

# Talk Homework

**The premise of Big Writing is: “If the kids can’t say it, the kids can’t write it.”**

Schools need to be proactive in the development of language and oracy in order to compensate for the deprivation that some children are suffering due to growing up in isolation in front of Game Boys, personal computers and televisions. We now have a whole generation of young adults who also suffer from forms of language deprivation and who do not find it easy to develop an extended conversation with their children. Talk Homework is an approach developed through Big Writing that promotes the development of such conversations.

Talk Homework should be launched at the induction of new pupils to the school. It may be complemented by the provision of a pamphlet such as the Parent guide available free with this article. Parents should be advised on strategies to extend the talk in the early days, such as:

- Encourage as many family members as possible to be home on Talk Homework evening and consider having a meal together.
- Don't just give your opinion, use the 'because' word to explain why you think that.
- Give the possible opinions of two contrasting family members who are not present for the talk, and use the 'because' word to explain why they may be different.
- Ask others around the table to give their opinions and to use the 'because' word.
- Ask your child his / her opinion and ask them to use the 'because' word.
- Link the topic back to something you remember from when you were a child and say why things may be different now.
- Project forward to how things may be different in the future.

## What is Talk Homework?

- Ideally a whole school approach to developing talk although it can be used successfully in one class or year as the preparation for Big Writing.
- Ideally done twice a week, once as a whole school topic launched on Monday, usually through assembly, and once the night before Big Writing to prepare children for the **two 'whats' – content and text type**.
- Occasionally done as enrichment for an issue of interest in the wider curriculum or in the news.
- Must never be abused as an 'easy option' to homework.

### What are the essentials of a good Talk Homework?

- Every child takes a Talk Homework slip home that explains what the topic is and has a reminder that it would be good to turn the television off for this homework.
- Every parent will have been inducted into the purpose and process, and will have been asked to explain its importance to other family members.
- Opportunities for quality feedback and review will be provided in school.

### What opportunities might be provided for feedback and review?

- The optimum quality time is a Talk Lunch towards the end of the week (see below).
- A slot might be identified on Friday for class or group discussion of the varied opinions heard through the whole school Talk Homework.
- Following Big Writing, discussion might take place on who children talked with and which discussions proved most useful to their writing.

### What is Talk Lunch?

- Talk Lunch usually takes place once a week towards the end of the week, usually Thursday or Friday.
- Children are seated in family dining arrangements – small groups.
- Preferably an adult sits with each group, although one or a pair of confident Year 6 pupils may be able to facilitate.
- The facilitator takes feedback on opinions heard during discussions in the homes of the children in the group, drawing on his / her knowledge of families in the locality.
- The facilitator is aware of children who may not have had opportunity to do this homework at home and/or appear reticent, and ensures this lunch is a good opportunity for them to experience the talk.
- Facilitators may be friendly parents or grandparents from the community the school serves, strengthening home/school links, or may be a pupil from the nearby secondary school.

### How else might Talk Homework contribute to the enrichment of writing?

The facilitator / parent or teacher may bring awareness of Big Writing into the talk (although the majority of the time the talk should be allowed to just flow) by saying things such as:

- Let's all use a 'wow' word in what we say ...
- Let's see who can use a sentence that starts with a Power Opener ...
- What punctuation might have been used in that sentence?
- How could what your Gran said have been turned into use of an exclamation mark?
- What 'wow' word might your Darren have used there?
- Can anyone up-level what Jo just said?

### What are some of the potential topics for whole school Talk Homework?

- Issues or change within the location of the community.
- Issues / people / events in the news.
- Issues / news within school.
- Fictional situation (e.g. David Beckham or the Queen is visiting this week ...).
- Things we would like to see happen in the school, the location or the town / city.

### What are some of the potential class topics for Talk Homework?

- The content and/or text type for the next day's Big Writing.
- Local / school / class issues and /or news.
- PSHCE related themes.
- Curriculum related issues / topics.
- Pupil generated interests and requests.

### 52 Topics for Talk Homework:

1. The best day of your life ...
2. The worst day of your life ...
3. The most famous person you have met ... ('Big It Up' if necessary, i.e. LIE!)
4. Someone you would really like to meet is ...
5. Your favourite television programmes / stars ...
6. Someone you would really like to be is ...
7. What you would do if you won a million pounds ...
8. What change you would most like to make in school / this locality / this city / this country ...
9. The best holiday you ever had ...
10. The best day out you ever had ...
11. A place you would really like to go ...
12. A job you would really like to have ...
13. Your favourite way to travel on holiday is ...
14. What makes a good neighbour?
15. The best neighbour you ever had was ...
16. Your best friend is ...
17. Your best ever present was ...
18. Your favourite meal is ...
19. Your first ever memory is ...

20. The house you liked living in best was ...
21. The lesson / subject you like/d best in school is / was ...
22. The lesson / subject you like/d least in school is / was ...
23. What would you most like to be good at?
24. What is your favourite game or sport?
25. If you were in the Olympics it would be to do ...
26. A hobby you enjoy is ...
27. The hobby you would most like to have is ...
28. If you had one wish it would be ...
29. A good deed you once did was ... ('Big It Up' if necessary)
30. The pet you would most like to have is ...
31. The animal you are most afraid of is ...
32. The best ever teacher you had is ...
33. The best ever birthday you had is ...
34. The thing you most hate having to do is ...
35. The thing you are most afraid of is ...
36. The best thing about my home / bedroom / garden ...
37. Two nice things about our family are ...
38. Two nice things about our home are ...
39. Two nice things about this school are ...
40. The food you love most is ...
41. The food you hate most is ...
42. Your favourite story / fairy story is ...
43. A new ending to ... (name a well known story) might be ...
44. If you ruled the world ...
45. A person you would most like to be is ...
46. The cleverest person you ever met is ...
47. The best dressed person you know is ...
48. What this town most needs is ...
49. What this school most needs is ...
50. Your favourite piece of English history is ...
51. If you were the King or Queen of England you would ...
52. Why can't kids rule?