

Children Talk About



at Home!

1 Defining the topic

How to choose a topic is not an easy task, but don't worry, we can give you a few pointers on this matter.

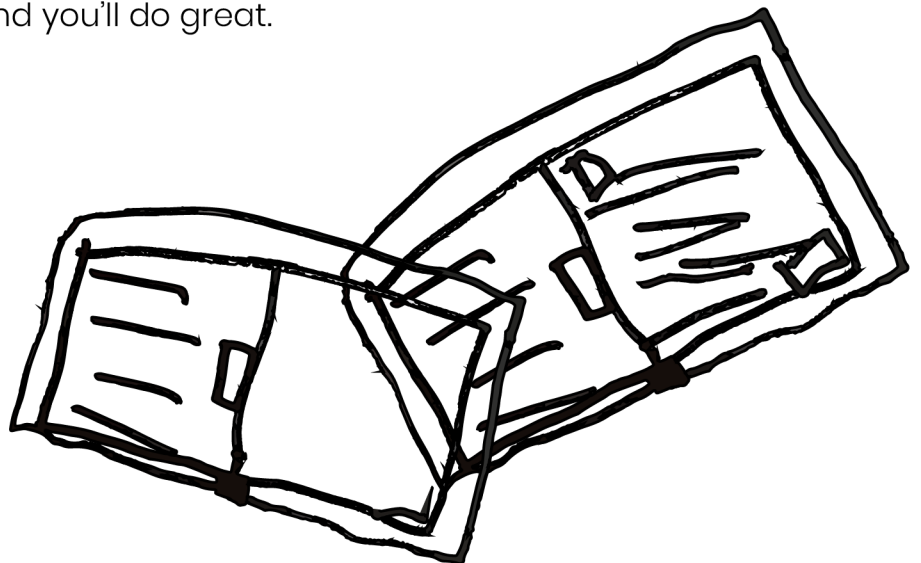
There are different *choosing methods*, today we share 2 of them and we strongly encourage you to find your own as well.

Observation Closely look to children's play in their most spontaneous way. We strongly suggest encouraging role-play between peers or with an adult. Through this kind of play, children reveal so much information about what topics are they are most interested in and those that are the most complex for them. If a topic repeats itself in the same or different ways, that is something that you might consider bringing into your sessions at home.

Conversation Make a list of topics you think your group of children could be interested in talking about. Create a safe, loose and comfortable space for the group to sit and chat about the list of topics you wrote about. Pay attention to children's reactions, what gets them excited, what lights them up, what gets them laughing or moving. Use all of those genuine reactions to make a decision.

This is not a perfect formula, which means that results and answers are very different depending on the demographic of the group of children you're working with.

Trust your gut and you'll do great.



2 Preparing questions

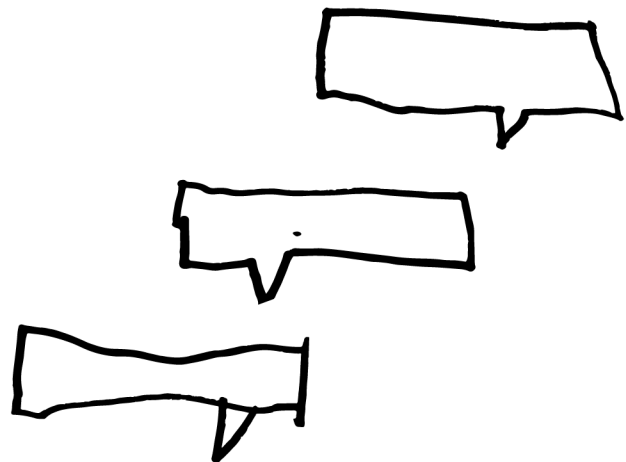
For every session you have to be prepared, not only in the physical space but also in the right “state of mind” and connected with the talking topic. To do so we share with you some useful resources and tools you could use.

Make a big list of questions. Those that you feel children would know the answer to or want the answer of. You could also include questions that you want to know how children would answer or what do they know about that specific topic.

Group the questions. When we brainstorm we often formulate questions in different ways. Don't erase the similar questions, just make another smaller list that contains those similar questions.

Edit. Take another look at your questions and now ask yourself which questions are too easy and which are too complex. Highlight each of these groups with a different color. You are left with the sweet spot of questions. Start with those and test the field. If children struggle to answer, go to your simpler list and if children breeze through them as so easy, start dropping the more complex questions. This is all about trial and error.

Deep dive, not shallow swim. When using your questions, try to ask and reask, orbiting around the same concept. Children sometimes need to hear and digest the question in similar yet different ways to understand, think and then answer.



3 Setting up the space

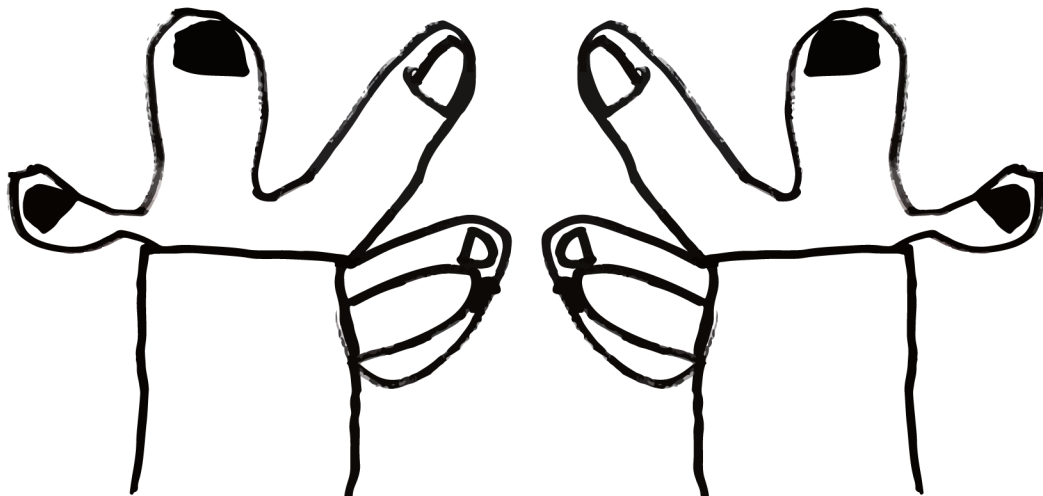
As adults, we value our workspace and we organize, clean, and arrange it in ways that could help us get more creative and productive. Children need the same thing with the bonus that we need to also create a safe space. This means that we are talking about the space in a physical and emotional kind of way.

Physical workspace. Have a table that fits everyone comfortably, including you. You have to have adequate seats where you are able to see all of the children. Lighting should become an asset and not an obstacle so be mindful of the lights and shadows in the room.

Have the materials and resources within hand reach. Having everything ready and handy increases the productivity rates during your sessions. Think about the quantity and quality of the materials. There has to be enough for everybody and they have to work properly.

Emotional workspace. Set the rules for yourself and then share them with the group of children. Always leave a space for discussion over the rules. It is important the children have clarity about the rules and that they feel they can change them within the boundaries that we set as safe and respectful. Remember to have fun.

The environment we learn in acts as a third teacher. Through space we can communicate without the use of words and we might as well take advantage of this third level of the hierarchy.



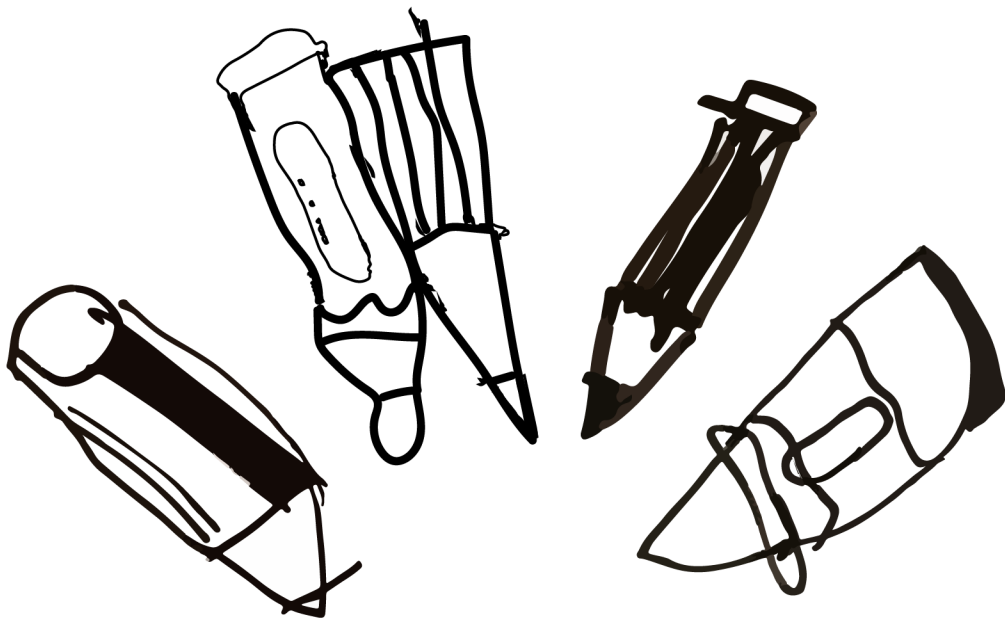
4 Gathering the material

When we talk about materials and tools we are referring to the physical objects and art supplies that children use to represent their thoughts through plastic language: drawing, painting, sculpture, etc.

Choosing the right material can help you boost your learning session or sometimes create unnecessary obstacles. Some pointers could help you pick and select the materials and tools to use.

Black and white. This should always be your default option. Black markers of different thicknesses and white thick paper are best when children are using plastic languages to express as the first time because if we add color it generates unnecessary distractions for children. If you are unfamiliar with plastic languages as well it is also safe to start with this group of materials.

Sketch first. When you and the group of children are familiar with plastic techniques you should start adding color with markers or watercolors which are very friendly. It is important that you always start with a simple black and white drawing and then start adding color, this will give children a frame to work under.



5 Work climate

When we talk about a work climate we are not only referring to what adults do and say but also about what children do and say. Children observe, imitate, copy and learn from adult's behaviors so we have to be on point as a role model for them. Adding to it we still have to encourage children to enhance some of these positive work climate attitudes.

Listen. It is very important to value children's ideas in equal ways. Always prioritize children's thoughts over yours, remember we are trying to understand how children think, so we have to start with their ideas. Always take turns to talk, interrupting is not permitted but remember that this is still a conversation so going back and forth is very productive to create cool ideas.

Ask questions. If you don't understand don't be afraid to say "I don't understand, can you explain it again?". Ask follow-up questions to deepen the idea children are proposing. Bounce the question to other peers, ask "what do you guys think?".

Engage. Always be part of children's quest to understand. Their road to comprehension and generating ideas involves much more than just their minds, they use their whole body to get a grasp of different concepts. Let's say they want to understand dimensions, they will use their fingers to symbolize small and their extended arms to portray bigger dimensions. We, adults, need to use this same understanding method. Try seeing yourself as a stepping stone for children to understand concepts, ideas, situations and so much more.

Commit. When having the experience with children, be 100% present, avoid distractions of whatever sort, and give them your full attention.

6 Work Climate 2.0

Laugh. It is amazing how underestimated is having fun and laughing during learning sessions. Significant learning experiences mainly occur when children are having pleasant experiences. Be silly, funny, crazy, playful, etc. Laugh with children, laugh with yourself, and promote laughter and pleasant experiences in these experiences.

Be supportive. Children often need encouraging words to try and tackle a drawing or conceptual obstacle so try using uplifting words like “let's try and see what we come up with”, “ I have a bunch of papers so we can try as many time as we want”, “If you need help with something we will figure it out together”. As you can see, all of the phrases are base on giving importance to the process and not the outcome. Be mindful that having a perfect end product adds stress to children so let's try and help them deal with focusing on the process.

Establish limits. Children need structure, they need to know what we expect from them so don't be afraid to be clear with them about classroom rules. Even though we may create a clear rule structure for children we have to be mindful of when to maintain a firm position and when to be flexible and allow them to bend the rules in some ways.

Play. While we have the experience we are attempting to work with children to understand how they think and formulate ideas but don't forget that children work best under playful conditions so remember to use engaging, didactical, educative tools to play with them, On the side note, this is also a place for you to have fun, play and get inspired by children's amazing and genuine ideas.

7 Have the experience

It is time for you to have the experience, have fun, enjoy and be amazed about what children have to say, they are magnificent.

Here are some additional recommendations you will need while in the experience with children

Take notes. Have a notebook near you at all times to jot down interesting ideas children have and also what you think of those ideas. Taking notes can also involve other documentation methods like videotaping, recording, and taking pictures. We strongly recommend this practice because it allows you to, later on, revise your work and further understand what children meant and also revise your practice and then improve for the next session.

You can use this space to write down your thoughts



8

Collecting and saving data

Saving the recollected data of your sessions is very important so that you can later on study, interpret and understand children's ideas.

Drawings. Children's representations of their ideas are treasurable objects so it's important to store them correctly. At the back of the drawing, write general information: author, age of author, date, title, and a simple interpretation that you give to it. Remember to scan it and save it on your computer or any digital storage system.

Notes. We encourage you to write at the top of your page the date, participants, and their age, and the main topic or concept being discussed in the session. Your notes are personal and you can write, jot down, scribble, make graphics, etc, as you wish. In the aftermath, we encourage you to then highlight and underline the most important quotes, ideas that happened in the sessions.

Videos. First of all, re-watch them and try to re-understand what children were trying to explain or communicate. Subtitling the videos is useful for other viewers to understand clearly the conversation.

Video extracts. Commonly we videotape the whole session that could last about 30 - 45 minutes so it is really important to make short clips and extracts that don't exceed 3 minutes to share and to be easy to digest. For this editions try to focus on the most important ideas but the video has to have a narrative to it and it has to still feel like a conversation so be mindful to edit the videos maintaining the coherence of it.

Pictures. When you take pictures throughout the session it is important to vary your focus. This means that you could use wide-angle photos showing all of the scene, middle range where you see some of the participants interacting zoom pictures where you could focus on working hands or facial expressions.

Organization. We use a date-based organization under each big topic. That helps everything is easy to find. Don't forget to use tags and keywords to store them and search for them later on.

9 Share your experience

By now you have realized that your experience was awesome and you were amazed by children's ways of thinking.

Learning is a social experience and we constantly learn from each other. So, to learn from each other, we might as well share our experiences. You could go to our Instagram account @childrentalkabout, use our hashtag #childrentalkabout or go to our website www.children-talk-about.com to leave your experience. We are looking forward to seeing what you came up with and especially hearing your children's ideas.

Sharing is one part of the experience and reading, seeing, and hearing the experience that others have is a good habit to get the hang of to borrow interesting ideas, tools, activities and so much more.

Thank you so much for being an active adult in the children's world and encouraging them to have their ideas and strong voice.

Hope to hear from you through all of the sharing channels we have!

