

# Community Circle Instructions

1. Create a circle shape, either sitting or standing. All students and staff should be included.
2. Read group norms (expectations), including turn-taking and offering only positive feedback to others.
3. Each participant offers an introduction (e.g., name, birthday, favorite hobby, or activity).
4. **Round 1** (low leverage question): The facilitator offers a question to be answered by all participants. Each participant takes turns speaking. Note: A physical object “talking piece” is recommended.
  - “If you were an animal, which would you be and why?”
5. **Round 2** (medium leverage question):
  - “What is one thing you’ve learned either from this past summer or from the changes that occurred last school year?”
6. **Round 3** (high leverage questions):
  - “What is one thing that you hope to accomplish this school year?”
  - “What is your goal (personal or academic)?”
7. **Summary** (wrap up questions):
  - “What were some things that you noticed during this activity?”
  - “Did you have anything in common with others?”
  - “Any highlights or shoutouts?”

**Background:** Research has shown that learning and teaching are highly social experiences. Building classroom communities that are safe and trusting environments for learning is essential for student learning. With Community Circles, educators can build trust, deepen relationships, and help people express feelings, needs, and wants. The “circle” format enables equity, focus, connection, and inclusion between all participants. Circles are used for teaching social-emotional skills, academics, conflict resolution, and more.

The questions for each round below are separated into low-risk, medium-risk, and high-risk questions designed to increase emotional awareness, deepen relationships, and build connections. Start with the low-risk questions (in Round 1). These contain less emotional risk for students and are great for initial community building. As the group develops trust, you can use the higher risk questions to “go deeper” and really get to know each other.

## Notes:

- The facilitator should thank participants for their participation after each round and acknowledge positive feedback provided by others.
- The facilitator should also redirect side comments or conversations by reminding who has the “talking piece.”
- The “talking piece” can be any physical item that can be passed from one person to another. In the virtual setting, a hand signal can be used.
- The circle should never be punitive or negative. If a student is unable or unwilling to respond to a question, do not force them. Allow them to pass and attempt to return to them when they’re ready.
- The circle should always end on a positive note and highlight student strengths.
- Circles can also be utilized for classroom discussions, problem-solving, and academic lessons. Please contact us for more information and training on this fun teaching format.



CLSTeam.net | Stewards of Student Success

©2022 Collaborative Learning Solutions. All Rights Reserved.