at random, but phrase the question to provide security – “Bob, what did you and your partner decide?” or “Lisa, tell us something you and your partner hadn’t thought of before your discussion.”
6. Clear up any misconceptions that may have arisen as a result of student discussion.

Instructions for learners:

1. **Formulate** a response individually.
2. **Share** your response with your partner.
3. **Listen** carefully to your partner’s response.
4. **Reach** toward a deeper understanding through discussion.
5. **Account** for your discussion by preparing to be called upon.

Appropriate uses:

- To focus thinking at the beginning of class
- To break up lectures (every 10 – 12 minutes)
- To stimulate critical thinking
- To emphasize an important concept
- To check for understanding
- To bring closure to a learning episode

Tips to consider: These tips are based on nearly ten years of work with numerous faculty at community colleges, colleges and universities in Iowa, Kansas, and Ohio. (Project LEA/RN™)

- Carefully plan the question. Know your own purpose for asking the question. Be sure the question meets that purpose.
- Listen to the discussions. Know what students are saying. Interact during student discussions as necessary.
- Plan for success! Use the accountability part to build confidence in the learners and to send the message that you expect **all** learners to work at learning.

Johnson, David W.; R. T. Johnson; and K. A. Smith. (1991). *Cooperative Learning: Increasing Faculty Instructional Productivity*. ASHE-ERIC Higher Education Report No. 4. Washington, D.C.: The George Washington University, School of Education and Human Development.

Licklider, B. L. & Wiersema, J. A. (2002). Project LEA/RN™(Learning Enhancement Action/Resource Network); Iowa State University.

Sousa, David A. (1995). *How the Brain Learns*. Reston, VA.: The National Association of Secondary School Principals.