

How to begin doing circles in your classroom

A sample plan to help get you started

What do you need to consider?

- **Explain the reasoning**- building community- getting to know each other better, teamwork
- **Be upbeat**
- **Regard resistance as fear**
- **Establish your circle setup**
- **Choose your talking piece**

Secrets to Success

- Clear topic and goal (Circle Lesson Plans Help)
- Set a positive tone
- Keep the focus
- Get some allies
- Use silence
- Active listening
- Pay attention to body language

Questions to Consider

- **Where/how will you set up your circle?**
- **What's your talking piece?**
- **What are your circle guidelines?**
 - *Respect the talking piece*
 - *Listen from the heart/ Speak from the heart*
 - *Without feeling rushed, say just enough*
 - *Honor confidentiality*
- **What questions will you ask?**
 - **Remember to start with low-risk**
- **How will you close your time?**

Starting Circles Day 1 activity

Ask students to think of an example of an activity or game that uses a circle.
(Don't share yet, quickly move into #2 and share in the circle)

Ask students to move chairs/form a circle in the room and share their example.

(Could even time them to see how quickly they can form a circle- to get a baseline for them to beat each time they make a circle)

First time around the circle:
*Teacher first introduce talking piece, only talking when holding talking piece

Students share out their example, passing around a talking piece

*after everyone shares, the teacher has the option to actually play one of the activities or games mentioned or just move on to the next round of questions below

Second time around the circle:

Have you ever sat in a circle before?

When?

Third time around the circle:

What do you think a circle represents? How do you feel about sitting in a circle?

Fourth time around the circle:

What do you like about the circle? What do you dislike about the circle?

Taking Turns in Conversation (Day 2 of Circles)

Students will take turns in conversation by participating in a circle where only one person speaks at a time. Students will develop active listening skills and experience authentic voice

Teacher prompt:	Form a circle with our chairs as quickly and quietly as possible (try to beat yesterday's time)
Setting up the circle	<p>Today we are going to do some learning in our circle</p> <p>Before starting, which way should our circle flow? (either left or right.)</p> <p>Whenever we are in a circle, you always have the right to say “pass” if you don’t want to share</p>
Activity:	<p>Prompt: You need to remember 2 items from the texts your peers about to read.</p> <p>Teacher asks the 3 pre-selected students to read different texts aloud simultaneously. <small>**See below)</small></p> <p>After the activity is completed, teacher facilitates first circle</p>
Circle Prompts:	<p>What 2 facts do you remember from the read alouds?</p> <p>Was it hard to concentrate?</p> <p>Why would we participate in this activity?</p> <p>Have you ever had something great to share and no one listened?</p> <p>How did that feel?</p>
Ending	<p>What will you do to be a better listener today?</p> <p>Open Society Institute. (n.d.). Restorative Practices Lesson Plan Guide. Retrieved from https://www.osibaltimore.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/Merged-RP-Lesson-Plan-Guide-FINAL.pdf</p>

Taking Turns in Conversation:

Reading selections for 3 ELEMENTARY students

Student 1	Student 2	Student 3				
<p>I Scream, You Scream We All Scream for Ice Cream! Ice Cream Party this Friday!</p> <table border="1"><thead><tr><th>Flavors</th><th>Toppings</th></tr></thead><tbody><tr><td>Chocolate Vanilla Strawberry Mint Chocolate Chip</td><td>Sprinkles Hot Fudge Whipped Cream Carmel</td></tr></tbody></table>	Flavors	Toppings	Chocolate Vanilla Strawberry Mint Chocolate Chip	Sprinkles Hot Fudge Whipped Cream Carmel	<p>Happy Birthday to You! Birthday Party this Saturday. Come get your cake, presents and free pizza. This is a Roller Skating Party, you can skate and play at the arcade – don't forget to invite your friends. The party starts at 6pm and ends at 8:30 pm.</p>	<p>Science Center Field Trip The field trip will be on Thursday. The cost of the field trip is ten dollars. Students will visit the IMAX Theatre and get to pick their favorite movie to watch with their friends. FREE Popcorn and soda for each student on the trip</p>
Flavors	Toppings					
Chocolate Vanilla Strawberry Mint Chocolate Chip	Sprinkles Hot Fudge Whipped Cream Carmel					

For kids that cannot read yet, have one sing a song they know, one recite the alphabet and one count.

Taking Turns in Conversation:

Reading selections for 3 Middle School students

Student 1 : Field Trip	Student 2: Dance Contest	Student 3
<p>You must get your permission slip signed by your parent. Your permission slip is due on Friday. The cost of the field trip is \$10.00. You do not have to wear your school uniform on the day of the field trip. You must wear sneakers or a comfortable walking shoe. The bus will leave at 8:30 and return at 3:00.</p>	<p>Contestants must submit their song of choice to the DJ by Wednesday. The dance contest will be held on Friday in the auditorium. Costumes must meet the BCPSS dress code standards; No shorts or skirts above the knee. No tube tops or spaghetti straps. No sleepwear. Jeans are allowed.</p>	<p>You must get your permission slip to bring your pet to school signed by your parent. Pets must be less than 75 pounds. Dogs, cats, ferrets, bunnies, hamsters, guinea pigs and birds are allowed. Fish, lizards and snakes must be in their cages and remain in their cages when you bring them to school. Pets are allowed to stay for the whole school day but must return home with their owners at the end of the school day.</p>

Taking Turns in Conversation

Reading selections for 3 High School students

Student 1: Prom	Student 2: Six Flags Field Trip	Student 3: \$5,000 Shopping Spree at Towson Town Center
<p>In order to attend the Prom as a senior you must have a minimum of 10 credits and 50 Service Learning Hours. You may not owe for any missing textbooks or outstanding dues at the time of purchasing your prom ticket. In order to attend the Prom as a junior you must have a minimum of 5 credits and a 25 Service Learning Hours. Students who wish to bring a guest from another school must provide a copy of their school or state ID. The cost of a single ticket is \$125.00 per single guest and \$200.00 per couple.</p>	<p>The Six Flags field trip is being offered to students with passing grades in all classes. A passing grade is 60 percent or higher. You must obtain the signatures of all 4 teachers no later than the Friday before the field trip. The bus will depart from the school parking lot at 8 am and will depart the Six Flags Park at 6:30 pm. Your ride must pick you up from the school no later than 8:00 pm</p>	<p>Towson Town Center is offering a \$5,000 shopping Spree. You will have one hour to shop unlimited at any and all stores in the mall. You may bring up to two guests and a free choice dinner at the food court. You will be allowed to shop in the mall before normal business hours. In order to qualify for a raffle ticket you must have perfect attendance for one month and have an 80% B average. You must provide documentation of your attendance and grades by submitting a report card that has been signed by your principal.</p>

Patience-option I (Day 3 of Circles)

Students will explore through a game and then discuss why patience is an important character attribute and how to demonstrate patience in the school, social, home and work settings. Students consider the importance of their immediate wants/needs versus those of others.

<p>Teacher guides students through Patience Game (next page); then facilitates a circle.</p>	
First time around the circle: Second time around the circle: (Choose 1 or 2 of the questions)	What do you think patience means? What does patience look like/sound like in a school setting? What does patience look like/sound like at home? What does patience look like/sound like in a friendship?
Third time around the circle: Take a minute to consider what has been shared in the circle so far before answering the next question. (Choose 1 or 2 of the questions)	When have you had to be patient? Share a time when your patience was tested by someone or something. Can you think of a time when you could/should have been more patient?
Ending	How can you apply patience to something in your life right now?

Patience-option 2 (Day 3 of Circles)

Students will explore through a game and then discuss why patience is an important character attribute and how to demonstrate patience in the school, social, home and work settings. Students consider the importance of their immediate wants/needs versus those of others.

Teacher guides students through Patience Game (next page); then facilitates a circle.

First time around the circle:	What do you think patience means?
Second time around the circle: (Choose 1 or 2 of the questions)	Who are you normally patient with? What is difference between being patient and complacent? (middle or high school)
Third time around the circle: Take a minute to consider what has been shared in the circle so far before answering the next question. (Choose 1 or 2 of the questions)	Who are you normally patient with? When have you had to be patient? Share a time when your patience was tested by someone or something. Can you think of a time when you could/should have been more patient? Describe a situation where being assertive is more important than being patient. (Middle or high school)
Ending (Choose 1 or 2 of the questions)	How can you apply patience to something in your life right now? Do you feel like you have learned patience? Describe a time when you were rewarded after demonstrating patience.

Patience Game

Have you ever had to untangle a necklace, or hair ties, rope or Christmas lights? If you have, then you can do today's activity!

Arrange the students in a tight group. All should extend their right hand and grab the hand of someone opposite them in the circle. Then each should use their left hand to grab someone else's left hand. The group now must untangle themselves into a circle without letting go of the hands.

When the game is over, discuss the importance of patience in working out the problem and what motivated them to keep going when it got tough.

(Circle up and ask the two questions below)

- Did you have fun trying to untangle the group?
- How did patience help untangle the group?

**Go back to previous slide for more questions around patience

Building Trust (Day 4 of Circles)

Have students form a circle and have the talking piece ready
see if they can beat their previous time setting up the circle

First time around the circle:	What is trust?
Second time around the circle:	Do you think it is important to have trust in a circle? Is it ok to not trust some people? How do you know if you can trust a person?
Third time around the circle:	Why or why not? (in relation to second time around questions 1&2) What is the difference between trust and loyalty? (middle or high school) How can you gain someone's trust?
Ending:	Think about people in your life- do you tend to want to spend time with those who are trustworthy or those who break your trust? (this one could be rhetorical for them just to think about or just have 1 or 2 share) What can you do show others you are trustworthy?

Ripple Effect (Day 5 of Circles)

After each round of questioning, record the answers on the board, asking prompts as necessary.

Activity (More details on the next page)	<p>The teacher will draw three circles on the board</p> <p>The teacher will read the scenario that they will be discussing in the circle</p>
First time around the circle:	<p>Who is affected?</p> <p>How is that person affected?</p>
Second time around the circle:	<p>Who else, not on the board, is affected?</p> <p>How were these people affected?</p>
Third time around the circle:	<p>What can be done to make things right?</p>
Ending-	<p>Just like mistakes have huge ripples-- doing positive things also have ripple effects...what is one way you can make a positive ripple?</p>

Ripple Effect (Scenarios for Circle 5)

1. The teacher will draw three circles on the board and label them 1, 2, and 3 (each representing a different student in the scenario).
2. Teacher reads the scenario(s):

*K-3 Example: Alexis hits Travis and his nose starts to swell. Sean sees Travis' nose swell and starts crying. The teacher gets angry and calls Alexis' and Travis' parents.

*4-5 Example: Student 1 brought a bag of chips to school. When he was not looking student 2 took the bag of chips from student 1's book bag without permission. Later at lunch, student 2 shared the chips with student 3 and did not tell student 3 where they came from.

Objective: Students will be introduced to restorative practices and key concepts, including:

- (1) Many people are affected by our actions.
- (2) There are many ways in which people are affected.
- (3) If we understand how people are affected we can figure out what needs to be done to make things right.

Creating Norms (Week 2, Day 6 of Circles)

Class norms are the behavioral expectations or rules of the class. Class norms inform us how we are expected to behave towards each other and towards the materials we use in school.-- Just like norms were created at the start of the year for the class, we will now be creating norms specific to our circle times.

First time around the circle:	Think about a positive, good working/learning environment and describe it in a few words.
Second time around the circle:	What will help to make it a healthy and productive learning/working Environment?
Third time around the circle: (Write down the norms as they are shared)	What norms/rules can we agree to that will make a healthy and productive circle environment for all of us?
Fourth time around the circle:	Share one thing you will do to contribute to maintaining the norms.

This or That (Day 7 of Circles)

**Today's goal is just to practice the norms created yesterday using very simple prompts

First time around the circle:	1. Would you rather only be able to eat salty things or only be able to eat sugary things? 2. Why?
Second time around the circle:	1. Would you rather play outside or stay inside? 2. Why?
Third time around the circle:	1. Would you rather lick the bottom of your shoe or eat your least favorite food? 2. Why?
Fourth time around the circle:	1. Would you rather be a superhero yourself or be best friends with your favorite superhero? 2. Why?

Share your favorite memory (Day 8 of Circles)

First time around the circle:	Tell the group about a happy memory Or Tell one thing that makes you happy
Second time around the circle:	Lower el: What is your favorite ice cream? Upper el: Tell about your best day or what would make for the best day
Third time around the circle	Lower el: What's your favorite holiday? Upper el: Give students the option to talk about their worst day.
Optional group reflection:	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1) How did you feel the circle went today?2) How did you feel sharing?3) What did you learn about someone from our class?

Reaching goals/ experiences- High School

First time around the circle:	Share a time you reached a goal.
Second time around the circle:	How did that feel to reach the goal?
Third time around the circle	<p>Best high school experience.</p> <p>(if you've been team building for a long time, you can also share worst day of high school experience)</p>
Closing- non-sequential	<p>How did you feel sharing?</p> <p>What did you learn about a classmate/friend/teacher?</p>

Content Circle (Day 9 of Circles)

First time around the circle:	What is one word to describe how you feel after that lesson?
Second time around the circle:	Is there a part of today's lesson that you would feel confident in teaching someone else? If so, what part/ what concept?
Third time around the circle	A question specific to the content (Could be done as a sequential go round or as non-sequential, allowing only a few people to answer)

Dreams (Day 10 of Circles)

First time around the circle:	What do you want to be when you get older?
Second time around the circle:	Why would you like to be that?
Third time around the circle:	What can get in the way of you achieving your dreams?
Fourth time around the circle:	Can friends and family help you achieve your dreams?

Superhero/Superpower (Day II of Circles)

Elementary:	Middle:	High:
What is a hero? What is a superhero? Who is your favorite superhero? Why? What does the superhero do? Do you have a hero in real life?	What jobs are heroic? If you could make up your own superhero, what traits would you have? Why?	What professions/careers are heroic? What are the characteristics/attributes of heroes in real life? Is there a trait that all superheroes share?

Is it necessary? (Could tie into science)

First time around the circle:	Pretend you are stranded on an island and are able to bring only 3 items, what 3 things you would bring? *Are the items you chose necessary for your survival?	Extensions for Elem: What things do you need to live? What things do you like? Are toys something you want or something you need?
Second time around the circle:	How long can you survive with the items you chose? *Why did you choose those items?	Extensions for Middle: What items are crucial to live? What items do you have that you could live without?
Third time around the circle	Is there another item someone else mentioned that you would like to bring instead?	Extensions for High: What do living organisms need to sustain life? What is happening in the world today that might realistically cause you to rely on basic survival skills? What items do you have that you could live without?

Positive Personal Attributes Circle

(with short activity-click link above to view full lesson plan)

Fill in with the specific questions you want to use from the full lesson plan linked above

First time around the circle:	
Second time around the circle:	
Third time around the circle:	
Fourth time around the circle:	

Manners

Elementary	Middle School	High School
<p>What are good manners? Give an example.</p>	<p>What are good manners? Give an example.</p>	<p>Start with them <u>reading these etiquette rules from Forbes</u>- or make a shorter version of this)</p> <p>Share the one rule you chose (from the list linked above) with the group and explain why you agree or disagree with it.</p>
<p>Where is it important to use your manners?</p>	<p>What is the purpose of good manners?</p>	<p>Was there a time where you could have used manners to get a better outcome?</p>
<p>Why would you want to use good manners?</p>	<p>When you talk to someone who is rude, should you use manners or be rude in return?</p>	<p>Are there any new rules of etiquette that you learned from this article?</p>

Perseverance

Teachers will ask students to individually brainstorm about what perseverance means to them.

2. Teacher will ask students to share out in order to create a class definition which can be written on chart paper, board, note cards etc. for use during the circle. Teacher and students transition to the circle.

Elementary	Middle	High School
<p>Is perseverance an important skill to demonstrate? (quick go round of yes or no)</p> <p>(next go round)</p> <p>Give an example of something that requires perseverance.</p>	<p>**If skipping full class brainstorm ahead of time- start with “What is perseverance?”</p> <p>Is perseverance an important skill to demonstrate? (quick go round of yes or no)</p>	<p>Does all hard work pay off? (yes or no)</p>
<p>Have you ever quit because something was just too hard?</p> <p>How did you feel after?</p>	<p>What class do you feel you have to work hard to persevere through?</p>	<p>How do you feel after you’ve accomplished something very difficult?</p>
<p>What is something hard you’ve completed?</p> <p>How did you feel after you completed it?</p>		<p>**If skipping full class brainstorm ahead of time- start with “What is perseverance?”</p> <p>How can you apply perseverance to school, work, and life?</p>

All the ideas listed have come from this site

There are many more circle lesson plans included on the site above

100's of circle questions are located on this site