

Facilitation Difficulty:



Varies by need:
15-30 min.



Any size, with modifica-
tions for large groups*



No preconference

Purpose – To silently reflect, generate ideas, check on learning, develop projects or solve problems. It can be used productively with any group. Because Chalk Talk is done in silence, it gives groups a change of pace, encourages thoughtful contemplation, and reduces the risk often felt in verbal conversations. A Chalk Talk can be an uncomplicated silent reflection or a spirited, but silent, exchange of ideas. It can solve vexing problems, reveal how much a group knows about a topic, get an entire project planned, or give a committee lots of information without any verbal sparring. It can be an unforgettable experience. Students love it – it's the quietest they'll ever be!

***Group size** – See note after protocol for recommendations for large groups

Preparation – Large chalk board and chalk, or whiteboard and markers, or many pieces of chart paper taped together on the wall and markers. Ideally, write your question or topic in the center of the space but do not reveal it until after the setup.

Facilitation tips – During the protocol, your job is to remind everyone to stay silent and active. Do not allow them to return to their seats until the debrief (exempting those who are physically unable to stand). You may also write your own comments to push participants' thinking in new directions.

Steps:

- Setup** – Explain that Chalk Talk is a silent activity that gets everyone out their seats for the duration of the protocol. No one may talk at all, nobody should go sit down until prompted, and all “comments” should be written on the boards/papers instead of being spoken. When not writing, participants should be standing back from the wall, reading each other's comments and allowing others space to write. (5 min.) They may respond to comments by:
 - Adding related or contrasting thoughts alongside an existing comment
 - Drawing a line connecting two similar comments
 - Adding exclamations, stars, smiley faces. +1s, or other pictographs to a comment
 - Drawing a picture that symbolizes what they are thinking or feeling
- Question** – If you were unable to prep the room and pre-write the question(-s), do so now, in the center of the board, and draw a large circle around it for emphasis. (1 min.) Sample questions:
 - *What did you learn today?*
 - *So What? Or Now What?*
 - *What do you think about social responsibility and schooling?*
 - *How can we involve the community in the school, and the school in the community?*
 - *How can we keep the noise level down in this room?*
 - *What does the scheduling committee need to know?*

- *What do you know about Croatia?*
 - *How are decimals used in the world?*
3. **Distribute** – Hand out pieces of chalk or markers to everyone, or place many pieces of chalk/markers at the boards and hand chalk/markers to several random participants to get the ball rolling. (2 min.)
 4. **“Talk”** – Announce to the group that, *“The Chalk Talk is now open!”* Participants write as they feel moved. Chalk Talks tend to begin and end like corn popping. A few people will start writing at first. Then, more and more people will join until there is a flurry of activity for a time. Gradually, fewer and fewer people will contribute until there will only be one or two writing at a time. There are likely to be some pauses in writing activity. Breaks for reading and reflection are natural, so allow wait time before deciding it is over. When it’s done, it’s done! Invite everyone to return to their seats for the debrief. (10-15 min.)
 5. **Debrief and reflect** –
 - *What did you notice about the comments? Anything surprising? Any patterns?*
 - *Why did we do this activity in silence?*
 - *What, if any, next steps should be taken?*
 - *What did you think of the activity? What worked, what didn’t?*
 - *How might you use this in your work?*
 6. ***Big group option** – One Chalk Talk works well with up to 15 people. If you have a larger group, setup separate (adjacent or parallel) walls with different questions, one per 15 participants (e.g., two chalk talks for 16-30 people, three chalk talks for 31-45, etc.). Participants can then feel free to comment silently on any of the walls, reading and writing at will. If you have more than one Chalk Talk going simultaneously, expect to increase your time accordingly to allow for more interaction. Example questions for a multiple Chalk Talk experience:
 - *What is experiential learning?*
 - *What are the benefits of experiential learning?*
 - *What are the obstacles around incorporating experiential learning into our curriculum?*
 - *What supports do teachers need to effectively teach common core using experiential learning?*