

Random Reporter



PURPOSE

Typically, some students desperately want to be called on to answer a question, while others desperately want to avoid it. Random Reporter is a flexible strategy that introduces the expectation that all students will be prepared to answer every question with the support and assistance of their team. At the same time, because you select students at random to respond to a question, it eliminates the need for raised hands and keeps you from inadvertently calling on the same students over and over again.

BREAKING IT DOWN

When you place the students into teams, assign each student a number from one to four (or one to five for teams with five members). Write the number on a piece of masking tape, and stick the tape to each student's desk. Change the numbers only when you form new teams.

To use Random Reporter, follow these steps:

1. Ask a question.
2. Have the students **think** about an answer for a few seconds.
3. Have the students **discuss** their answers with the team for a few seconds.
4. Call on either the #1s, #2s, #3s, or #4s (or #5s) to **share** the team's answer with the class.

Why is it important to ask the question first, let the students think, and then allow them to talk to one another **before** you call a number?



FINE-TUNING THE TECHNIQUE

- Don't expect perfection from yourself or your students right off the bat! This technique will become automatic as the year progresses.
- Pacing is critical with Random Reporter. Are you allowing silent time for individual students to think before asking them to discuss with their team? Are you allowing teams time to talk before asking them to share with the class? If not, make a conscious effort to count to five before moving to the next step.
- Do not call a number until it is time to share. The students are more likely to stay engaged in team discussion—and to help one another prepare an answer—if they do not know who will be asked to share the team's response. After all, it could be them!

- To assist visual learners, add hand signals to call attention to the different steps in this routine. For example, ask the question, and then point to your temple and say “Think.” Then, after a suitable amount of time, give the signal for team discussion. Providing simultaneous visual and verbal cues helps the students stay focused on their current task.
- If you find that you need help randomly selecting students, label wooden sticks or slips of paper with the numbers from one to four (or five) and put them into a bag. Another option is to take the aces, twos, threes, and fours (or fives) out of a card deck. After allowing the students time to think and discuss as a team, call a team name, and then pull a number from the bag.
- If you are working on active listening with the students, ask them whether they agree or disagree with the previous student’s answer and whether they have anything else to add. This is a subtle but firm reminder that they need to listen carefully to one another’s responses.
- During the few seconds when teams are discussing the question and answer, encourage all team members to take part. Award team cooperation points to teams with 100% participation—for example, “Great job, Team Judo! I can see that everyone is involved in the discussion! Give yourselves five points.”
- Use the team discussion time to take a quick, informal assessment of the students’ learning, to note any points of confusion, or to offer feedback, encouragement, and clarification.

During what part(s) of a lesson would you be most likely to use Random Reporter? Why?

Teachers typically ask whether they have to call students by number instead of by name. The answer is yes and no. Use numbers to select students at random—but when you’re talking to the students, you may call them by their names. For example, “Okay, now that you’ve had a chance to talk with your teammates, I want to hear from the #3s. John, you’re a #3. What did your team come up with as an answer?”

TIME-SAVING TIPS

- After the students have had a chance to think and pair during Think-Pair-Share, use Random Reporter to randomly call on a student from one or two teams to share with the class.
- When having the students Jigsaw, assign them to expert groups using their numbers.
- Use Random Reporter as a way to randomly select students for a task. For example, put team materials in a basket, bucket, box, or bin where teams can easily collect and return them. Then call all #2s to pick up their team’s supplies. At the end of class, ask all #3s to record team cooperation points on the team score sheet. This limits the amount of disruption caused by such routine chores.