

# When Talk Gets Challenging

TEACHER  
GUIDANCE PACK



# When Talk Gets Challenging

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# When Talk Gets Challenging

## Introduction to Oracy October 2023

Welcome to Oracy October 2023! This year's theme is 'When Talk gets Challenging' and explores how your students can use their oracy skills to make sure their voice is heard even in contexts where this might be a challenge. Across the month, you can enable your students to take part in a range of tasks, encouraging them to feel comfortable and confident when engaging in challenging talk.

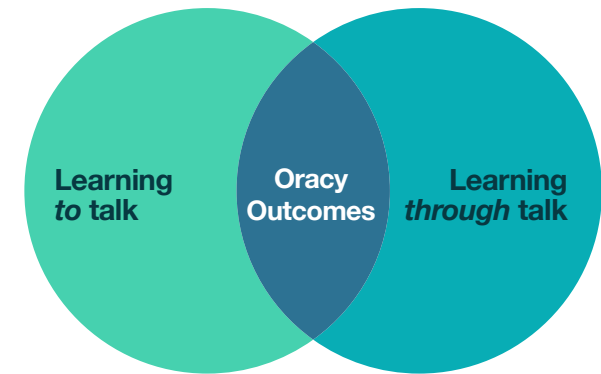


This October, we're asking you to consider how oracy skills can be used when students find themselves in different contexts for oracy. This year's theme is '**When Talk Gets Challenging**' and explores how we can empower young people to talk effectively in challenging contexts, both in the classroom and beyond. This includes discussing a difficult or sensitive topic in class, or sharing your feelings. By equipping students with the oracy skills they need to navigate challenging contexts for talk, we can build their confidence and prepare them for success in school and in life.

Academic research consistently shows that creating challenge, diving into disagreement and posing questions are all essential for academically productive talk. For example, in [exploratory talk](#), participants engage critically but constructively with each other's ideas, with all opinions sought and considered before decisions are jointly made. (Mercer and Wegerif 2004). Furthermore, the focus on students challenging and questioning is also found in [dialogic teaching](#) (Robin Alexander, 2018) and [accountable talk](#) (Resnick et al, 2018).

Yet all too often, students may shy away from situations where talk might get challenging. In marking this Oracy October, we're putting the spotlight on contexts when talk can get tricky or challenging, embracing the opportunities this provides for developing students' thinking, learning and confidence. From Voice 21's own research, we know that [oracy plays an essential role in developing students' confidence](#), with many of those students we spoke to saying they feel that their oracy skills help them feel able to speak up.

This resource will support your students to learn both to and through talk. The best oracy teaching and learning takes place at the centre of this Venn, when students have opportunities to develop their knowledge and understanding through talk, but when they are also taught the skills to do this effectively.



Our activities will give your students the oracy skills to learn how to deal with challenging talk (learning to talk) as well as learning from other's views (learning through talk).

To get started, share the student packs – as well as the purpose behind them – with your students. There are five different activities for each age group, each of which focuses on different strands of the Oracy Framework. Each challenge presents a different context where talk can get challenging, with each challenge getting progressively harder so that your students are building their oracy skills.

Share your students' progress on Twitter.

Tag [@voice21oracy](#) with the hashtag #OracyOctober

# Introduction to The Oracy Framework

When Talk Gets Challenging

Use the Oracy Framework to understand the Physical, Linguistic, Cognitive, and Social and Emotional skills that enable successful discussion, inspiring speech and effective communication.

The Oracy Framework sets out the different skills needed to be an effective speaker and listener. It breaks oracy into four different strands:



**Physical** – how you use your voice, body language and facial expressions



**Linguistic** – the words you choose to use

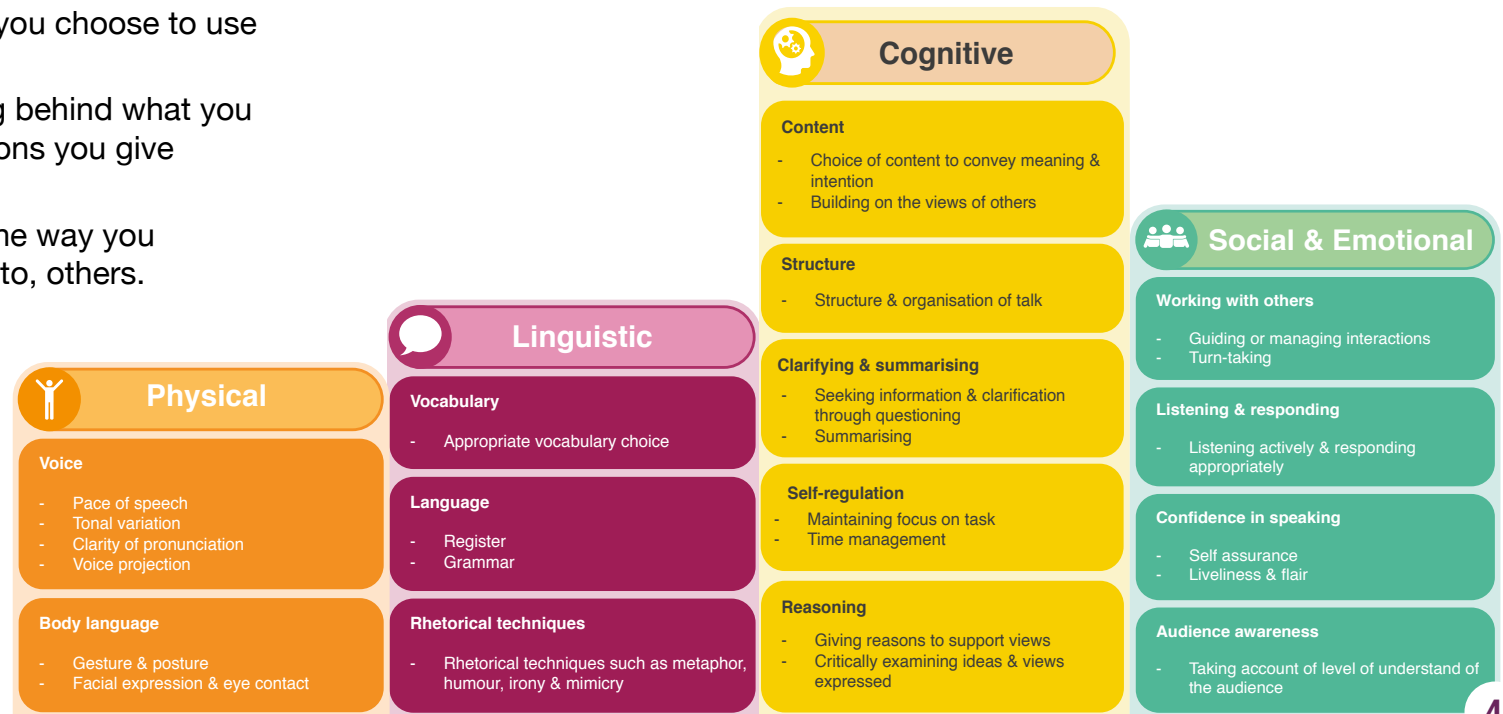


**Cognitive** – the thinking behind what you are saying and the reasons you give



**Social & Emotional** – the way you engage with, and listen to, others.

Start by asking students to think of a situation recently where talk got challenging for them. Which strand or specific skills did they need to help them speak and listen in that situation?



# The Oracy Framework through 'When Talk Gets Challenging'

When Talk Gets Challenging

Through engaging with our 'When Talk Gets Challenging' resources your students will develop specific skills from each of the four strands of the Oracy Framework. If you are part of a Voice 21 Oracy School, you can search for our 'Student-friendly Oracy Frameworks' on the Voice 21 Exchange to view an in-depth version of this resource.

## Consider:



Which of these skills do your students need support developing?

How can you model these skills to ensure students are well prepared to use them during the challenges?

Which conditions to support talk will you need to provide?

## When Talk Gets Challenging, we can...



Physical



Linguistic



Cognitive



Social & Emotional



EYFS

Speak loud enough to be heard by all

Join ideas/opinions with linking words, such as *because* or *and*

Explain ideas, and ask questions to find out more

Take turns and listen to others in a conversation



KS1/2

Consider how speed and volume affect use of voice

Link to others ideas using sentence stems, and include relevant new vocabulary to challenge

Give reasons for our thinking/ views in an organised way

Listen actively, responding to others and encouraging all to take part



KS3-5

Speak in a clear and confident manner, considering how tone and expression contribute to meaning

Tailor vocabulary use to match the correct audience and formality level, considering the use of persuasive language

Present a structured argument with clear evidence, by building, challenging or summarising other's ideas and opinions

Adapt our speech to meet our audience with respect and confidence, and be mindful of group dynamics in a conversation

# 'When Talk Gets Challenging' in your setting

When Talk Gets  
Challenging

You may wish to 'launch' Oracy October as a whole school (for example in an assembly) or in your own classes. Student packs contain an Oracy October poster to track progress against each of the challenges – you may wish to print a larger version of this to track whole-class progress too!

For younger students who may need additional support accessing the challenges independently (in particular EYFS students), it may be a good idea to direct and work through elements of the challenges together as part of a dedicated Oracy October time slot (eg Circle Time or PHSE).

For secondary colleagues, tutor/form time is a great place to inspire, practice and support your students through the challenges. See the guidance pages for more information.



## Reflection



**Reflection** is an important part of Oracy October: within their resource pack, students are encouraged to reflect on their experience and the skills they have used to achieve the challenges successfully. Teachers also have reflection lanyards (see pg 9/10); we encourage you to invite students to approach you and share their experience of 'When Talk Gets Challenging'.



Station members of staff, wearing **reflection lanyards**, around communal areas (playground, corridors, dining hall) at break/lunch times to instigate reflective conversations with your students.

Share your students' progress on Twitter:  
Tag [@voice21oracy](https://twitter.com/voice21oracy) with the hashtag #OracyOctober



# Teacher Challenge Guidance

When Talk Gets  
Challenging

The aim of the Oracy October challenges is to encourage and support your students to complete all five challenges, developing relevant skills from the Oracy Framework as they go. Each challenge will follow the following format – below each step, we have included some ideas on how you can support these aims in a variety of different key stages.

## Let's get going!

Provide students with the opportunity to try the practise activities prior to completing the main challenge.

## Climb higher!

Provide and model appropriate sentence stems (see Student Pack) and conditions for talk (Conditions to support talk – p8) to scaffold students.

## The final climb!

Motivate, prompt and support all students to achieve the talk challenges.



EYFS

Find opportunities within provision activities to practise and reflect, or set up mini-interventions for these with adult support.

Encourage adults to model sentence stems within provision activities.

Support students to track challenges completed and allocate reflection/celebration time around this.



KS1/2

Ring-fence time during morning tasks, breaktimes, lunchtimes or after-school activities for these practise activities.

Record exemplar videos of students using sentence stems to show to the wider class, print out sentence stems for students to use in partner talk.

Praise student talk, link challenges to your reward system or set challenges as homework tasks.



KS3-5

Set aside time in form/tutor time for students to share reflections from practise activities.

Spotlight students showing excellent modelling of sentence stems, in addition to teachers explicitly modelling use of sentence stems across the curriculum.

Get staff and / or older students involved for a whole school approach and make the talk visible! Appraise students talk, link to your reward system, and share great examples with wider school.

# Conditions to support talk – tools

Establishing ground rules for talk and explicitly modelling the listening skills needed to engage successfully within ‘When Talk Gets Challenging’ situations can help you to set high expectations for your students. It can also help to create a classroom culture where every voice is valued and students feel confident to speak up.

## Discussion Guidelines

The poster features a blue background with a white border. At the top right is the voice21 logo. The text is arranged in a circular pattern around a central brain icon. Arrows point from the text to the brain icon. At the bottom, there are illustrations of hands giving thumbs up.

- We give proof of listening
- We respect others' ideas
- We build, challenge, summarise, clarify, and probe each other's ideas
- We are prepared to change our mind
- We invite others into our discussion
- We try to reach a shared agreement

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How could you use the Discussion Guidelines to set and model expectations for talk?

Where are your students on the Listening Ladder?

## Listening Ladder

The diagram shows a ladder with ten rungs, each with a different listening skill. The rungs are arranged from bottom to top in increasing order of complexity. A purple box at the top left of the ladder contains text explaining its purpose. The voice21 logo is in the top right corner.

The Listening Ladder sets out the various listening skills and orders them in terms of complexity. It can be used to support students to reflect on their discussion and to set targets for which rung they want to reach.

- Summarising the speaker's ideas
- Asking questions that dig deeper
- Asking questions to clarify understanding
- Reacting and refocusing
- Offering nods or short words of encouragement
- Looking at the speaker
- Being calm and still
- Giving 100% of their focus to the person speaking

# EYFS/Primary Reflection Staff Lanyards

## When Talk Gets Challenging

### Reflection



Talk to me about a time  
when you have...



Shared your feelings

### Reflection



Talk to me about a time  
when you have...



Met someone  
for the first time

### Reflection



Talk to me about a time  
when you...



Didn't know the answer  
to a question

### Reflection



Talk to me about a time  
when you have...



Disagreed with  
someone else's opinion

### Reflection



Talk to me about a time  
when you have...



Come to a shared  
agreement

#### \* Note

You may wish to print these on A3 and laminate them to make accessible for staff and students



# Secondary/Post 16 Reflection Staff Lanyards

When Talk Gets  
Challenging

## Reflection



Talk to me about a time  
when you have...



Made someone feel  
listened to

## Reflection



Talk to me about a time  
when you have had to...



Reach a shared  
agreement

## Reflection



Talk to me about a time  
when you have had to...



Think and talk on your  
feet!

## Reflection



Talk to me about a time  
when you have...



Disagreed with  
someone else's opinion

## Reflection



Talk to me about a time  
when you have...



Advocated for yourself  
or someone else

### \* Note

You may wish to print these on A3 and laminate them to make accessible for staff and students



# Where next in a EYFS/Primary setting?

Through the series of 'When Talk Gets Challenging' challenges your students have completed, you have allowed them to develop confidence and courage in their voice. Why stop there?

Enabling every student to benefit from a high quality oracy education requires a whole-school approach to oracy. If you'd like to find out more about how Voice 21 works with schools to transform teaching, learning, curriculum and school culture, take a look at our website: [www.voice21.org](http://www.voice21.org)

Here are some further ideas you could consider to build on this year's Oracy October challenges across your school:

## When Talk Gets Challenging



### Student Council

Why not set up a school council to ensure student's voices are valued? Find opportunities for students of all ages to disagree with opinions and reach shared agreements about their school community?



### Oracy Club

Give your students the opportunity to extend their exploration of questions they don't know they answer to and share their feelings through an oracy after school club - this could link to Philosophy for Children OR votes for schools schemes.



### Oracy Buddies

Make sharing feelings, listening to each other and meeting new peers part of your play/lunchtime culture by setting up oracy buddies: students who instigate talking points and sharing opportunities with other students.



# Where next in a Secondary/Post 16 setting?

## When Talk Gets Challenging

Through the series of 'When Talk Gets Challenging' challenges your students have completed, you have allowed them to develop confidence and courage in their voice. Why stop there?

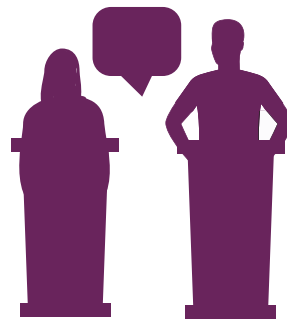
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Here are some further ideas you could consider to build on this year's Oracy October challenges across your school:



### Soapbox

Why not introduce a soapbox in a communal space at your school (yard, dining hall, common room) to encourage your students to continue to use their voice share and listen to each other's feelings?



### Debate Club

Give your students the opportunity to extend their ability to 'disagree agreeably' with others and debate topics they are passionate about through setting up a debate club.



### Advocacy

Enhance student's opportunities to use their voice to advocate for themselves and others. What are your students passionate about? Link up with charities to develop your advocacy reach.



# When Talk Gets Challenging



## CONGRATULATIONS!

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has completed all five  
'When Talk Gets Challenging' oracy challenges.

This certificate is presented in recognition  
of your successful completion of  
Oracy October 2023.



# Here at Voice 21, we love to hear your thoughts and reflections on Oracy October!

Share your student's reflections or progress against the challenges with us on Twitter!

Tag [@voice21oracy](https://twitter.com/voice21oracy) and use the hashtag #OracyOctober.

You could upload videos, pictures of your challenges in action, or even written reflections after your students have completed each challenge.

We look forward to seeing your contributions!



**Come and join our free online webinars throughout October.**

For further information visit

<https://voice21.org/oracy-october-2023/>

## **Talk on Tuesday Live**

**Get started with oracy in KS1&2**

3 October, 3.45-4.45pm

**Get started with oracy in KS3&4**

3 October, 3.45-4.45pm

**Let's Argue Well**

17 October, 3.45-4.45pm

**Transform how you teach vocabulary**

31 October, 3.45-4.45pm

## **The challenge with...**

**The challenge with...oracy as policy**

5 October, 3.45-4.45pm

**The challenge with...assessing oracy**

12 October, 3.45-4.45pm

**The challenge with...leading oracy**

19 October, 3.45-4.45pm