

## Activity Ideas: Back-to-Back Discussions

### BACK-TO-BACK DISCUSSIONS

**Back to Back Discussions** works as a great tool to improve listening. Without the benefit of nonverbal cues, students focus much more intently on listening to the conversation. In addition, when students miss a word here or there, they make intuitive leaps based on the context of the sentence/conversation, not on gestures, facial expressions, etc.

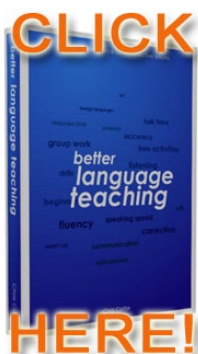
**Step One:** Students get into pairs and arrange their chairs to sit back to back.

**Step Two:** The teacher distributes a worksheet with several questions, or enough questions for about five to ten minutes of discussion. The worksheet for student A has different questions from the worksheet for student B. This prevents pairs from preparing or thinking about possible answers while their partner speaks. Students take several minutes to read through the questions for comprehension. The teacher monitors and offers help and clarification where needed.

**Step Three:** Students ask and answer the questions back to back. All but the weakest class of students should ask at least one follow-up question. Higher-level classes must ask follow-up questions and add information to the conversation. Students continue through the questions, alternating asker and answerer roles from question to question. In other words, student A asks his first question and his partner answers it. Then student B asks his first question and student A answers it.

**Step Four:** Optional. Students switch partners and repeat the activity. This improves fluency because students have the chance to engage in a new conversation yet reuse much of the material in the previous steps.

**Variation:** Students take notes to report on the information in this variation. As student B answers a question, for example, student A takes notes. This isn't a dictation activity, so the information doesn't need to be word for word. Once student B finishes speaking, student A reports the information as a means to confirm that all was heard and understood correctly. In this variation, follow-up questions may/may not be asked.



If you liked this idea and want others, then take a look at my ebook, [Better Language Teaching](#). There are **100 activities** with more than **75 variations** for flexible, fun learning.

Have great classes!

Chris Cotter